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The National Life Skills, Values Education & School Wellness Program

Healthy Schools Healthy India

Education is not preparation for life...
Education is life itself

- John Dewey

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- All submissions should follow the APA 7th Edition style
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Message from the Editor

Our actions are deeply influenced by the way we think about things. Our conceptual orientation affects almost all decisions and areas of our lives. Concepts pervade our lives. They influence our interpretation of social and personal experiences and the decisions we make in response. This is also true for school settings. Schools are surrounded by countless planned and unplanned situations and experiences that influence their mental health and well-being. Therefore, how teachers, parents, and school administration conceptualise a certain idea often directly influences the students' lived experiences of the same.

For instance, if a teacher believes discipline to be the same as controlled student behaviour, it will have visible implications for the teacher's treatment of the student, especially in cases of indiscipline. The teacher is likelier to keep strict rules and harsh punishments when those rules are broken. Micromanagement would be yet another trait the teacher may display. Similarly, if a teacher conceptualises learning as behaviour modification, most of her focus would be on students' exam performance. Consequently, her pedagogy may revolve around strategies that help students score better grades and, in the process, overlook other aspects and goals of schooling and education. However, we are often unaware of this underlying conceptualisation as one of the reasons for this failure in achieving our educational and curricular goals.

In such a scenario, our remedial measures also do not focus or consider reflecting on our conceptual understanding of ideas, leading to confusion and frustration. While the conceptual base is not all there is to any emergent issue at hand, it undoubtedly is the foundation of the experiences one may undergo in a certain situation. Therefore, carefully reflecting on how we understand a certain concept may bring mental clarity and help us refine our practices, leading to more meaningful experiences. Rather, it is necessary to reflect on the concepts involved to ensure that the school ethos and the educational processes taking place in the school are fulfilling their intended aims.

The authors have identified certain concepts that influence school children's mental health and well-being in the current issue of the Journal for School Mental Health and Well-Being. The volume begins with Ms. Nita's reflection and attempts to understand silence and its varied manifestations that one may get to observe and experience, especially in classroom settings. She argues that silence, as often desirable and expected from school students, may not always be productive. Silence can reflect oppression and a hegemonic power structure that needs intervention. The article questions the image of a silent student as a disciplined student and urges everyone to inquire and identify the underlying causes that may promote a culture of silence in schools. It also demands the reader to reflect on the implications such varied conceptions of silence may have upon the various educative processes undergoing in school and how being able to voice one's opinion could be a privilege.

Further, Ms. Ankita's writing explores the ideas of privilege, merit, rewards, and their relationship with each other. The paper simultaneously explores the impact of their conception and the nature of their relationship can have on one's very existence in society. Privilege not only influences one's way of being in society but also one's experience and performance in school. While it may be seemingly harmless to reward meritorious performances, it could also be a drastic overlooking of the struggles of the other students who put in equal hard work, but their lack of privilege pushed them down in the merit. Rewarding meritorious students raises questions about our understanding of assessment and inclusion. We aim and claim to be inclusive in our practices but serve each student a standard assessment to appear while completely overlooking their differences, including the privilege of some.

The following paper by Ms. Swati demands that readers acknowledge one's privilege and argues for the value of prayer in school with the hope of developing humility among students and teachers. The article responds to one of the most popular critiques of holding a morning prayer in schools: it makes students abandon all power and accountability and renders them ignorant. It urges us to reimagine prayer as an acknowledgement of our privileges, fortunes and fateful circumstances that we have no control over, such as those dictated by birth. Prayer, conceptualised as an act of expressing gratitude rather than an act of surrender, may broaden the horizons of students' imagination beyond their selves.

Moving on, Ms. Manisha urges us to think about developing critical thinking among students while comparing and contrasting the same with the idea of independent thinking. She argues how schools, in the name of developing critical and creative thinking, push children to think alike and, in the process,

repress their independent thinking. Children are pushed to think the way the adults, i.e., teachers, administrators, parents, policymakers and other stakeholders want them to think. It defeats the educational goal of developing thinking individuals who exhibit a critical outlook and can make informed decisions.

After that, Ms. Shikha argues for the need to reflect upon the development of morality among school children. Children's moral development has also been emphasised in NEP 2020 as it has implications for developing a good citizen and human being. She then suggests tools and methods such as discussion, dialogues, philosophy for children (P4C), and discussing moral dilemmas to help children deal with moral issues and make informed choices.

Often, our decisions and choices are influenced by the company we keep. Mr. Parikshit's article brings up the idea of friendship and how the implications of the same cut across various goals and aims any educational process may envision. Friendships between students may hold valuable pedagogic insights that teachers may benefit from. Friendships are not just personal relationships devoid of educational value but an extension of students' being that requires due consideration, especially within the caveat of wholistic education. The article argues that we must care about seemingly inconsequential and unrelated aspects of students' lives, such as friendships.

Subsequently, Ms. Garima's paper enquires into the students' and teachers' perceptions of care. It tries to gauge who students perceive as a caring teacher and compare the same with what attributes teachers associate with the idea of a caring teacher. The paper moves on to identify the gaps between the perceptions of the two groups and examine the effects they may cause while simultaneously reflecting on how the gap between the two can be permeated. Caring cannot be restricted to behaviours and attitudes within the classroom but needs to extend to outside activities and instances. A teacher needs to become a caring teacher, often by taking a break from engaging with students in a strictly professional fashion, but consider acting in a manner that allows the student to feel cared for.

Ms. Achint Kaur touches on another highly frowned upon and undervalued idea in any academic space: taking a break. While the phrase is commonly and casually tossed around to professionals, its boundaries remain untouched in schools, especially in the term's true meaning. School life is considered a life full of breaks (vacations) now and then. However, each break is an opportunity to catch up with pending tasks or get a head start on upcoming ones. It is more than visible in practices such as holiday homework for students and stay-backs for teachers. These practices reflect a flawed conception of breaks, and a severely undermined value of the role taking a break has in one's life, be it as a child or adult. It points towards the need for us to rethink the aim and intent of taking a break and when and how we take one.

The final paper in the volume is a step ahead in the direction and looks into the possibilities that music may offer in the lives of students and teachers. It proposes Indian folk music as a potential learning opportunity for music and incorporating cultural diversity, advancing language development and building a more inclusive atmosphere. It surveys various dimensions of music and comments upon society's perception of music as only a leisurely pursuit. While music is a highly aesthetic experience, it comes with a list of advantages and possibilities it merits for teachers, students and human beings.

While these concepts seriously affect the school systems, the list continues. How we understand and conceptualise an idea transcends into our attitude and practice. Therefore, it becomes important that we think about these ideas to be more reflective and informed in our practices in life. I humbly present to the readers this volume of the Indian Journal of School Health and Well-being, hoping that it will become a beginning point for all to reflect upon ideas and experiences of daily life and render them more meaningful.

Dr. Vikas Baniwal
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Message from the Patrons

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

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

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

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

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

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Silence In Schools

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Abstract

“.....sometimes, silence is very violent” this is the statement one of my professors gave while talking about silence in her classroom with me. We all have experienced silence in our classrooms; sometimes, when a difficult question is posed by someone, other times, its presence signifies the listener's focus on the speaker. Have you ever heard something which has no sound? Have you heard silence? The sounds which don't seem audible aren't always inaudible. Sometimes, silence is too loud, and other times, it is so subtle that it becomes natural. Moreover, there are many forms and types of silence we have experienced in our daily lives, which we will discuss further in this article. Silence is a very common phenomenon in our classrooms. There are multiple examples of people being silent in the classroom. But this silence doesn't mean the same thing in all contexts. There is a very popular phrase in English, “talk is silver, but silence is golden”. There could be multiple interpretations of this phrase, but critical theorists might question it by asking – is “silence” always golden? Do we really think “talk” is silver? We will be discussing similar questions in this article. However, this article itself is a question for the reader to reflect upon.

Keywords: *silence, culture of silence, speech, schooling*

Introduction

“Silence is so freaking loud.” I found this quote, by Sarah Dessen (2006), on the internet a few weeks back. This quote made me curious about the concept of silence and its meaning in different contexts. Is silence really that loud? Does this mean silence talks? Or does this mean silence also communicates? My mind was full of questions. So, I decided to explore silence in our daily lives and especially in schools. But first, I searched for its syntactical meaning.

In the Oxford Dictionary (2008), *silence* is categorized both as a noun and a verb, meaning- “quietness” and “saying nothing about something”. For example, a silence punctuated only by the occasional sniff from the children. In this way, silence is complete soundlessness or an absence of any sound. But “silence” and “quiet” are often used interchangeably, then how could one be used to define another? In the Oxford Dictionary (2008), *quiet* is also labelled into two categories, a noun and an adjective, meaning- “with little or no noise”, “no talking”, and “without much activity”. For example, “I'm going home for a bit of peace and quiet”. In this example, it doesn't mean that the house would be soundless or soundproof, but it means that even when various sounds would be hearable,

one won't be listening to them. In other words, silence is seen as soundless-ness or actionless-ness, whereas quietness would allow a bit of sound and activity but not “much”. Hence, silence and quiet aren't equal. Although they are used interchangeably.

As a result, to understand the meaning of “silence” or “quiet”, one has to emphasize the experience of the experiencer who's in the specific situation. It is also important to note that in the above given example, silence is seen in two forms – one, in the form of soundlessness and two, in the form of actionless-ness. Moreover, with these meanings, the understanding of sound is not restricted to its physical aspect. In other words, sound is not just the vibration of atoms of the medium; it could also be one's unarticulated thoughts or ideas.

Now that we are equipped with a basic understanding of *silence*, we can look at it in the context of our daily experiences. We often stay silent while talking. These “silences” are of many for in our everyday speech. Sometimes, they come in the shape of a small pause between two phrases to assert something. Some other times, the silence provides shelter to the speaker in the inability to express themselves. There are times when speakers stay silent to let others join

in the speech. On other occasions, we take small moments of silence to think. There are also incidents where we choose prolonged silence to communicate; for example, a lot of people use silent treatment on others. These are the types of silence we experience in our daily lives. They have the same form, i.e. absence of sound, but they are used in different contexts. Evidently, ‘silence’ is situated in multiple dimensions of our lives and in different forms; sometimes, it is individual, and other times it is in social form. Silence is a part of our everyday speech, indeed, in many shapes and sizes.

Commonly, silence is not conceptualized in multiple forms, and if it is, as it has been categorised earlier, its understanding remains in the physical aspect of it. It is commonly understood that when one is silent, either they are struggling with collecting their thoughts and can’t articulate, or they don’t have anything to say and therefore aren’t talking. If we look closely, both of the examples are indicating towards the absence of sound. But, we have established earlier that the lack of sound isn’t the only meaning of silence. Merleau-Ponty (1996) pointed out that “being unable to speak or make one’s voice heard is not the same as being silent; a person is silent only when they are able to talk – that is when they have something to say”. Having considered the above-mentioned argument, silence is clearly not one’s inability to articulate. Probably, silence signifies something much beyond the dimensions of evidence of sounds. Thus, one needs to think about the connoted meaning of “silence”.

To understand these connoted meanings of “silence”, let’s contextualize it in Indian schools. Indian schools have been subject to multiple research studies, especially post-independence. With changing research approaches, the ways of looking at the school and its constituents changed. In popular conception, schools in India are considered the shrine of knowledge. Teachers, students, and curriculum are integral parts of this shrine. But, like many other shrines, schools aren’t always silent and peaceful. Schools are filled with many noises – students talking, playing, repeating something after their

teachers etc. However, there are instances when the whole school remain silent, especially during exams. We will be discussing these instances of silence and noise in detail in the following part of this article. We will explore this presence of silence in the school and how it travels back and forth from home to school.

Silenced at School

Indian classrooms are full of sounds; students often play around in the room itself, chat, shout, share their ideas or thoughts, question, and do a lot of other things. One of the significant means of expression for them is their voice. We know the use of sound is a significant factor in communication. But are all forms of sound acceptable in our schools?

When a child enters school, he/she becomes a student there. This new identity is attained by the child while going through certain schooling processes, for example, wearing school uniforms daily, following the timetable etc. Discipline is one of the major aspects of these schooling processes. Most schools consider discipline as a very important part of the school curriculum. Nevertheless, this discipline is manifested in various forms; one of these forms is maintaining silence. This silence is desired in two forms – as a lack of physical sound and silence as the absence of thoughts or absence of mental sound. Often, it is expected that the learners speak less and listen more. Very common commands that all of us have heard in our school lives from our teachers are “keep quiet” or, with a higher tone, “silence!!” It is a conceptual error that we use “quiet” and “silence” interchangeably, while they mean different things. Although students are expected to majorly stay silent and follow what is told, in case of doubt, they are sometimes allowed to ask questions after raising their hands but not without it. The discipline here is manifested in two forms – one, physical, as the students stay silent till they are allowed to speak, and two, they silence their thoughts till they are allowed to do so.

There are also instances when teachers sometimes desire silence or lack of physical sound in the class just for the sake of maintaining discipline. In other words, learners

have to maintain a silent environment in the class, which would let them focus on the concepts better, and hence they will learn more. Moreover, silence or even being a silent student is also emphasised greatly in schools. The value of being a good listener is always understood in equivalence with a good learner. Only those classes which are quiet and get good results are considered good ones. But, one might question what the connection of this silence with learning is. Some researchers (Liu, 2005; Tatar, 2005) suggest that a silent classroom allows the learners to be more focused on what is being said, which helps them in retaining the knowledge and provides more space for reflection. Hence it caters to the learning of the students. The presence of silence here signifies the reflective phase of the learners, where they stay silent for the outer world, but their mind is full of sounds. This means the presence of sound inside our head is independent of the sounds created in the outer environment. Then, where does this thin line between the two gets blurred? Let's pause for a moment and think.

All of us have heard the phrase, “Silence speaks louder than words”. The idea that even while one is staying silent, they are communicating; is so bold that we acknowledge that silence also speaks. But do we listen to this silence? And even if we do, how do we listen to it? As it is established earlier, silence is soundless-ness then how, in a practical sense, would our sensory organs be able to catch sound waves when there are none? If I simplify the question, I would say, in the absence of any sound, how is this silence being heard? The assumption is that even when one is silent, the communication that is happening probably needs other modes. A common example is when the teacher wants the class to be silent, they often stop speaking themselves. This silent gesture by the teacher often makes the class silent too. This gesture still takes me back to the days of the sudden silence which would follow this action of the teachers. In this example, the teacher is not speaking but is communicating her voice through her gestures. An incredible way to communicate without producing any sounds, isn't it?

Silence in schools indicates different things. On some occasions, it works as a shield one uses to protect themselves from the consequences of the speech. A lot of students hesitate to answer the questions raised in the class when they know they don't have the linguistic proficiency in expressing themselves effectively. On the contrary, there are times when students take shelter in silence when they think they don't know the right answer and sharing a wrong answer might shame them. In both of these cases, students are using silence to keep themselves in a safe position.

Another form of silence in school is when students want to show their disagreement. Students often remain silent in response to some order or request from their teachers. For example, teachers often ask after teaching a lesson if everybody understands what is being taught. If students say “yes”, it means they understood, but silence in the class shows their disagreement with the assumption of the teacher that whatever is being taught is understood by them. This silence signifies disagreement between the student and the assumption of teacher. On the contrary, if we change the question from “have you all understood” to “if you have not understood please ask your doubts,” then the silence would signify the agreement of the students with the assumption of the teacher. Another example in which silence seems to signify agreement is that in Japanese culture, to show respect and agreement, it is common for people to remain silent while talking with others. In this way, silence signifies agreement or disagreement of one person with another.

In some cases, silence also signifies that the person is thinking. Here, silence provides a space to cater to thinking. It is a manifestation of one's analytical processes. Many of us stay silent when we are thinking, analysing, or reflecting on something. In school, this form of silence is quite evident. Another form of silence that is very much visible in schools is when we take a moment or two to reflect on each side of the problem in front of us. This type of silence could be categorized as problem-solving silence.

It is critical to notice how all these silences had similar basic structure i.e. soundless-ness, which categorises all of these under the same form. However, silence in school is not limited to this one form. Sometimes, silence is a part of the socializing process and is so deeply ingrained in our behaviour that it remains almost invisible. In other words, silence is a part of our daily lives, and it is not at all noticeable unless and until it is used strongly.

It is said that teaching is an art and science. It not only includes the art of pedagogy but also the science of content and, above all, a mixture of both. But sometimes, these pedagogical activities include harmful gestures which induce a repeated behaviour of remaining silent. In a lot of cases, students even silence their thoughts and questions. Consider, for example, in a science class, the teacher is only concerned with completing the syllabus, which could result from systemic pressure. In the process of completing the target, she tends to overlook or ignore the general doubts students have about the world, like – why the rainbow is only visible after rain. Why does the sky turn into so many colours throughout the day? Now, the teacher keeps on ignoring such questions, which results in repeated actions leading to a culture of silencing one's questions because they would eventually get ignored or overlooked. Moreover, it is an essential criterion for a good student to remain silent. Thus, students learn to shut themselves in order to fit into the idea of a good student.

The term “culture of silence” was given by Brazilian educator, philosopher, and prominent advocate of critical pedagogy Paulo Freire. According to him, in the state of oppression, the oppressed suppress their identity, culture, or ideas to follow the mainstream or oppressor's culture because they don't find any value in their own ideas, identity, or culture. This social process creates anaesthetised individuals with very less connect with their own selves, and this disconnect is manifested in the form of a culture of silence. These individuals are so much alienated from their own reality that they are not conscious of their life situations and eventually become a part of the mass oppressed by the

dominant class (Freire worked in the context of class-based hegemonic social structure). Freire suggested that a problem-posing and liberating education might break this culture of silence and allow individuals to speak their reality in their own voices. But the education system in India itself is creating a culture of silence among young individuals.

In school, right from the beginning of the day till the end, we follow a curriculum. From morning prayer to the last period, we follow the rules and regulations set in the school. Schools are agents of socialisation, and sometimes they become miniature societies themselves. As a consequence of this, the rules and regulations of the school are guided by societal forces. At the same time, students find themselves in an oppressive structure defined and curated by the forces outside the school. In this system, a lot of students start to feel a disconnect from their own selves, this disconnect later turns into an emotional numbness, which is an essential factor in creating the culture of silence. The students often sub-consciously silence their own thoughts, questions, and disagreements to remain safe and sound in this miniature society called school. This leads to an internalised behaviour of not raising a voice. The thin line between the mind and the mouth gets dissolved in the air, leading to individuals who neither think nor speak.

The content taught in the classroom plays a very important role here. Cognitively, it is beneficial for the students if whatever is being taught is connected with their life outside the school. Correspondingly, the content of the textbooks should be in alignment with the child's (who is playing the role of a student in school) reality. When this alignment doesn't happen, a state of disconnect follows. The example given above of the science teacher substantiates this argument. This disconnect is later converted into a forced muteness on the students, who have to shut their questions in order to “learn” what is important for exams. Moreover, they follow what is being said to them because they never consider themselves to be competent enough to do anything on their own. Here, the two classes

defined by Freire translate into the education system in new forms but with the same basic structure.

Classroom practices, on the other hand, are also very significant causes of this culture of silence adopted by the students. When school replicates society, they also adopt social norms. These norms later become a part of our classroom discourse. In this manner, the school continues the social structures and order, which pushes the marginalized people further towards the margin and never opens the door of the core community for them. For example, Krishna Kumar (1983), in one of his articles, shares the example of a classroom. The topic which is being discussed is *tantrism*, and the teacher asks questions about it from a boy who is from a reserved (tribal) background. Moreover, she also accepts responses like “the most affected areas by the *tantrism* are tribal villages”. A classroom discussion like this might make the students think stereotypically, further reproducing the social norms. When students don’t find any space for discussion in their classes, they stay silent. The repeated and generalized form of silence by a group of students creates a culture of silence, where they silence their own selves after accepting the fact that their voices won’t have any impact on their reality.

Schools, being an agent of socialisation, creates responsible (in socially acceptable ways) citizens who adapt, grow, and learn in accordance with social norms. They learn to do the jobs that social structures allow them (Althusser, 2014), and they learn to negotiate their place in society. But, to make them capable of these negotiations, schools play an important role. When these young learners enter the school, from day one, they start to learn the social norms and structures. They follow the hegemonic structures of teachers, principals, and students. For example, being present in community prayers, talking only when it is allowed to, going to washrooms after seeking permission, etc. Living in these hegemonic structures is not always easy for young students. They repeatedly struggle with social norms. Sometimes, during a class, students have to wait a really long time before

sharing their thoughts, ideas, or questions, and other times they get impatient and speak, which is not considered a good trait. Here again, the values of a good student come to limit the learner. The burden of these boundaries of the good student makes the child habitual of seeking permissions and waiting for order to begin something, while they forget to learn, which was their aim in the first place. This habit makes them disconnected from themselves. They don’t recognise their own curiosities, questions, and issues. Rather, these young students try to adapt to the system of their oppressors (in this case, the system designed by the school authorities). This disconnect leads to a culture of silence from students, whose only work is to listen and never question.

The system of school creates predictability in these young learners. On the one hand, silence is supported as soundlessness to maintain discipline. On the other, this silence gets translated into the classroom discourse, leading to the creation of silent bots who follow the instructions to learn. This predictability of the behaviour is so much internalised in the minds of these students that they don’t dare to think anything out of the box; because that might cause chaos in the system and would affect the equilibrium of this closed system of the school. This culture of silence not only brings estrangement in students from their own selves but also causes them to become desensitized towards their own reality. In this situation, students find themselves trapped in a forced muteness which controls not only their actions but also their thoughts. The question is, are we aiming towards it? Do we want the future of this nation to be mute like this? We need to reflect on it, this is why I said this article is a question in itself for the reader to think upon.

Conclusion

The presence of silence can’t be denied in schools. Silence is an integral part of our schooling processes. Indeed, the arguments given in the above paragraphs take us to the various forms and shapes of silence in the school. Nevertheless, one can’t deny the presence of a culture of silence, which is being

created from the overall systemic interaction of students, teachers, and texts.

The idea of silence at the personal level shows one being able to listen to their inner thoughts; but, when it comes to the sociological level, it shows hegemony and power structure and then silence is actually making one so soundless that you would listen to your own voice echoing from their side. The question, then, is – whether we want this echo or not.

It is important, however, not to overemphasise the positive or the negative side of silence in schools. Although the presence of silence can't be denied, sometimes silence is deafening and

unavoidable in nature, and other times it is very subtle. Therefore, it is important for us not just to hear these silences but rather listen to them, for it is said that “silence speaks louder than words”. Moreover, we need to work on minimising the silence caused by the socialising processes at school. In schools, students not only go for learning but also for growing. Thus, it is crucial for us to break this cycle of silence in schools to make schooling a healthy experience for future generations.

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Rewards: An Acknowledgement of Merit or Privilege?

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Abstract

In any society, the privileged group gradually sets the norms and standards of living of any society, and the rest are the groups who then aspire to achieve that lifestyle. It becomes the characteristic of the dominant group to establish their culture as 'the culture'. This setting of standards also gets its way into schools. These are groups whose performance unconsciously gets marked as 'good performances'. For acknowledging those performances, rewards often follow. Must we forget about the underlying privileges responsible for this? The underlying privilege becomes so functional in our everyday lives that we tend to become oblivious to its presence. This obliviousness tends to naturalise the differences in students' performances and results in the reproduction of inequalities even in the school class, which is supposed to be equal for all. This paper attempts to look critically at how much these rewards justify the performances of students in the context of a school class when the level of performance is set as per students coming from certain groups of society, while the hard work of the rest is going unrewarded.

Keywords: *Performance, Rewards, Privilege, Progress, Standardization*

In a school class, some days are special for the students. These days are not like the other days because these are days when students get their rewards for their performance. Those special days also occur at the school level, but here we will limit our discussion to the school class only. In a school class, those special days include giving rewards to the students who have performed well in the class. These rewards come in various forms. In materialistic and non-materialistic forms – praise, patting on the back, hugs, attention and many more. The idea behind the distribution of rewards is to acknowledge students' hard work and reward them accordingly. So the good performer gets the rewards, and the poor performers get to sit back and clap for the others.

There is a difference between a good performance in class and a performance that is not considered 'good' but includes learning. For instance, when a child has improved from their previous performance and hasn't yet performed in what is being considered desired. Situations like this leave us with a few questions: What should we reward students for? Should we reward them for their performance or the amount of learning that has happened since the previous assessment? Should we reward them for the final

result or the efforts they put in during the learning process?

Years after years, this process happens and keeps happening. Both students and teachers get habituated to only rewarding the performances up to a certain level. This narrows the understanding of good performance only, which could be rewarded. Leaving other students to accept that they are not performing up to that desired level is not learning. This again raises a few questions: What's the reference point for marking good or poor performance? Did the students receiving the rewards actually do that much hard work? Leading us to the question of how justified these rewards are. These questions never come into the purview of teachers while rewarding the 'good performers' and expecting the 'poor performers' to sit and clap. Ignorance of these questions is the first step leading to the naturalisation of the situation.

Along with the teacher's perception of students, it also affects the student's perception of themselves. Gradually pushing them to believe that no matter what they do, they are destined not to improve. These questions in a school class before rewarding the supposedly 'good performers' only will lead towards breaking this notion that only these children are to be

rewarded and minted it will open up space for the teacher to critically think about the position of a child concerning their position in society and consequently in the class and not the class as an isolated entity.

Rewards in a school class, given based on performance, very extrinsically separate the students into two groups – the talented, hard-working students who can perform as per the expectations and make good use of the education provided by the school (as considered by the school). And the others who are not talented and hard-working enough to uphold the expectations in their performance. What we are doing here is we are setting up bars for the performance. The bars, initially invisible, get legitimised and desired when we attach rewards to them. The bar should be the same for each child if they start from the same level. In a school class, it could be said that every child is getting the same teacher, syllabus, textbooks, and education; hence, they all start from the same level. Only these statements are at a very superficial level, without considering the child's life outside the school. In reality, this starting ground is not the same for each child.

Children in a school come from diverse backgrounds. Diversity in the case of India exists majorly in the form of economic class, region, language, caste, culture, and gender. Different policies have repeatedly addressed that each child comes from a different background, and the attempts to put them into the same cast hamper their educational experience.

“The distance between the child's everyday life and the content of the textbook further accentuates the transformation of knowledge into a load. A common source of alienation of subject-matter from the children's perspective and life is the presentation of the life-style and worldview of the urban well-off class. The most common message that children get from the textbooks is that the life ordinary people live is 'wrong' or irrational.” (Learning without burden report, 1993).

On that account, each child has a different starting point. Different starting points come with different needs and levels of scaffolding.

Consider the case where a child is coming from a nearby locality. Both of the parents are working in good positions. The child is encouraged to take part in different activities going on in school. After school, the child goes to a coaching centre. At home, there is easy access to various online learning platforms. In the same class, another child has to walk for around forty minutes. Both parents work in the home, but the income hardly gets them throughout the month, making coaching or any other extra support a faraway dream for the child. Only one of the parents is literate, but as the parents work late, the child has no support at home. The internet availability is minimal, and only when the parents are at home, that is, at night, the child gets limited access to the internet. Outside the school, these all contribute to the child's good, average, or poor performance inside the class.

In this situation, the first child has better access to resources than the second child. It is not only about the materialistic resources but also the home environment. The level of support, motivation, involvement of others, the cultural dispositions the child gets, and social assets all contribute to the child's learning in general and specifically at the school. Along with learning, it also impacts how the child shows their learning through class performance.

At this point, we can say that in a school class, some children are in a privileged position in society, the privilege which puts them or helps them to get to the position or, say, the standards which schools demand from their students. The economic, cultural or social privilege puts the child in a better position than the others. As defined by Peggy McIntosh (1989), privilege is “an invisible unearned package of assets which count on cashing in each day. This unearned advantage rests more on social class, economic class, race, religion, sex and ethnic identity. It is the conditions of daily experiences which one takes for granted.” This privilege comes in the form of endowments and contributes to the ascribed status within society. In an unsaid form, children from privileged families get some advantages in their respective situations over

others in educational institutions. Whether it be the ease of access to the school, the availability of resources for doing the projects and activities, having people at home who understand the activities going on in the school and guides the child accordingly, the guaranteed access to education or even the representation of their 'culture' and 'way of living' in the textbooks and school curriculum. The lack of children who do not have these resources are seen as "something that just happens rather than as indicative of durable inequalities that ensure that the odds are stacked in the favor of upper-class students... Presented as established middle-class common sense, discourses of merit and individual achievement ignore the social and economic factors that produce meritorious candidates" (Gilberston, 2016)

Looking back to the questions with which we have stated, there could be the following inferences drawn – While setting standards keeping the privileged child at the centre, by considering the privilege as the norm, at the surface level, tells that the privilege and the resources with which it comes from are the desired norms which one must have to have a dignified life. A close look will show that this is not only the setting of norms but also the rejection of the way of living of the children in less privileged positions. In this process, each child's performance is viewed from the lens of these standards. Performance is not looked at from the individual position of each child. Nothing is considered from where they are coming from, the resources to which they have access, and their cultural and social dispositions in society. The child is seen as a blank slate on which the school assumes a role to write, which is never the case. Looking at their performances from their position, we can see each child working to improve their performance.

Year after year, this has been reproduced in the school class. This reproduction of privilege is naturalized to the extent that schools tend to become oblivious. The obliviousness, silence, and even denial are what gets manifested in the form of merits. This complete focus on merit and the obliviousness of the privilege in play behind

the curtains is another reward for these children. On the one hand, these rewards constantly make way for a group of children and, on the other hand, challenge the work done by the other group by telling them constantly that they haven't learnt enough yet. This is how the privileged status of a child in society gets entailed with setting standards of performance in a school class. In this process, a group of children is left behind, as emphasized by Bonilla-Silva "...socially bounded groups that do not attain success are seen as not having worked hard, rather than seen as subject to unfair systemic disadvantages. The obedient narrative then becomes that they deserve the failure they encounter." ((Bonilla-Silva, 2014 cited in Laavanya and Saroja, 2022) Later on, this gets legitimized by the giving of rewards, which now completely leaves behind the less privileged students.

Role of teacher and a vision for the class

What a teacher can do in the class is acknowledge each child's efforts. As for the rewards as well, there could be small things that could be incorporated into the daily classroom transactions for this acknowledgement. Small materialistic items like stamps on answer sheets or notebooks, words of appreciation, pats on the head or back and many such things could be used. This will help to make each child feel appreciated for their efforts. Each student should be rewarded as per their progress and not only based on a standardised level of 'good performance'. For this, the teacher has to create an environment that will accept each child as a whole and not just by separating them by their social environment outside the school. Different cultural practices and lifestyles could be included in the daily discussions of classrooms, including their knowledge system in the daily discourse of the classroom and not only what is prescribed in the textbooks.

Each student comes from a different socio-cultural and economic background. All of them carry certain cultural dispositions with them. In a school class, each of them deserves their space. Different backgrounds have an impact on the performance of a child in one aspect or another.

School class is an inclusive space that can assess the performances of each child based on their previous performances and the consideration of their socio-economic position. The class could be a safe space for each child to express themselves freely. Expressing not from the perspective of what is desired from them only

but also what and how they want to express themselves, using the dispositions they are carrying from their homes and culture. Rewarding not from the perspective of what is desired standard of performance but based on their progress in learning.

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A Case for Prayers in Schools

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Abstract

This paper is a response to the criticism of prayers in the morning assembly in schools, which argues that the values that prayers promote are orthodox and regressive. For instance, many prayers eulogise the value of surrender, where the prayer often project the prayee (in this case, the students) as powerless and ignorant and say it is the almighty who provides all knowledge and power. The prayee (student) expresses surrender towards the Almighty. It seems they have no active role in their own lives. Proponents of this view find this to be antithetical to the values of our modern education system, such as independence and confidence. It is argued that such kinds of prayers make them fatalistic and pessimistic, or, in short, it teaches them to surrender. Despite the above argument, I am making a case for prayers in this article. Here I argue that surrender be interpreted as humility instead of loss of control or fatalism. Further, it would be good to teach humility to students if the concept is understood holistically.

Keywords: *compassion, humility, spirituality, human-divine relationship*

In most schools, the mornings begin with the morning assembly. All the students and teachers assemble on the ground, often sorted according to their classes and sections. They are even expected to stand in increasing order of their height. Often, there are separate rows for boys and girls. This morning ritual is repeated almost every day. It is time when the school uniforms are checked and defaulters and latecomers to be punished. Such is the nature of morning assembly, as experienced by most students.

However, the most important component of the morning assembly is the prayer. These could be prayers praising specific deities like Goddess Saraswati, Jesus Christ or just some songs showing piety to the god. This aspect of the morning prayer that connects it to specific religious beliefs has recently attracted severe criticism. It is often debated whether the morning prayers are worthy to be included in the morning assembly since they are religious and thus non-secular. In this reference, I would like to make a case for prayers and give a counterargument against one of the criticisms that prayers have attracted, viz., the values that prayers promote are orthodox and regressive.

This criticism is levelled against the prayers that point to the values they seek to impart to the

students. For instance, it is said that many prayers eulogise the value of surrender, where the words of the prayer often project the prayee (in this case, the students) as powerless and ignorant and say it is the almighty who provides all knowledge and power. For example, the lines “शुद्ध भाव से तेरा ध्यान लगाएं हम, विद्या का वरदान तुम्हीं से पाए हम ।” from the school prayer “सुबह सवेरे लेकर तेरा नाम प्रभु ।” In most prayers, the focus is not on individuality or personal well-being but also on the welfare of others and society. It seems they are taught to believe that they have no active role in their lives or nothing they do is their own doing. Proponents of this view say that this is antithetical to the values our education system seeks to imbibe: independence, self-confidence, self-worth, etc. It makes them fatalistic and pessimistic.

Before elaborating on the counterargument I propose against the above criticism, I would like to elaborate on what a prayer is and whether it holds the same meaning for adults and children. Prayer (verb) is challenging to understand, even for grown-up individuals. Still, the act of praying is such a widespread practice. It is a routine practice among most religions (and non-religions). Prayer as a concept is something most people are aware of, regardless if they pray or

not, what they believe in, or how often they pray if they do. If not god, people pray to different entities. These could be humans, trees, and others. Nevertheless, one commonality in prayers is that the prayee believes in the transcendental powers of the one being prayed to and its ability to do things we cannot do ourselves.

For adults, the answer as to why one prays could be linked to the experiences of adult life. Growing up, we see the world's realities in a different light where pain and suffering are inevitable and non-evasive experiences. We begin to contemplate the reasons and the nature of these pains and sufferings, and there is a constant struggle to evade it. Consequently, people engage with the idea of god due to their socio-cultural learnings or their lived realities. Some pray to ease their pain, some ask for help, and some merely to express gratitude. There are occasions when even the most staunch atheists claim they prayed. These were times of immense suffering, and they prayed involuntarily to a higher power for help. It feels like an innate urge. Would one involuntarily pray if they were unaware of this idea of god in the first place? This question still needs to be answered. The idea of god and prayers invoke strong reactions in people – for and against. Thus, in the end, it is a matter of belief for people. And what gives them comfort and meaning.

However, the matter is more complex for children when we look at school prayers. The criticism of school prayer argues that school prayers teach children to be under-confident. The content of most prayers is such that it centres around the idea that everything is God's doing, and in a sense, children who pray are helpless or even powerless. Children in these prayers lack agency in their lives. They are taught to be pessimistic and dependent. They are taught to accept their fate, leaving success or failure in God's hands. They teach children to surrender, which is the central theme of most prayers. For the proponents of this view, this is antithetical to education, which is supposed to teach children to develop their voice and agency to shape their own lives. In such a scenario, even a

rudimentary analysis of the central theme of prayers would lead us to believe that prayers have no place in schools and education.

However, if we reflect further and think of prayers as a way to connect with something universal, then the value promoted by the prayers is not surrender but rather a sense of humility. Humility is not the sacrifice of self or the negation of self. Fostering humility is a good thing if the children can understand the concept in its entirety. Humility is a very wholesome concept of life if examined in its entirety. Simply rejecting it by saying it snatches away the children's agency is a superficial analysis.

To illustrate this point, I would like to highlight a Sanskrit phrase, "*Idam-na-mama*", which means this is not mine, this action, this life. If we elaborate on it further, this highlights that whatever an individual does is not his own doing. Everything an individual does has bigger forces working for him. It is given to him by the almighty, the cosmos, or fate. For example, if someone has earned wealth which he feels has been earned through hard work, but at the same time, he mustn't forget the role of good fortune, enabling conditions, the ethos of hard work learned from parents, good childhood etc. remembering the role of these other forces in the success of oneself enables the individual to have humility and prevent them from being pompous and vain.

However, the further question is why this humility is essential. Most modern societies believe that the more hard you work, the more you will be rewarded. The values of free opportunity and free competition are valued. It is said that through hard work, one can achieve anything. People should be distributed rewards and resources based on their merit and abilities, i.e. the hard work they have put in. This means that no matter what position an individual is born in society, one can achieve and reach any position based on hard work. These ideas, however, stand on the false belief that everyone solely deserves the fruits of their labour. And whoever is left behind in this competitive race is because of their shortcomings. The idea of free competition says the more hard work one puts

in, the more successful one gets. It says that everyone was given the same opportunity, and thus where they end up at the end of the race is their own doing. The ones who succeed have no one but themselves to thank. This belief in free competition is, in fact, folly.

As highlighted above, there are a lot of things that contribute to one's good fortune. The idea of free competition ignores the disadvantageous position that some people inherit or are born into. For instance, they might be born into very poor families, or they might not have a very happy or stable childhood. The people who succeed in society forget these disadvantages suffered by others. They claim they have worked harder than others and deserve whatever they have.

To counter the above thought process, humility is very important. It helps us to understand our place in society and the world. It makes us realise the value of compassion and understanding for others. It prevents us from being apathetic towards others and society. Humility is very important to build a just and egalitarian society. It helps us to be more responsible citizens. Through humility, people will believe that since they are not the sole actors in their success, thus it is most natural for them to share the fruits of their labour with others because these rewards were not theirs in the first place. The ideas against free competition ask for the organisation of a just society firmly based on

the pillars of humility, compassion, and mutual respect.

The idea of humility is fundamental to being compassionate and having respect for others. It is essential to recognise the role of good luck in life, having specific talents that happen to be prized by society, and having specific opportunities and privileges to achieve success in life. This humility is a very important civic virtue we must instil in the children. Humility helps us to be compassionate and respectful, as it helps us to put ourselves in other people's shoes. Society has so much inequality and injustice that we need a spiritual and moral anchor to guide our life. Furthermore, the ultimate aim of education is also the creation of such a just society.

This is where the role of prayer comes in. In this larger analysis, the value of humility seems an important part of human existence. And if school prayers are a medium to teach those values to the students, they are not pointless. They play a very significant role in this larger analysis. However, the system of prayers needs to be rethought. The way the prayers are done currently can only somewhat fulfil their actual purpose. They have become meaningless and ritualistic. There should be a move to make them more relevant to the students, making children understand the meaning of the prayers and instilling humility in them so they can be agents of social justice when they become part of society.

Thinking Independently

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Abstract

From birth, we begin trying to make sense of the world around us. Young ones are the most curious and eager to know about the world around them. While infants think through sensation to get acquainted with their surroundings, they begin to engage in more abstract concepts as they grow. But as we grow, we are passed on some guidelines and rules on what to think and how to think, what the limitations on thoughts would be and what kind of product one should expect. Since everyone has a life with unique experiences upon which they build their perspective to look at a situation, why do we desperately want every child to think the same way? Does everyone think the same way, to begin with? What are the criteria for gauging one's thinking? While the schools still perpetuate the traditional, orthodox and restricted ways of thinking in the name of higher-order skills, the 21st century demands otherwise; unorthodox and innovative ways of thinking.

Keywords: *thinking, children, curiosity, independent thinking*

From selecting their toys for play to making their little games; from colouring the sky blue to observing different hues of the sky; from curiosity to touch a hot utensil to observing different concepts of heat and temperature, from memorising the multiplication tables to realising different ways of reaching a solution, children engage in a lot of thinking. A lot of thinking and free movement of thought is required to generate new and more effective thoughts. It isn't just one thought that makes the child realise that the rain, snow, hail, and vapour all are just water in different forms. Even if they are told everything about a phenomenon, the child would only selectively memorise what they can comprehend. Putting a child's thought in a box would be just to tell children 'what is', 'why is' and 'how is' and expecting them to stay within the given by either memorising the provided information or letting them think within a restricted, systemic and standardised way instead of letting one to further struggle with their thoughts and observe, organise, reorganise, question and find patterns on their own.

We often come across children asking us some questions which even we, as adults, cannot answer at times, and in exchange, we tag them as 'curious beings'. Calling children 'naturally curious' hides the process behind their curiosity. Children are curious beings because the world around them is new, and they have the freedom to explore the world around them. Children are independent explorers because they have the

freedom to play around and manipulate objects and their surroundings. Children are autonomous learners because they are not always dependent on adults to tell them about their surroundings; rather, they will first try to know it by themselves. They rely more upon their senses than on adults' instructions. They go through a scientific process while constructing knowledge about the world around them. They observe, theorise, test and revisit the theories, making thinking an integral part of the whole process. 'Children are naturally curious beings' is an overly stated phrase, but what happens to this curiosity when children grow into adults? What causes children to move from independent and curious thinkers to being submissive and docile beings? Why do many adults feel incompetent in making decisions for themselves?

The cause is rooted in childhood. Children start thinking when they are born, not like adults, but they try to make sense of the world around them, their experiences with people, objects, places, emotions etc., in their way. To make connections between different facets of existence is something a person has to do for himself; we cannot do it for others. Similarly, a child has to make sense of their world by themselves, and no adult can do it for them; they can only help when necessary. For that reason, children are always processing some theories consciously or subconsciously since they have a lot to make sense of in the world they entered not so long ago. The unnecessary interventions led by adults

can do more harm than good as it takes away the natural process through which children learn to learn and become autonomous thinkers. Initially, parents and then teachers at school intervene in children's decisions about their own learning experiences. There is always an authority figure to dictate what needs to be done and what not, what a child needs to know and what not, how the child must know it and how not, and all other Dos and Don'ts. Initially, this authority is external and causes a restraint in a child's learning experiences. As this becomes repetitive, the child gives up to external authority to validate their choices and decisions. They are not curious anymore about why and why not of the happenings around them. That is when the external authority has been internalised, and by the time children grow up, they feel incompetent in making decisions for themselves.

When children are born, they are unaware of the human-made rules, regulations, and limitations. As the child develops thinking in the early stages, they don't know there are human-imposed limitations on thinking too. While thinking does not naturally have limitations, humans have created some standards for thoughts. And any new generation takes off some limitations while putting in some others and, in this way, propagates a certain way of thinking. Since most children's lives are organised and dictated by adults, who themselves have been through the same and, by now, have become comfortable within their boxes. So, as children grow, their thinking also develops into traditional, conventional ways. They have to submit to the adults' imposed limitations on their thoughts to fit in the social settings. Their thinking is pushed within the boundaries of a box, and there comes a time when they stop putting effort into thinking beyond what is expected. Rarely anything new comes from it; it produces a replica of whatever is already out there—reproduction, not innovation.

Our thinking process is bound within the realm of accepted patterns in society. Going beyond which feels like breaking some laws. Since early childhood, children are taught what to think and how to think. These rules and regulations shape the way our thought process works, the information we want to process and the thoughts we want our mind to produce. A child in their early years has not yet internalised these rules

and restrictions on thinking and thus can think in any direction. That is why many times, adults are unable to answer the queries of young ones and instead tag them as curious beings. While on one side, they are tagged as curious beings, on the other hand, their thoughts are considered going wayward and must be directed towards the right way. Thus, adults continue to transmit their ways of thinking to the young ones, and in that process, we ignore what the child knows and focus on the child not abiding by the rules of the problem.

For example, a first-grader is given a set of alphabet flashcards and instructed to make words out of some given letters. The child successfully rearranges the letters and makes a meaningful word out of them. Next, the child is asked to use the letters of that word to extract some more words out of it, for example, making words from the letters of the word CARPENTER. The child struggles with it and thinks of a word which requires a letter that isn't present in the original word. Let's say the child needs L to make the word PLANT out of the letters in CARPENTER, but L is unavailable. When asked not to take any flashcard from outside the letters of the original word, the child takes a card from the available ones and writes the needed letter on it and puts it in place to complete the word, i.e. takes the C from the word CARPENTER and writes L on its backside and puts it on the place to form PLANT. But the child was interrupted again and told that it wasn't allowed. She was again reminded that she has to stick with the available letters only and can't make her own. So this time, instead of creating the letter on the card, she wrote the needed letter on the table where the letter flashcard was to be placed to complete the word. However, she is again interrupted until she gives up on creating a word that requires letters beyond the letters present in the original word. These kinds of actions show that children are capable of creativity. Adults often leave a chuckle at such actions of children before continuing to 'correct' their behaviour. It is a moment of awe for adults who themselves could and still can think outside the box, like children, but are bound by the standard and accepted ways of thinking and continue to perpetuate that way in the younger generation as well. That is why children are interrupted and dictated to behave in a certain way, read and write a certain way, and express themselves a certain way. These

situations push them into the boundaries of a box.

In the school setting, what often happens is that children are required to repeat instead of discovering for themselves. Most of the time, repetition of the given information makes no sense to them, and after a point, they give up trying to reconcile what people say about the world and what they feel about it. When students bring their queries to the classrooms, they are often shut down by the teachers. Children's queries prove they are thinking beyond the given and the expected. But in the classrooms, their queries are regarded as out of context, out of syllabus, illogical, irrelevant or disturbing to the class. It is rarely the case that children are encouraged to share what THEY think about a situation or text, and rarely children's queries are encouraged. And as time passes, they accept what the authority says as true and do not try to question or test it anymore. They become docile bodies, accepting control and submissive instructions. While schools claim to be preparing children for a better future by making them creative, critical and independent thinkers, schools are the foremost ones trying to perpetuate one way of thinking – the one which is widely accepted, expected and has only certain perspectives in it. The examination system is like the cherry on the top that ensures that the system perpetuates the 'one way' of thinking successfully by evaluating what the children can memorise from the given. The standardised answers to the exam questions based on which children are evaluated ensure no deviation in how children think. These standardised exams become criteria to gauge children's thinking, while these exams provide the least opportunity to think.

To quote J. Krishnamurthy from his book 'On Freedom':

"When you are told what to do, what to think, to obey, to follow, do you know what it does to you? Your mind becomes dull, it loses its initiative, its quickness. This external, outward imposition of discipline makes the mind stupid, it makes you conform, it makes you imitate. But if you discipline yourself by watching, listening, being considerate, being very thoughtful – out of that watchfulness, that listening, that consideration for others, comes order. Where there is order, there is always freedom."

This is what one needs- 'freedom', freedom of thought. Freedom to think on their own, without any imposition from outside authority. One doesn't need a structured direction to lead the thoughts; that just leads the thinking towards reproduction rather than innovation. To move from the known and the given to the 'yet to know', we need to put our unique experiences, perspectives, and ideas into motion. This freedom of thought without dependence on outside authority is called independent thinking. One might think that being brought up in a democratic society, everyone is free to think, but that's not true regarding the practical grounds of the education system. A girl child brought up with the ideas of submission to patriarchy would develop her thinking the same unless she is probed to think critically about it. A child from a dominant class brought up with the ideas of power and dominance would probably grow up with an attitude of power unless he is facilitated to think critically about society's power dynamics and role in it. Family and school play a major role in perpetuating certain thinking through socialisation. The child's thinking is shaped by the thought processes and ideas of the people around them; thus not independent. That is why one might be living in a democratic society and still not be an independent thinker.

In the surge of the 21st century's demands of skilled labourers and entrepreneurs, thinking and producing what is 'given' has little to no value. The fast-changing world demands minds that go beyond the conventional and usual, providing new and innovative solutions to modern problems. Higher-order thinking skills like abstract thinking, imaginative thinking, and creative and critical thinking are observed as desirable, but what tops the list is 'independent thinking', that is, thinking without letting public opinion influence it. Independent thinking might be considered risky since it requires the thinker to go beyond the general and reflect on their thoughts through a 3rd person's point of view. The fear of authority and the limitations on thought made by authority prevents us from examining, questioning and inquiring. It prevents us from going beyond the given and provided. Therefore, independent thinking should be developed among children from the beginning as a quality of mind that knows the freedom, responsibility, and power of one's thoughts.

Independent thinking allows a person to look at a situation as it is without letting their thought be clouded by how they know of it or how they are told about it. At a young age, when children are mostly dependent on their senses for thinking, they observe their surroundings as they are. They haven't yet learnt the art of labelling everything. Unlike adults, they would observe birds for their features and activities, whose first instinct would be to identify and name the bird. This culture of objectivity devalues our ways of thinking and how we perceive our surroundings. It fools us into ignoring the different ways to approach a situation. Independent thinkers observe and learn at their own pace and do not hesitate to say they 'don't know' when they don't. They have the confidence to own a thought, which shows in their speech and actions. Therefore, it is the responsibility of parents at home and teachers in school to help maintain that confidence and not kill their self-esteem by imposing objectivity on them. Only when children can think independently and have independent ideas can they contribute to innovation. Therefore, to nurture this independence and creativity, schools should become a place to explore different ideas, perspectives and questions children bring to the classrooms. Observation, questioning and healthy debates should have a higher position in schools. Creativity should not be left for creative

competitions only, but it should be seen as an integral part of all classroom activities. The assessment criteria must consider different approaches and processes children apply to problems rather than sticking to an objective solution. For this, the teachers must first reflect on their own teaching. They need to identify where they need to interfere in children's learning and thinking processes and where they need to give space for the child to think on their own.

Thinking is, therefore, a quality of mind that develops as the child develops or is exposed to more experiences. And as facilitators, teachers don't need to develop a particular way of thinking among children but rather provide them ample opportunities to think by themselves, on their own- independently. The teachers must let children think independently, explore, examine and question on their way to learning. The free movement of thought makes the thinking process more worthwhile and prosperous. Independent thinking is a way towards thinking outside the box, beyond the given and expected, and towards creativity and innovation.

Why is Understanding the Morality of Children Important?

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Abstract

The rising moral issues and the morally insensitive decisions taken by children have been serious matters for society. This article examines the prevailing moral issues among children and the need to understand their moral development. The recommendations of National Education Policy 2020 are also reviewed in light of the moral development of the children. Several tools and methods are suggested in order to know and explore the evolving moral thoughts of children and understand the process of development of morality among them.

Keywords: *Moral Development, Moral Issues and Moral Reasoning*

Introduction

Morality has always been a matter of concern for parents, teachers, communities, societies, and policymakers. The children are taught; they vicariously learn and experience from their environment and develop their morality. In the early stages of their life, be it infancy or later stages, children also start developing a moral sense through their feelings and desires. Therefore, there are lots of forces in society that try to influence the moral development of children. Some of these are family, parenting, schooling, teaching, media, friendship, peer circle, etc. Moral Development is often associated with the building of good character, associating with understanding right and wrong, developing a perception of the world, determining behaviour, and making decisions at the time of moral issues. There have been many serious issues and matters reflecting the present scenarios of the development of morality or moral sense among children. These can be easily reflected by the news highlighted in the newspapers and on the news channels.

Understanding Moral Issues

These days, there have been lots of cases reported in the past when children have made hazardous moral decisions in order to fulfil their self-interest. Looking at instances like the Pradyuman Thakur Murder case where a senior schoolmate killed him to delay the examinations, a 16-year-old boy killed his mother in order to play PUBG and hide her body for two days,

another 12-year boy allegedly made a bomb threat call to the Railway Police Helpline in order to stop his PUBG playing friend from boarding. Numerous such cases portray the direction of the moral sense of the children. Such cases reflect the lack of understanding of the importance of an individual's life, the value of relations, and excessive focus on self-interest. This is not just news but a warning bell for the society that questions the efficacy of various societal systems and institutions in developing a sense of right and wrong among the new generation. It is not only these news stories that mirror this issue but several other incidents of killing, cheating, merciless beating, bullying, etc., are regularly reported in every corner of the world, which portray a missing sense of right or wrong in the children's actions. Such incidents raise indispensable questions like how children arrive at such harsh solutions to their moral problems and how one could understand the developing sense of right and wrong among children. There is a need to address such questions and understand the process of moral development among children.

Generally, children spend much of their time at school and at home. The stakeholders of school and home, i.e. teachers, parents, and other family members, spend maximum time with them. Despite the full involvement of children with the school teachers, parents, and other family members, such incidents reflect unattended and insensitive moral standards of the children.

Today, most of the children's time is spent on mobile phones, the internet, gaming, and surfing. They have limitless access to the virtual world. Anything appropriate or inappropriate is just a click away from the children. Multimedia has a great role in shaping children's thoughts, and the internet has given them free access to it. Whether it is merciless games like PUBG, brutal videos, or some sexual content, these are very easily accessible to young children. However, after the pandemic, children have unlimited access to the gadgets like Mobile Phones, Tablets, Laptops, and computers, and because parents are working or ignorant, their usage of the internet is hardly monitored by them. Therefore, exposure to lots of multimedia content and receiving less time from the parents makes the situation more miserable. The children are exposed to content that affects their moral sense and develops insensitive morals and distorted morality among them. Hence, as caretakers and guides of a children's life, there is a need to understand the moral development of the children and attend to their moral issues. Understanding the process of moral development requires a different type of involvement with the children which would propel their inner thoughts to be expressed and reflected upon. This will be discussed later in the article.

It is not today, but such efforts to understand moral development were done earlier as well. Various theologians, psychologists, and philosophers throughout history have studied moral development and the nature of morality. Western philosophy provides three platforms to think about human morality; those platforms are given by Christianity, French Philosopher Rousseau, and English Philosopher Locke (Dorough, 2011). Christianity provides the doctrine of original sin, which holds that without salvific intervention, all people will naturally behave improperly, selfishly, and without regard for the good of others. The second philosophical platform was proposed by Swiss-born French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778). He believed that human beings are born good. Rousseau proposed that moral development requires little, if any, societal or parental intervention. People naturally develop a

sense of right and wrong. English philosopher John Locke (1632-1704) proposed a third platform of moral philosophy that human beings are born amoral and are influenced by their experiences. Locke proposed the term *tabula rasa* (blank slate) to convey that morality is entirely derived from environmental interaction (Dorough, 2011). According to this thought, children are assumed to begin as nothing, and their character is shaped by experiences entirely. Now, if it is believed that children are blank slate or naturally selfish and bad, then as a parent or teacher, it is assumed that it is part of their job to teach children to be humble, generous, and cooperative, to instil the right ideas and avoid aggressive behaviour because these things do not come naturally (Mukunda, 2015). In this case, the whole responsibility for developing children's morality lies with the external sources, they are the sole authority for developing children morally. According to Rousseau's philosophical platform, the nature of morality is not to destroy the child's natural humbleness, gentleness, generosity, and honesty. According to his child-centred philosophy, adults should act receptively. Children are naturally good, and exposure to society's evils may corrupt them (Berk, 2011; Dorough, 2011; Mukunda, 2015). This in itself is not a holistic explanation of the nature of a child's morality. As parents and teachers, our way of handling situations and children is greatly influenced by which side of the line we fall on. But whatever platform we choose, we will not be very effective until we understand the true complexities of moral development.

Talking about morals, merely for one day, in a few classes, or a few interactions, may not effectively add to the development of a sense of right and wrong among children; rather, continuous efforts are required from parents, teachers, family, and society. This process whereby children or people form a progressive sense of what is right and wrong, proper and improper, is known as Moral Development (Dorough, 2011). As a parent, teacher, or another responsible member of society, it is important to understand the process of moral development among children. This understanding would guide

us to take the necessary steps for the harmonious moral development of the children.

NEP 2020 Recommendations

The policymakers are also concerned about the moral and ethical development of the children. Looking at the Indian context specifically, the 'New Education Policy' has a deep concern for teaching children the importance of 'doing what's right' at a young age and providing a logical framework for making moral or ethical decisions. They also focus on the development of ethical reasoning among children, and as a consequence of it, they are expecting the development of Indian Traditional values, Constitutional values, and all other basic human values (*New Education Policy 2020 NEP 2020 Why so Controversial?* 2020). The functions of moral development or the development of moral sense are also associated with cultural, constitutional, educational, and basic human values. Therefore, it is important to understand what a child is actually learning morally and understand the developing moral sense.

Tools and Methods to understand the construction of morality

There are many ways to understand the morality of children. A few are discussed below, which involves the active participation of the children and facilitator.

Discussion - A discussion is a multipurpose tool. It is an important method of learning which helps children to think, process, and understand information rather than simply receiving it. The children get the opportunity to express their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences with others. There has been a study that indicated that small-group discussions significantly increase moral reasoning skills, and these skills are teachable and measurable also (Self et al., 1998). The small group discussions could be used to understand the moral reasoning of the children and also help to build and structure it.

P4C- Philosophy for Children (P4C) is an approach to teaching and learning which encourages and develops children's caring,

creative, collaborative, and critical thinking skills. The classroom becomes a community of ethical inquiry where children question their own beliefs and prejudices. This type of community is committed to taking the inquiry beyond the boundaries of limits and promoting a Socratic dialogue in which students are the active knower of their own learning. The criticism faced during the dialogue of P4C would let children mutually contribute, contrast the arguments, and find good reasons to make moral decisions (García-Moriyón et al., 2020). Such practices would help children to reflect on their moral or ethical thoughts and reasons, and the facilitator to have an observation over those.

Dialogue - Dialogue is an indispensable tool for understanding the moral thoughts and moral reasons of children. Dialogue demands the active involvement of the participants. It gives immense space to explore and understand one's own thoughts and others' too. In other words, it provides a constructive and reflective space for moral thoughts, intra-personally and interpersonally also. The Children exchange their experiences and perspectives with each other, and this will help them to gain a better and fuller understanding of moral complex situations. Actually, Dialogue is not only an instrument or technique to arrive at a better decision, but it is understood as a continuous and ongoing learning process in which participants develop new, and richer understandings of their practice. Simultaneously, it also involves a responsive evaluation which also assists children in understanding their beliefs and practices from multiple perspectives. In dialogical interactions, there are chances that multiple perspectives may evolve into new perspectives if children are willing to acknowledge the limits of their own perspectives and want to change in their interactions. (Abma et al., 2009). This would provide enough opportunities for children to evolve their moral thoughts with dialogical interactions and continuously evaluate them.

Responses to Moral Dilemmas – This method is profoundly used by a well-known Psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg (1927-1987), in his study of Moral Reasoning. To study the development of

moral reasoning among participants, Kohlberg has designed hypothetical vignettes of moral dilemmas. Based on the responses to these moral dilemmas, he gave a popular theory of moral development. This method can be used to talk about moral beliefs, moral reasons, and the moral sense of the children through hypothetical moral dilemmas. The children are given space to talk their hearts out about the dilemma and how they would choose to make moral decisions. Several questions are asked based on the moral dilemmas whose answers from the children reflect their moral understanding. Such Moral Dilemmas can be used with an individual child and with a small group of children as well. A cross-sectional study on the development of moral reasoning among school children has reflected that while discussing the answers to the questions on moral dilemmas, making moral decisions and giving moral reasons for those children have learned from their group mates. This learning has made them change their moral decisions and give more clear moral reasons to

support their decisions. This research also reflects that such small group discussions on moral dilemmas also motivate them to find some middle ground for the moral dilemma and make a more acceptable and well thought moral decision. (Shikha, 2022). This method also gives enough space for children to share their moral thoughts and check on them through peer validation.

All these tools and methods are the platform that may help teachers and parents to provide opportunities to open up children's thoughts about right and wrong, their moral beliefs, moral reasons, and their developing moral sense. Merely lecturing children about moral principles, telling them moral stories, and asking for moral stories are not enough to understand children's morality and develop them morally. The methods and tools which involve children actively in the process of moral discussions are far better than traditional classroom methods.

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Appreciating Friendship

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Abstract

This article will help teachers to understand the importance of friendship among students. It will also highlight how the friend circle helps develop their personalities. The teachers should understand the bond between students and the activities in which they are involved. They can use the energy between the two individuals to construct a positive learning environment in the class. The discussion about the students' friendship should not be limited to the staff rooms, but it should be part of the lesson plan of the teachers, and also, it should find some space in the curriculum. Parents should also understand the importance of friendship. Children befriend other individuals based on their interests, hobbies, likes, dislikes, etc. and based on these, and they try to indulge in as many activities as possible. By knowing about their child's friends, parents can learn a lot about their child. Teachers and parents can use friendship and this positive energy to improve the child's personality.

Keywords: *Friendship, school, pedagogy, emotional wellbeing*

Friendship is a bond that connects two individuals; however, its expression can vary for different people. Some might like going out together or doing any activity, while some enjoy talking, and for some, it can be just being together even if they are not doing anything. The underlying principle behind friendship is that two individuals have something in common; it might be interests, experiences, values, etc. It is a universal phenomenon. All individuals, regardless of their social or economic status, have friends with whom they can comfortably share their joys, sorrow, problems and ups and downs. Thus, it can be said that the friendship between two individuals is based on mutual trust, support, and companionship. They trust one another and feel that they will stand together in thick and thin, and by doing so, they enjoy each other's company.

Being around your friends feels like a safe zone where there is no feeling of being judged, and you can talk freely about what is happening in your mind. For instance, a person may not be comfortable sharing their thoughts openly in front of others as they may feel judged and unable to express their views adequately. But the same person can be very expressive and communicate openly with friends. As friends, they would have developed a level of trust,

allowing them to share their thoughts and feelings without fearing judgement which can lead to a good conversation. A good discussion among friends can help to understand the perspective of others and can lead to new ideas and solutions. It can also help people to vent their feelings.

Friendship is an unmediated bond in which individuals have grown together, learn from each other and have a deeper understanding of each other's weaknesses and strengths. They know what their friends think and how they may respond and react. Someone can have a small circle of one or two close friends, best friends, or a large group of friends. It differs from person to person.

It is often considered that the first friend an individual makes outside the family is in school. School is a minuscule society where students from different backgrounds come together. It is a secondary socialising agency, which shapes a child's personality, and friends play an instrumental role in doing so. It allows students to interact and indulge in activities that help develop their bonds.

Students start as companions or classmates, and when the two of them hit it off, they may develop a bond that lasts throughout their life. Peers also share something in common with their

companions, like a classroom, similar bus route, extracurricular activity or the same sports team. When two students share something more than that, then they might become friends. For instance, they may share hobbies and interests and have similar preferences for people and humour, and once they become friends, they would choose their friends over classmates. They like to play games together and can participate in different events, which can lead to better results. When they become friends, it becomes epiphenomenal to the activities, which means now they do not require any recreational activity to connect.

In school, the students share a lot of moments with their friends in which they are applauded or punished by the teachers, share inside jokes, tease one another, and call each other using different names. All these things become integral to our school life, significantly impacting an individual's social development. These interactions can help develop social skills such as sharing, cooperating, listening, belongingness, etc. In addition, the ministering role of friends can work as a supplement to their friends in the activities they are involved in, as friends can powerfully impact an individual's choices, attitudes, and actions.

As we say, every child is unique, and different values are embedded in them; however, friends can positively and negatively influence an individual. Positive peer pressure can help an individual perform better in academics, sports and extracurricular activities, maintain a healthy lifestyle, etc. Thus, it creates a positive impact on the physical and mental health of the individuals. Whereas if the students are not guided properly, especially during adolescence, then they can get involved in the activities like drug abuse, physical abuse, pornography, etc., and it negatively impacts the social development of the child. They might acquire the habits of dishonesty, lying, thieving, etc.

The importance of friendship is neglected in schools. It is considered something trivial and disruptive. The discussion of the students and their friend circles is limited to the staff rooms only as the teachers discuss the activities in

which the students are indulged and how some of these groups disturb their prepared activity due to a lack of interest. If they have two friends in a class who are very talkative, they identify them as the disturbing elements of the class. Most of the time, they try to separate them to maintain discipline in class. And by doing so, they often overlook the possibility of using this energy to achieve something which can benefit the whole class.

C.S. Lewis has said that friendship can be seen as a sort of succession or a rebellion, which is why authorities frown on friendship. This frowning can be seen in a classroom when a teacher prepares any activity or lesson. Still, during the activity, if a group of friends lose attention, they can distract the whole class, and the teacher can lose their authority. The students can ask unrelated questions, and their friends may support them. This can lead the teaching-learning process in a different direction.

Friendship is valuable for school children. However, teachers try to undermine it as they feel the students waste their time indulging with their classmates in non-academic activities. They just want students to focus on their academics. But teachers can use friendship in classroom management as the teachers aware of the students' friendship can also provide support and guidance to help their students navigate any social challenges they may face. It was said by Aristotle that "friendship helps the young to keep from error." Teachers can use these friendships to promote positive behaviour and discourage negative behaviour. Friends working together can create a supportive learning environment, providing a space for the learners to feel safe expressing themselves, asking questions, and making mistakes. If two friends are doing the same activity, they might perform it better.

Friends can have a significant impact on a student's emotional well-being. So much so that students cannot open up with their parents and teachers; instead need their friends to listen. Students are afraid to share things with their families and teachers because they fear how they will react to the situation. As there are things

considered fun by the students, they get a good scolding when they talk about these activities to their parents or teachers. So they try to keep these activities restricted to their friend circles. However, if teachers and parents are unaware of the child's actions, this can lead to more significant problems. For example, if a child decides to bunk a class with their friend and later tells about this incident to their parents. In response, the parents would want to scold the child and give a strict warning not to do such a thing again. This will not be good for them as the child might bunk class the next time and not even tell their parents about the incident and eventually bunk the whole school altogether. This will also create a gap between the child and their parents. If the parents listen to their child and deal with this situation more composedly, then the child will not hesitate to tell their parents everything, and then parents can guide their child as to why such activities are not considered right.

The teachers can incorporate the bond between the students in their pedagogy to improve the learning outcomes in the class. This can be done by having peer group activities, in which students can work collaboratively on any projects and assignments in the class. They can also use peer mentoring in the class, where

students can help their friends who need extra support.

The teachers can strike a balance between being friendly to the students as well as maintaining professionalism. As a result, a positive learning environment is created in which the students will feel safe and supported. They will also not hesitate to ask the teachers questions and can share any problem they might be facing in school. This way, students will thrive both academically and socially. The parents should also be friendly with their child so that the child will not hide things from their parents. They can communicate openly and honestly with their child by being good listeners, showing empathy and offering guidance to them. Thus the students can share their problems with the teachers and their parents more freely and openly if they feel accepted by them, just as they do with their friends, which will eventually help in developing healthy personalities. This will help in the better overall development of the child.

Friendship remains one of the most beautiful bonds formed in a person's life, and its importance must be addressed, but it is severely undermined in educational institutions, which shouldn't be the case today.

A Caring Teacher: Exploring the Perceptions of Students and Teachers

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Abstract

Care is an integral part of human life and hence a crucial part of education as well. When caring relations are successfully established between teachers and students, it helps in the all-round development of a student. This includes not just the cognitive but social, emotional, and ethical development of students. This is one of the goals of NEP 2020 as well. But, caring relations are threatened when there are gaps in the understanding of teachers and students about who a caring teacher is. This paper explores the perceptions of teachers and students about caring teachers and highlights the gaps that exist between them. It uses the interview method to collect data from its participants and highlights that while teachers take a very macro view of caring in terms of hefty ideas like “guiding” and “imparting knowledge”, students take a very micro view of it and tend to relate classroom behaviour and management of teachers to care. Students look for guidance but not from a place of imposing authority, which teachers often end up acting like. Students rather look for freedom and agency. Its conclusion offers some ways through which these gaps could be overcome, and the nurturing of caring relations between teachers and students could be facilitated.

Keywords: *Care, caring relations, development, caring teacher, perceptions*

Introduction

We see the word care used ever so often around us. There are so many institutions claiming to care about us, hospitals claim that they care about people’s health, schools claim that they care for students’ education, insurance companies claim they care for people and their loved ones, and the government claims that it cares about the governed and the list goes on. In the realm of personal relations, many teachers and parents claim that the younger generation maintains an “I don’t care” attitude. The same allegedly uncaring generation keeps lamenting that “nobody cares”. Very often, students claim that none of their teachers cares about them at all. Teachers, on the other hand, claim otherwise. It is often with a tone of appreciation that we describe someone as caring, and with a tone of criticism, we say that the person does not care. Care, therefore, appears to be an indispensable part of every human’s life. Its absence is lamented, and its presence is desired. It appears to be an integral part of every human relationship as well. It appears that people care and also want to be cared for. Caring for someone and being cared for can give meaning to people’s lives and make them worth living. It

is a warm human emotion that can make a person feel protected and safe and make the world seem like a beautiful place to live in. Personal human relations are generally considered to be incomplete without an element of care. It, therefore, has a direct bearing on a person’s mental well-being too. Martin Heidegger (1962) declares care to be fundamental for a human being. While trying to answer what the meaning of being is, he puts care at the foundation of being itself. According to him, it is through care that the self authenticates itself. Since care is such an important part of any person’s life, it is undoubtedly an integral part of education as well. According to John Dewey (1897), education is not preparation for life, it is life itself. If care cannot be neglected in a person’s life, it can also not be neglected in their education.

One aspect of care is that it has a component of subjectivity, it is personally influenced and defined. That is, different people perceive and understand care differently. This can give rise to certain challenges at times. Though the one caring might be strongly convinced that what they are doing is out of care, the one being cared

for might not feel cared for at all. In Indian households, parents often persuade their children to marry only with their consent, and they often choose the person. They declare that they do this because they know better and are doing this out of care, as they don't want their child to marry the wrong person. But, very often, the children and parents do not look eye to eye on this. They claim that their parents are “controlling” and not caring. Such gaps, which are endemic to the nature of care, can therefore be observed/seen in education as well.

A study was conducted to investigate the perceptions of secondary school teachers and students about care in Lahore by S. Bashir and A.M. Malik (2020). Its findings indicated that a gap between their perceptions does indeed exist. This can be detrimental to the development of caring relations between teachers and students (Noddings,2005). According to Noddings, a caring relation is one in which there are two parties involved, both of which contribute to the relation in their own ways, and in which care of the one caring is recognized by the cared for too. If the cared-for claims that s/he was, in fact, not cared for, it is not a caring relation. The absence or distortion of such a caring relation between teachers and students can, in turn, impact students' academic achievement (J. Lee,2012). It can also affect their emotional, ethical, and social development negatively (Noddings,2005).

According to NEP 2020, “education must develop not only cognitive capacities – both the ‘foundational capacities’ of literacy and numeracy and ‘higher-order’ cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem-solving – but also social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions”. NCFTE 2009 also emphasizes these dimensions for the “total development of human beings”. Since caring relations between teachers and students are needed to develop both the cognitive and social, ethical, and emotional capacities of students, it is worthwhile to look into the factors that might hinder such relations from being nurtured. One of the factors is the difference in the perceptions of teachers and students about who a caring

teacher is. Therefore, this study was conducted to look into these differences in the Indian context so that the aforementioned goals of NEP 2020 can be fulfilled.

This study, therefore, explores 3 key questions-

- What are the perceptions of students and teachers about a caring teacher?
- How are these perceptions of students and teachers different?
- How can the difference so found about the perception of a caring teacher between the students and teachers be used to facilitate the development of caring relations between teachers and students?

The next section of this paper states the methodology used. The third section discusses the significance of this study, the following section discusses the findings of the study, and the concluding section suggests ways to nurture caring relations between teachers and students.

Methodology

The study was conducted in two parts. In the first part of the study, nine students from different schools in Delhi were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule with questions around the theme of who is a caring teacher. Similarly, twelve teachers from different schools in Delhi were interviewed using a semi-structured interview schedule with questions around the same theme.

Out of the 9 students interviewed, 3 were in primary classes that are classes 1 to 5, 2 were in middle school (class 6-class 8), and 4 were in high school (class 9-class 12). Out of the 12 teachers interviewed, 5 are primary school teachers, 4 teach classes 6-8, and 3 teach classes 11 and 12. The idea was to keep the group as diverse as possible in terms of the level of schooling they were in (for students) or the grades that they taught (for teachers) to find out how the understanding of care changes across levels or grades for both teachers and students and where do the maximum gaps exist.

The idea behind conducting interviews rather than giving set questionnaires or using other research tools was that interviews allow more

responses to be accommodated and allow flexibility in the questions being asked. Questions asked had to be based on previous responses given by the person. Moreover, since students as young as 7 were also interviewed, questions had to be broken down to make it easier for them to comprehend and answer.

Significance Of The Study

The study would be particularly beneficial for teachers as it can help them identify what qualities and features students look for in a caring teacher. This can also help them recognize some of their unchecked behaviours and acts that may be seen as uncaring by the students or some behaviours and acts that they might perceive as caring, but the students don't. This would help them bond better with the students. This study is therefore significant in helping to establish healthy interpersonal as well as caring relations between teachers and students, which are in turn linked to better academic performance and social, emotional, and ethical development of students.

Findings And Discussion

Discussing Students' Responses

There is a commonality in the responses given by primary school students. They all seek security and protection from their teachers. For them, a caring teacher is one who pays attention to them in class, appreciates their work, and takes action whenever they are facing some issues which they cannot resolve themselves. A class 2 boy finds his teacher's act of not letting anyone bully him for being dark-skinned or not being fluent in English to be that of care. For another, a caring teacher gives them the freedom to be and also pays attention to how they are feeling.

Young Students can differentiate between a teacher who cares and one who doesn't base on how much teachers believe in students. The teacher who reasons out with the students is caring; the one who dismisses them and simply keeps scolding them is not. A student in class 5 said, "she (the teacher) is always angry and keeps yelling for no reason at all. She doesn't care for us". On being asked if a caring teacher

never yells at students, she further added, "no, a teacher can scold us and still be caring. But she should always tell us the reason why she is upset with us".

Since younger students are not mature enough to deal with a lot of situations like bullying on their own, they need teachers who pay attention to them and also are approachable enough so that they can share their issues with them freely. Teachers who scare or intimidate them cannot be said to be caring because they are not able to provide a healthy environment for students to express themselves, and this would hamper their emotional and social development, and many problems that they face in school might not get resolved, and they might not feel like going to school at all. Further, there might be students who have problems in their families for whom the support and care of teachers might be of all the more importance. There might be some students with psychological disorders like ADHD, or learning disabilities like dyslexia, dyscalculia, etc. For these to be diagnosed timely, a teacher must be very attentive toward the needs of the students in the class and must also maintain a safe environment where students don't feel restrained in expressing their concerns.

There is a very drastic difference between the perception of caring teachers for primary students and those in middle school. The older students are found to be mostly parameterizing care in terms of whether or not the teacher teaches well, lets them ask doubts, is impartial, and is ready to repeat the explanation of concepts that might not have been understood well by the students. Their idea of care and teaching seems quite limited to the classroom and academic activities on the face of it. It does not seem to have an emotional component involved. These students seemed to be a bit hesitant while answering the questions and guiltily answered yes to the question that their teachers care for them if they taught well. It seemed like they felt otherwise but could not say it out loud. A class 8 student said, "she (the teacher) keeps sitting on her chair and reads the lesson from the science textbook while we

remain silent. She teaches biology but makes absolutely no effort, as a result of which students have to take tuition. She is very strict and doesn't give me any chance to ask doubts either. She doesn't care about her students. All that concerns her is the completion of the syllabus". On being asked if all strict teachers don't care, he adds "our physics teacher is also very strict. Students are very scared of her, but she teaches well. She probably cares". Though this student says that the teacher probably cares, he doesn't sound very sure.

As students grow older, they start taking care of themselves too in some aspects, like maintaining healthy relations with others, protecting themselves, and having some level of emotional regulation. But, this is a time when their academic needs increase. The number of subjects increases and also diversifies. Students need their teachers to teach well. Their self-esteem also gets linked to performance, and they are also curious about various concepts. Therefore, at this level, a teacher's care is best shown through the pedagogy used. Moreover, since students have almost reached the Piagetian formal operational state or are at the end of the formal operational stage at the least, they already have some abstract concepts like justice, equality, and democracy defined for themselves. They also have the logical capability to figure out inconsistencies in teachers' behaviours too. Therefore, their ideas of caring teachers become more refined. They no longer look for protection or emotional support but rather egalitarian and inclusive classrooms where they also have a voice and freedom to express their opinions.

While middle school students still want their teachers to be impartial and inclusive and are ready to admit that some teachers may be caring in some aspects and not in others, high school students see care in absolute terms. They have firm ideas about what a caring teacher is and do not admit out of guilt that a teacher is caring or not. A class 12 student responds that "He(the maths teacher) teaches well. He can explain concepts but there is no scope for any kind of discussion or doubt-solving. His main focus is completing the syllabus. How can I say that he

cares for his students if his students don't matter to him?"

They logically argue their points as they have been in the Piagetian formal operational stage for at least 2 years now. For them, a caring teacher is one who teaches well and is also concerned about whether or not students are actually grasping the concepts. He/she should be open to answering students' doubts and must also be approachable. They also see care in terms of effort. The efforts made by the teacher to ensure that everybody has understood the concept and not just a few shows that they also link an Inclusive and equal classroom to a caring teacher. They are also able to identify when something is being done just for the sake of fulfilling the mandatory duties like completing the syllabus and refuse to call it to care if it is missing an element of effort and concern for students.

Primary school students have a more emotional connection with their teachers which seems to wane during middle school. As a result of this, their idea of a caring teacher is also very comprehensive. It is not limited to studies or academics. As these kids are not capable of emotional regulation themselves, they seek protection from unbecoming and unsettling situations. But, as the students grow up, they learn to manage other dimensions of their life with the help of friends and family and also develop their own inner strength and emotional regulation. This is very clear from the nature of the responses received that students do not expect intensive care from their teachers on this front. They expect care from them in matters related to studies and classroom conduct. They see freedom and approachability as important parts of the care of a teacher. They value the student-teacher bond and believe that for caring relationships to be established, the hierarchy between the two should be dismantled. The students link the idea of a caring teacher strongly to the values which are upheld in the classroom. They unknowingly showed their desire to study in egalitarian classrooms, not dictatorial ones. They slowly start seeing care in absolute terms and also start looking into the intentions of the

teachers and don't hang their hats on the outcomes alone.

Discussing Teachers' Responses

There is a common idea cutting across all responses given by teachers. This idea caters to the needs of the child. The teachers of primary classes understand how important it is to give special attention to every child and act accordingly. They also don't restrict their idea of care to academics and talk about it very comprehensively. One of them also mentions home-school continuity. She is the mother teacher of a section of class 3 in a government school, and that "school is the second home where students spend 6 hours of their day. As a teacher, I care for them by giving them a friendly environment as the child might miss their parents or their home too. They need someone who can also listen to them".

All primary teachers talk about the holistic development of students. They define care in terms of initiative and responsibility to ensure the holistic development of students and the creation of safe spaces for students so that they can voice their concerns. 3 out of the 4 primary school teachers interviewed linked care to guiding students towards the correct path and taking care of their emotional, social, and academic needs by observing, talking, interacting with them, and also by involving the parents when needed. Surprisingly, only 1 out of the 4 actually talks about forming an emotional bond with them.

Middle school teachers also share similar views about who a caring teacher is. They believe that a caring teacher is one who helps students move on the right path in life, guides them when they find themselves in sticky situations, and also works for their academic betterment. A TGT maths teacher says that "I care for students. I believe in them, affirm their efforts, and place my students at the centre of the educational process". She further adds that caring is essentially linked to the moral component of teaching. All 4 of the teachers interviewed mentioned "imparting knowledge" and "providing guidance" to be qualities of a caring teacher. When asked about how this could be

done, all of them gave almost similar responses revolving around teaching well and telling the students what is right and what is wrong.

The responses given by middle school teachers seem to reflect that teachers focus more on the assumed needs of the students and not the expressed needs. Noddings (2012) specifies this difference between needs. Assumed needs are the ones that the one caring believes to be the needs of the one being cared-for, while expressed needs are the ones the cared for has and expresses.

High school teachers have very different responses from primary and middle school ones. They are more flexible in their take on care and believe that their students really need mentors/friends, especially the ones who have entered the adolescent age. They do look at the details of the classroom as well. They were able to point out that students' feelings also can't be missed completely. Also all 3 of them also consider helping students out academically to be a crucial part of caring for them. A PGT teacher says, "I care for students by making them feel comfortable. At the adolescent age, it is important to make them feel like they have someone on their side as they deal with a lot of problems that they may not be able to share with their parents or peers. They are at a vulnerable age and need a mentor who can also be their friend, who is more experienced and can also be a confidante". All 3 of them state that it is not sufficient to simply focus on the syllabus as the emotional well-being of students also has a bearing on their concentration in class, and the student-teacher bond also affects how receptive the students are to what the teacher says and teaches. One of them also mentions that classroom dynamics also matter. He mentions that a caring teacher needs to focus on the classroom dynamics as well as the students need to be felt valued and heard too.

High school teachers are able to see the students as individuals in their own right who need not be dependent on them. They realize that students have their own opinions and ideas, and they need to be heard out too. They seem to be focusing on

both the assumed needs and the expressed needs of the students.

Gap in the Perceptions of Students and Teachers About A Caring Teacher

There seem to be differences in the perception of students and teachers about who a caring teacher is across all levels of schooling though the magnitude of this gap is different at different levels.

Though primary teachers and students both look at care comprehensively, students expect more emotional care with a sense of connection and personal touch, an idea that most, but not all, primary teachers seem to adopt. The responses given by teachers and students are almost similar and do not indicate much gap between their idea of who a caring teacher is. The difference can be seen in the behaviours that teachers and students consider to be caring behaviours. Though both of them agree that a caring teacher is attentive and considerate of their needs, students also mention that a caring teacher is appreciative and protective also. These ideas do not appear anywhere in the responses of teachers.

Even at the higher levels, the ideas of impartiality and openness that the students iterated in their responses do not seem to reflect in the responses of teachers. They don't seem to be aware of the idea that students look for a democratic classroom. All but one of the teachers talk of care in a very macro way. They talk of care being linked to the hefty concepts of "holistic development" and "guiding towards the correct path". But, they do not talk about the way they manage their classrooms or their interaction with individual students. They don't seem to link care to their behaviour and actions in the classroom. They believe that care lies in guiding the students by occupying a morally superior position- an idea that students seem to dislike a lot. Students want to be guided but not from a position of superiority. They want to be advised, not told what to do. All the students from middle school and high school declared that imposing teachers are not caring. Only one teacher was able to mention the idea that a teacher needs to be a mentor who is also a friend.

While teachers seem to view care as a macro thing, students, on the other hand, seem to perceive care as a micro thing. They do not want to see the teacher as an imposing authority. Rather they want their teachers to be with them, ready to listen to them and also acknowledge their views. Students believe that a caring teacher can uphold the values like democracy and promote dialogue, equality, and mutual respect in a classroom. This is one major difference between the ideas of students and teachers about care. None of the teachers except one mentioned the idea of being impartial toward students. Teachers believe that a caring teacher works for the betterment of the academic capabilities of students as well. But they do not mention anything about being patient with them when they ask about their doubts again and again. Students seem to take note of how freely they can raise their queries and doubts and link them directly to whether or not a teacher cares. Even when a teacher teaches well, s/he is not said to be caring unless s/he clears their doubts and does not criticize them for asking them in the first place. Teachers seem to have missed this point completely.

The teachers and students of high school seem to have a similarity in the idea of who a caring teacher is in one aspect. Both of them believe that a caring teacher considers a student to be a human in their own right, a human who needs to be heard and valued too. As adolescents start developing a certain sense of identity, they also start to respect themselves and want to be respected too. Teachers seem to understand this and treat them as such.

Conclusion

There is a shared understanding of a caring teacher amongst students of a particular age group. There are individual differences, but the broad idea is the same. According to students, a caring teacher is one who makes an effort to bring about their well-being, both academic and non-academic. Teachers who do not give space to students to speak at all are not considered caring by any student. In addition, teachers who refuse to repeat concepts even when they come to know that students have a doubt and are

simply aiming just to complete the syllabus are not considered caring.

There is a difference between the perception of students and teachers about who a caring teacher is. Students look for care in the details of how a class is being conducted and managed by a teacher. They look for features like democracy, equality, equity, etc. in a classroom and expect a teacher to try to incorporate these in their classes. Teachers, on the other hand, miss this point. They view care in education as being linked to the development of individuals. They are looking at a much higher goal and are missing out on the steps that need to be taken to achieve it. They have a perception of what the well-being of students is and are trying to achieve it, but at times are missing their real well-being. This gap between the perceived well-being and the real well-being of the students needs to be bridged in the mind of the teacher.

For this, communication needs to be established between the teacher and the students. This communication needs to be very open, and students must not feel scared or restrained in communicating their needs to the teacher. Teachers must be open to receiving feedback from their students and must try to obtain it from time to time so that a caring relationship can be established. Here, we are talking about dialogue between the teacher and the students.

Teachers need to understand that their idea of what's best for students need not be what is really best for them. They need to be humble enough to accept that they can't always make decisions that will ensure their student's well-being. They need to consider the long-term impacts of their actions as well. A student who is scolded a lot by a teacher who believes that it is a good way to make the student work might not realize that incessant scolding actually shatters the student's confidence, as a result of which he/she may perform even worse.

Teachers often believe that students are too unaware of what is good for them and immature too. As a result of this, they sometimes tend to get imposing. This makes the students feel not only not cared for but also like they have no agency whatsoever. This idea of being powerless

can lead to a lifetime of fear and a tendency not to take action to change one's life at all. When teachers encourage students to take a particular stream solely on the basis of marks, they push them toward identity foreclosure. Actions on the part of the teacher taken with a different understanding of care can scar students for life.

A caring teacher would be aware of what is happening in the classroom. Sometimes, some students bully others, a caring teacher would be careful of such or any other disturbing activities. A teacher also shows care when he/she is ready to step outside the syllabus and really engage with the students. This could be in the form of various activities like games or even simple discussions in the classroom. Listening to what the students have to say and trying to make them reflect on whatever their issues are would help develop critical thinking, a skill that is very important to live. This would also help in forming a bond with the students. This connection would make the teacher more approachable to the students, and the students would be more comfortable in expressing their needs. The teacher may not always be able to fulfil their needs, but she can definitely include them while planning her lessons.

In education, just the virtue of caring does not suffice. The teacher needs to establish a caring relationship with the students. Just claiming that they cared for the students is not enough if the students do not feel cared for at all. There are students who grudgingly and guiltily declare that a teacher who was strict with them and made them complete all their work on time cared about them, while in reality, they don't really feel cared for. A caring relationship between the teacher and student would also establish trust between them. The students would not doubt the intention of their teacher and would be willing to learn what she has to teach. The teacher, on the other hand, would have a better idea of what the students really need and feel. Teaching would be more effective if caring relations were to be established in the field of education.

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Take a Break

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Abstract

“Take a break” is a term that all of us have heard, but how many of us have thought about what it means or dared to go as far as to implement it in our lives. A Lot of questions pop to mind while reading this phrase, like how to take a break, for how long, or maybe why taking one in the first place is necessary. And to top it all off, why is something like this even relevant to be known by an educational institution and all the people associated with it? Because it seems like a pretty simple and straightforward five-lettered word, nothing that an “amateur” student or a group of intellectuals can't decode, yet its true understanding or essence is very much lacking from our educational system. This paper discusses what a break means not only in general use of the term in everyday life but also in terms of what taking a break means for students , teachers as well as what changes are required at an institutional level to actually implement it.

Keywords: *Break, Rest, Slowing -Down, Student Life, Reflection , Pause, Teacher - Student Break Time ,Change in School Curriculum*

So, for starters, what is a break? Well, it can mean quite a few different things. For some, it could be to work on oneself and have ME time, not worry about anything, or think about what you must do next. Others define it as activities they like to do if they want to take a break, like listening to music, drawing, or travelling. Sometimes there is no clear distinction between a break and a hobby because many people define taking a break in terms of their hobbies or the things they like to do. Even if someone loves what they do, like an artist, they also need a break from their work.

Often when people use this phrase, it is to denote that you need to step back momentarily from whatever you are doing and not necessarily detach yourself, as it means not feeling personally involved in something and reflecting on things which may be of past or present. This may lead to clearing your head from the task at hand, looking at things from a fresh perspective by having a relaxed state of mind or evaluating the progress of the work. Here the intent is that we must constantly strive towards an objective and assess and judge our progress. It almost seems like we look at the break as a form of escape. However, a break doesn't have a fixed time duration, ranging from a few minutes to hours or even days.

Another way break is looked at is in terms of taking a break from something. This something ranges right from our families and society to sometimes even ourselves. These may be rooted in the expectations that we carry for ourselves or what others expect of us, or simply in what they are. The things that we feel we are obligated to do sometimes, even when we don't want to.

Like when you are little, you go to preschool, then school begins at class 1, and before you know it, you are in 12th. Then comes the pressure to quickly fill out college forms, and at 18, you are supposed to have your life career figured out. Nowhere do you take a break to figure out what you really want. Even in the so-called breaks during the school year, you have to do holiday homework and projects, and the time before starting new classes, so many students start studying for the next standard. Even if someone takes a year off after 12th, it is only to study to clear the entrance test. Then, when you finally get into college, you study and clear the examinations and get the degree, after which you either start working or you study further to ultimately get a job. Where in all of this do you get a break to figure out what you really want to do?

Taking a break from yourself is probably the hardest, and from your own thoughts that constantly remind you of all the things that you have to do. Also, just being idle is looked down upon in our society. Or maybe just connected with the notion that the only things worth having are through hard work, it seems to propagate the idea that taking a break is terrible. So what is wrong with wanting or getting something with the so-called “easy way”?

Such a mindset gets instilled in us at a young age and is propagated from the fact that the very concept of break seems to be absent from school in totality, wherein the teachers need to understand that students need a break from the everyday homework, tests, activities, etc. which keep them occupied even after school-leaving very little time for themselves which is necessary for them to do things which they really want to do. Even the so-called “fun” activities that students are made to engage in might not be what they really want to do as even such activities have an agenda behind them, that is, to make the students good or reflective citizens. Even during break time, they are made to follow the rules and regulations.

A break is just as necessary for a teacher as it is for a student; however, in our classrooms, there is limited or next to nil space for emotions to be expressed other than “being happy”. This is very necessary for the teachers because they aren’t allowed to display “bad emotions” like being sad, angry, frustrated, etc., which isn’t really possible realistically, making teaching one of the hardest professions. If a teacher doesn’t get to take a break from time to time, it will eventually lead to a lack of motivation and burnout, which can even start affecting their personal life. This is also a very popular area of study in research in recent times, especially after COVID-19, wherein the personal and private lives of the teachers became intertwined, and they did not get a break for teaching even in those times. Moreover, when the students get holidays or breaks, it isn’t the same for the teachers who have to come before the students to prepare everything and stay overtime.

School takes up a major chunk of the initial years in a child's life, also referred to as the “building years” in one's life, so why shouldn't a child be “taught” the value of slowing down or slowing down, taking rest? Why should it be such that every moment spent in the schools needs to be constructive or building up on one thing or the other? It is just as necessary to take a break as it is to be productive.

This shows a systematic cultural problem in our schools as an institution. Instead, teachers and students should have a certain amount of time in the school timetable wherein they can take a break without any ‘educational’ aim to achieve or fulfil, as recess time isn't enough. This way, the students can also get more moments to cherish and express their emotions, which are ignored and undermined throughout school life. There is a need to acknowledge the same and change the structure to make space for the same.

Even when NCF 2005 it talks about inclusion of co curricular activities in the timetable it may seem like a break from the academics but in reality those also have certain objectives to be fulfilled where in they want a holistic development of the child because if they didn't, they wouldn't have been graded components in the curriculum. The idea of a break may not be art, sports or music for every child, although it might be for a few but for some it is just like a task which has to be done as enforced by the school and curriculum at large.

Which brings us to an important question, why is taking a break so important? Because it helps us to feel refreshed and recharged to deal with daily life, to work on ourselves and discover something new along the way about ourselves. Even to stop to think and reflect on things, decisions, choices, etc. Moreover, it is proven that taking a break can help increase productivity and prevent burnout due to the daily monotony of life. Plus, taking a break can help lead to better stress management. Although this isn't the final goal or achievement of taking a break. What is important is how a break helps you step away from the task.

There isn't any fixed guideline on how an individual can take a break. In our fast paced

world there are hundreds of articles which talk about how to increase the productivity but none talk how to slow down neither is there any theory which talks about the same which brings us to another question.

Then, how to take a break? Well, there is no prescribed set of things to do, as only some things will work out for everyone. For some people, it could be playing a musical instrument, reading a quantum physics book, or even just going to sleep for a few minutes. You don't have

to worry whether you are being productive while taking a break or doing what you must do. Taking a break gives you a sense of peace where you can just be. If this article made you stop and think when was the last time when you actually took a break or makes you want to take one then the purpose of this this article is fulfilled.

Music

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Abstract

Music is an everyday phenomenon, but it is a concept as old as the existence of living itself, and it is widely used and appreciated in all stages of life by people. The dictionary defines music as the art of arranging sounds in time to produce a continuous, unified, and evocative composition. Anyhow, there still exists no 'one size fits all' definition for a concept as vast as music. Music is perceived differently by different individuals (individual differences); to some, it is just another everyday phenomenon; to some, it is an escape; some find it inspirational; some believe it brings zest and zeal, whereas so many consider it nothing but a sound that pleases the heart. Because of this diverse nature, music also holds a place in our educational system or curriculum. Music is being taught in schools to learners to enhance and develop the taste of learners for music so that they can appreciate different forms of music in their surroundings. In this write-up, I tried to look at various dimensions of music, how it is used or could be used in the educational setting and why it is necessary to use music in educational institutions.

Keywords: *sounds, development, education, school, teaching, learning*

Music is part of our heritage, and it is widely used and appreciated in all stages of life by people. Although music is an abstract concept, it's beautiful how it makes sense to people, who enjoy the moment they are in. There's no age when music loses its essence, and music remains lively for people of all ages. A lullaby has the potential to cater to the attention of not just an infant but of an adult too. For instance, nowadays, most people use various social media platforms, such as YouTube, Facebook, Instagram etc., for entertainment purposes. Thus, it is being observed that usually, parents of children use these social media platforms to engage their children. YouTube is widely used for grabbing attention and engaging young children through songs, videos, rhythms, poems etc., which the children eventually appreciate because of its liveliness. Thus, music is appreciated in all stages of life by people, and people use it to teach their children the alphabet, rhymes, poems etc.

Music finds a place in our educational curriculum, and it is being taught to children in our educational institutions, but one of the questions which arise is whether we are utilising music in our educational institutions properly or not. In our country, we still believe and preach that good marks hold supremacy, the only

criteria which define the development and achievement of children. That's why teachers didn't focus on teaching music to learners, as teaching music didn't align with the idea of performance.

Mostly, music classes in schools are found as a part of extracurricular activities in which focus is not given to teaching and using music in daily life to articulate and express emotions because mostly teaching music is considered a useless activity by teachers. Generally, music classes are converted into or taken by other subject teachers to complete their syllabus to engage learners in academic subjects. Thus, the necessary scope is not given to children to flourish, build, use and learn music in our institutions. But as teachers, we need to counter this issue in our class to make our class more productive for learners.

In addition to the above-stated problem, it is also observed that music is not appropriately valued and appreciated by people. For most people, music is just a hobby, and one should not pursue a career in it because, in the modern era, people aspire to choose that profession which helps them to achieve upward mobility to fulfil their needs and demands. Hence, people are more focused and give more importance to academics because if they are good in academics, then they will get a well-off job which will eventually

fulfil their needs and demands. That's why mostly music holds its place as a hobby for people. For instance, in most families, parents want to spend their money on teaching main subjects to foster good academics in their wards, and they barely want to spend their money on teaching and learning music as teaching and learning music is not lined up with the idea of the utility of their economic resources (money).

Music is perceived differently by different individuals (individual differences); to some, it is just another everyday phenomenon; to some, it is an escape; some find it inspirational; some believe it brings zest and zeal, whereas so many consider it nothing but a sound that pleases the heart. Overall, music syncs with every mood and helps people to articulate and express their emotions and feelings. For instance, to most people, music is pleasant, soothing, and cheerful because music syncs with their mood have the potential to make them feel or remember moments of the past, bringing out peace; it is like a medicine for emotions as it helps to articulate and channelise different feelings and emotions.

There are also various sounds which are present in our surroundings. We all occasionally do hear and enjoy these various sounds which we encounter in our everyday routine. One of the common phrases which people use when they hear any soothing sound is "this is music to my ears". The calmness or smoothness that the sounds in the form of music bring to one's soul is somewhere peaceful for them. For instance, people listen to ritual songs as they have calmness in them, which the listeners appreciate.

Hence, because of the above-stated diverse nature of music, it will become important for us to incorporate, use and utilise it in our educational field so that children can enjoy and appreciate it, including natural music produced by nature. This will help learners to appreciate their environment, as they will become more sensitive towards the environment in which they live. Learners can use music to articulate and express their emotions, which is important for their social and emotional development as well. Teachers could also utilise music in their

classrooms to make the teaching-learning process less stressful, as music has the potential to bring out peace and calmness. One of the aims of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to make learning less stressful for learners, which could be achieved using music.

Education is meant to be a component of society, and for there to be a mutually beneficial connection between educational institutions and society is necessary. The same was advocated by the psychologist Lev Vygotsky in his theory of sociocultural, cognitive development, where he stated that human development is a socially mediated process as children learn from society. Various policies and documents also highlight the point, i.e., our pedagogy should be child or learner-centric, and the content should be connected to the learners' home environment or culture (given in National Curriculum Framework 2005). One of the goals of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is to bridge the gap between society and education. These above-mentioned objectives, goals, or aims given in different policies or documents could be achieved using music in the classes, like by incorporating or using Indian folk music.

As teachers, it becomes important for us to bridge the gap between society and education, and it can be achieved by using music in the classes. Music is part of our culture, and teachers can use it in their classes to bridge the gap between society and education. For instance, Indian folk music, which could be described as something which people perform at local celebrations to bring the people of the community together, could be used by teachers in their classes to bridge the gap between society and education. Almost every region has their own folk music, which is commonly performed by the local people of the community. For instance, Haryana has Ragini, Gujarat has Sugam Sangeet, Assam has Bihu geet etc. Another example of folk music, which can be observed easily, is the music performed or sung by the women of particular communities during weddings.

The use of Indian folk music in classes would also help teachers to teach various cultures and

traditions of different communities to learners. Teachers could organise some programmes or events where they can invite local artists or community members to the school to teach music to learners and to interact with them, to enhance community participation in the schools and to bridge the gap between school and education. The same is stated by Lev Vygotsky in his theory of sociocultural development, as he firmly believes that community plays a crucial part in making meaning, and that's why community participation and collaboration with the community is necessary. Hence, it could be said that by using music in educational institutions, teachers can attain the goal of holistic development of learners by connecting learners' home environment with the school and collaborative learning by increasing community participation.

Music fosters language development to some extent. For instance, when people listen to the music of different languages and dialects, they try to imitate the sounds, words, and lyrics of that particular music which eventually fosters language development as they learn different words and sentences through music. In addition to language development, using music in the class helped enhance or develop communication skills. For instance, findings of one of the research journals named "*Analysis of the Communication Levels of the Students Studying in Music Education and Preschool Education in Terms of Music and Different Variables*" suggested that using music has positively impacted communication development among learners as it has helped learners to enhance their communication levels. Thus, it could be said that it has become important for us to use music in the classroom to foster children's language and communication skills, as suggested by the findings of the research journal.

As mentioned above, music is part of our heritage and a concept as old as the existence of life itself. Thus, ignoring music or not utilising it properly in educational institutions impacts the development of learners. Many teachers are using music in their classrooms as audio-visuals to engage and teach learners of their classroom,

but many teachers are not using it in their classrooms. So all teachers need to use music in their classrooms as music has a lot of scope, potential, and qualities which educational institutions could adopt to create a more inclusive environment for learners as they will have more options for their expressions or to articulate their ideas. In addition to this, music would help teachers to create a stress-free environment for learners, which is essential for their development and learning.

Post-COVID-19, a noticeable increase in aggression and stress levels among children is observed. One of the causes is the increased involvement of technology in children's lives. In recent years, technology or gadgets have swept into learners' lives, shortening their concentration span and contributing to stress. These levels can be balanced, and the issues could be addressed with the help of music. For instance, music could be paired with yoga and art and craft classes to alleviate stress. Researchers have shown that listening to music causes the production of hormones that promote a healthy and stress-free lifestyle. Findings of one of the research studies named "*The Effect of Music on the Human Stress Response*" also suggest that listening to music has a positive influence on health by reducing stress. Thus, to promote a healthy lifestyle among learners, teachers should use music in their classes.

One of the goals of NEP 2020 is the holistic development of learners. Holistic development comprises all kinds of development, such as cognitive, emotional, physical, social, etc. The most neglected area of development in schools is the emotional development of learners. Teachers could use music in their classes to work on the emotional development of learners as music has the potential to help people to cope with overwhelming feelings; here music can be used as a processing tool. For instance, people frequently listen to songs they can identify with because it relieves their stress and puts them in a good mood and in the mood to learn. Therefore, music could be used as a tool to enhance the emotional development of learners, which

eventually leads to a healthy mind and a healthy life for learners.

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