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● Health Services ● Life Skills Education ● Healthy School Environment



The National Life Skills, Values Education & School Wellness Program

Healthy Schools Healthy India

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

- John Dewey

Submission Guidelines

- All submissions should follow the APA 7th Edition style
 - All submissions should have an abstract summarizing the main points.
 - The submission should have a clear and informative title
 - The submission should be original and should not be in the process of consideration by any other publication at the same time.
 - The submission should have rigorous and reliable information and provide a deeper level of understanding.
 - Submissions should be engaging and accessible to non-expert readers as well.
 - Submission emails must contain an inline declaration stating that the research work is the author's original work and has not been submitted elsewhere for publication.
 - Initial acceptance of any submission does not guarantee publication. The editorial board shall do the final selection.
 - If necessary, the editors may edit the manuscript in order to maintain uniformity of presentation and to enhance readability.
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 4. Review Articles: These are systemic and critical assessments of the literature which will be invited. Review articles should include an abstract of not more than 250 words describing the purpose of the review, collection and analysis of data, with the main conclusions. The word limit is 5000 words excluding references and abstract.
 5. Grand Rounds in child psychiatry or psychopathology (Case Conference): This should highlight one or more of the following: diagnostic processes and discussion, therapeutic difficulties, learning process or content/technique of training. This may be authored by an individual or a team, and may be an actual case conference from an academic department or a simulated one. The word limit is 1500 words.
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7. Commentaries: These papers should address important topics, which may be either multiple or linked to a specific article. The word limit is 3000 words with 1 table/figure.
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10. **Book/ Movie reviews:** Reviews of books or movies relevant to school mental health and wellbeing may also be submitted. The word limit is 1000 words.
11. **Announcements:** Information regarding conferences, meetings, courses, awards and other items likely to be of interest to readers should be submitted with the name and address of the person from whom additional information can be obtained (up to 100 words).

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

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

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Message from the Editors

The role of education is to provide students with the experience needed to become independent and socially responsible. Schools being the formal institutions dedicated for education are expected to work towards these goals. However, regular programmes in these institutions are often unable to meet the demands of holistic development. This not only hampers learning, but often turns out to be the root cause of various challenges and issues faced by the society later.

Consequently, a need is often felt for school level interventions to deal with the plethora of issues faced by growing children, for example bullying, drug use, mental health, familial pressures, etc. Such intervention programs are envisioned to enable students to address problems faced in domains of functional, academic, cognitive, behavioral, and social skills.

The current issue of Indian Journal of School Health and Well Being attempts to explore how interventions at school level can help resolve a diverse set of issues. Some articles included in the volume deal with deconstructing notions of discipline and addressing the students' need for self expression. Others involve examining interventions in areas of sex education and career advancement. Themes of learning disorders and disability have also been explored through development of rehabilitation programmes. A set of Mental health programmes as well, is presented for teachers. This might help teachers to deal with issues that are experienced by school going students, especially adolescents, and are crucial to an all round development of learners

The hope of bringing these papers together is that it can serve as an inspiration for adoption of better practices with reference to Mental Health of students, by schools across the country. This will not only contribute to better learning, but will also act as a step further towards holistic development of learners.

Dr. Sunil Kumar Verma & Ms. Akansha Marwah

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 adopted by all schools including Higher Education System.

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

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

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

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Challenging Stereotypical Notions of Discipline in Elementary Schools: Building a Positive Classroom Environment

Manisha Wadhwa nee Dabas* & Divya Moudgil**

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Abstract

Indiscipline is the main source of anxiety among teachers, especially pre-service teachers. Indiscipline is caused by children in the class who are either misbehaving, or being unresponsive or showing lack of initiative. In classrooms there are a number of such incidents of disruption. For handling these issues teachers try different strategies. In this research, school teachers from schools were observed and their strategies to handle indiscipline were analyzed. This analysis helped in discovering teachers' notions of discipline which are labeled as 'Silence – Pin drop Silence'; 'Order – Order, Order'; 'Don't Ask Anything' and 'No movement'. However, these strategies though created silence in class but did not seem to make a difference in the learning environment of the class. Thus, a few alternate strategies of classroom management for building a positive environment in class were explored and tried. These strategies helped in solving the problem of indiscipline in classrooms. It was also found that managing children who are not inclined to engage in work is a challenging task. The skill of classroom management is very important for a teacher to manage her class and for the children for their effective learning.

Keywords: *Classroom Management, Discipline, Positive Environment of the Class, Elementary School*

Introduction

'Be in discipline' is the phrase which comes to my mind, whenever I think of my school experience. Considering that I did my schooling about three decades ago, is it still prevalent? Teaching methodologies have changed over a period of time, but what about notions of discipline? According to Cambridge English dictionary, discipline means "training that makes people more willing to obey or more able to control themselves often in form of rules and punishment if these are broken, or behavior produced by this training" (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/discipline>)

The word discipline which comes from the word "Disciple" meaning a 'learner' holds much importance in one's life. There is a need of discipline in our life, our society, in schools, in the playground and everywhere. The absence of discipline brings chaos and problems in life. Classroom discipline is a complex issue and a key concern for teachers, principals, children and

parents. Classroom disruption or indiscipline is a major challenge faced by teachers. It is often indicated as one of the main causes of wasting time in classrooms. A great deal of the energy of teachers is directed toward classroom disruption while trying to deliver a lesson, thus it becomes the foremost reason for teachers' emotional exhaustion. Classroom discipline clearly cannot be reduced to a technical and/or scientific problem. A teacher needs to face it, handle it and rectify it with wisdom. Basically, classroom discipline refers to a set of teacher actions that constitute organizational and management processes aimed at establishing classroom order. There are challenging situations in classrooms especially related to classroom management.

Misbehaviour of children like violence, or theft are generally rare; in case it happens then also mostly in lunch times/ break and in corridors but not in classrooms. These are generally caused by few unruly children. On the contrary, in classrooms commonly observed misbehaviour are "inattentiveness, talking, calling out names or mild form of physical or verbal aggression".

Though minor, but these behaviours definitely disrupt the classroom interaction and distract every child's attention. How to manage such behaviours is the key question in this paper. Before addressing that let's explain the term 'classroom management'. It refers to "the techniques (actions and strategies) used by teachers in order to make children focused and attentive in any classroom transaction". Does the teacher need to be dominating or free with children? What needs to be done in such unruly classes? These are challenging questions especially for pre-service teachers and beginners. The paper is an attempt to answer them.

Objectives of the research

The following are the objectives of the research:

- To understand the notion of 'discipline' of teachers in a primary and a middle school.
- To build a positive environment in the class by using a variety of classroom management strategies.

Context of the study

The research was conducted in two schools – a co-educational primary school of the North Delhi Municipal Corporation and a Government Girls Middle School of the Directorate of Education. Both schools are located in Rohini, the North West of Delhi. In these schools' pre-service elementary teachers were placed for a duration of sixteen weeks for their school internship (practicum of practice teaching of BEIED (Bachelor of Elementary Education) an undergraduate professional course in teacher education).

Methodology

To find answers to these objectives two schools were chosen as a research sample. Children and teachers' behaviour in both the schools at different places – within classroom, in playground, in library, in corridors, during break time and assembly were observed. Informal conversations were held with teachers teaching in those schools. These observations and conversations helped explore the stereotypical notions of teachers about discipline.

The second phase of the research was action research and involved a pre-service teacher teaching for 16 weeks while trying different techniques for classroom management. The findings and conclusions shared in this paper are

based on the data collected from two schools only within a limited time span.

Observation of a primary school

Most of the children in primary school come from a nearby slum. Their parents work as laborers at construction sites, in factories, shops; as fruit or vegetable or other vendors or as servants in houses or shops. Most of them work in unorganized sectors. Their houses did not have even basic facilities of toilets and water. Water tankers from Delhi Jal Board come twice/thrice a week and they use portable toilets located in the slum. Children came from disadvantaged families (socially and economically) where there was not enough support from parents to study.

Children in the primary school were always expected to be quiet and working silently. Most of the time teachers were talking and children were listening. There were hardly any activities where children were discussing among themselves. There was not any constructive talk observed among children. During recess time, mid-day meal was distributed and teachers remained in their respective classrooms. After having their meal, children went out to drink water, or to washrooms, or walked in corridors or went to other classes. However, they were not allowed to go into the school playground. The school has a large playground which is neither utilized nor maintained. The headmistress told that school didn't have funds to employ any person on a daily basis for maintaining the garden/ ground. She informed that the school hires a daily wage to cut grass on a fortnightly basis. Even in the school library, children were not allowed to pick up books of their choice. The school librarian decides upon a storybook then a child or two from that class read it aloud during the allocated time. On being asked why are the children not allowed to explore and read books as per their choice, the teacher responded that they don't know how to take care of books; they would tear pages and mis-manage the entire library. Instead of setting protocols to be followed in the library, children were denied access to books! At the dispersal time, children moved in a class wise queue and slowly went down the stairs. Classes were held regularly. However, there was no variation in the pedagogy of the teacher. It was 'talk and chalk' method.

Observation of a middle school

The middle school, located in Rohini, the North – west of Delhi was a only girls’ school. After school assembly there was silence in school. Every girl was inside their classroom and working quietly. At any point during school hours there were hardly any girls seen outside their classes. The instances which were observed in corridors were of teachers scolding girls. Harsh words were used like - these girls can never improve (*‘ye ladkiya kabhi sudhar nahi sakti’*); Have your parents taught you something or not? (*Tumhare maa baap ne tumhe kuch sikhaya hai bhi ya nahi’*); Girls were negatively reinforced. For instance, they were not allowed to go to the playground in their free time and break time. There were few instances of where teachers and class monitors were seen slapping girls. Girls were only allowed to play during their games/ sports period in the presence of a physical education teacher. During recess too after finishing their mid-day meal, girls were seen only roaming in the playground.

Girls were always expected to be on their seat and working silently and on time. If they were found talking, it was labeled that they were ill-mannered and not taking interest in the classes. Girls were afraid of their teachers and the principal. They hardly argued with the teachers. They did what was expected from them. Such kind of atmosphere in school develops a feeling of fear, dislike and even hatred in extreme cases towards teachers and the school system. Girls in this middle school were in their adolescence years and for them self-respect and self-image are of importance. Use of negative remarks about their family and parents are often like emotional torture for them. Verbal abuse is equally damaging as that of physical punishment. It was also observed that a lot of time was spent on how to do a particular work (instructions of doing in a notebook) or what behaviour is expected from them.

Stereotypical notions of discipline

During the observations in schools, a few practices were regularly observed. For the sake of convenience of recording and analyzing data, similar observations are grouped in a single category and are labelled. These categories are called notions, as these are ‘conceptions or beliefs’ of teachers about discipline. Thus, the following are their stereotypical notions about discipline: -

Notion 1: Pin drop Silence

All the students will remain in discipline. No one will speak loudly in the class, everyone will do neat and good work, no one will make a noise in the class. (Translated from Hindi - *‘sab bache discipline main rahenge, koi bhi chilana mat, ache se kam karna, shor mat machana,’*)

On a particular day, a visit from a school inspector was expected. The teacher instructed her class and reinforced the criteria of a ‘good class’. Teachers find indiscipline as one of the major problems in teaching. ‘Having control of the class’ is seen as one of the indicators of good teachers by school authorities and principals. On the contrary, children don’t see the school setting as an interesting place to learn. They come to school more as a compulsion or to socialize with peers. Hagenauer et al (2015) in their quantitative study on 132 secondary school teachers found that the “lack of discipline in class is the best predictor of teacher’s anger experiences” Do we want children to be quiet or want to make them attentive? For making the environment of class meaningful for children in which learning can take place, it is essential to make them attentive, not quiet! But, teachers in the present study found it difficult to encourage children to participate in the classroom and even in other school activities.

Notion 2: Order

If anyone would like to ask questions from you, then raise your hands. You all have to prove to them that you are good children. (Translated from Hindi - *‘sab hath uthake jawab denge agar wo kuch puchenge to, ache bache banke dikhana hai unhe’*)

For the teacher a ‘good child’ is the one who follows all the rules of the class. Ironically, the practices of raising hands and waiting for their turn to speak/ ask questions were hardly followed. Teachers are bothered about unruly class and disruptive classroom behavior, but rules of classroom management were not made. Sometimes, rules like raise your hands, if you wish to answer were iterated but not practiced. It is also important to understand that ‘order’ in any examination hall meant absolute silence, passivity and following strict rules but in the case of classrooms order is different. All learners in classrooms should be allowed to participate in activities. Different classroom activities would require different activities like in a silent reading

task or written work, each child is expected to work individually and teacher supports learners wherever required; in a group activities, children will interact with each other and try to find answers for the questions posed; in a whole class discussion children will listen to others and speak when it is their turn; in lunch time (break time) children will freely move around and speak to each other. Thus, each context has different demands for order from children and teachers, it is not uniform!

Order does not necessarily mean passivity or absolute silence. It simply means that within the acceptable limits' children are following the behaviour expected for that particular classroom event.

Notion 3: Teachers Speak and Tell: They don't Ask!

Do not ask them (children) questions because if you will start asking them they will make noise in the class and then how will you control them (Translated from Hindi: '*Inko mat pucha karo ye shor macha denge fir tum kaise control karoge*'))

Whatever you want to teach them, just tell and write on the board and they will copy it from the board; only then they will remain quiet. (Translated from Hindi '*Inko jo bhi krwana hai samjha diya karo aur fir inki copy main likwa diya karo tabhi chup rahenge ye*'))

Teacher advised many times to the pre-service teacher for keeping children of the class 'disciplined'. During activities, children were excited about teaching learning material. Children were given space to interact in groups. However, the teacher ignored the difference between constructive talk and noise. Moreover, expecting children to be busy while copying from the board for the entire day is not appropriate. This kind of seat work may create children's lack of interest in school, thus leading to chatting, sleeping, walking around in the class or any other disruptive activity. The teacher would find it difficult to engage children in the classroom. For planning and organizing an activity and then to make it successful, it is important that children must be willing to participate. In case a few children were not interested in class activities but not being disruptive then they can be ignored. Thus, the need is to move away from 'Speak and don't Ask' and the purpose should be to keep children

engaged in a stimulating curriculum thereby leading to joyful learning.

Notion 4: Classroom: A Place for No Movement

Make children sit as they were before otherwise; they will start roaming around in the classroom. (Translated from Hindi - '*Inko jaise ye baithte hai waise hi bithao nahi to ye class main nachne lag jaenge*'))

The teacher stayed in the class for the whole day in the primary school and in the middle school a teacher is with the same group of children for about 50 minutes. The class size in both the schools varied between 40 to 50, depending upon the number of present children on a particular day. This large group of children is heterogeneous with different academic levels and different interest levels. All times, children were seated in rows on their seats. In such heterogeneous group it is not possible to manage students on the same kind of task every day. Thus, the routine task made school boring for them. They seem to attend school to pass their time or socialize. By not allowing children to speak or to move, the situation was worsened as children started to show disruptive behavior. There was no place for theatre or story-telling or any other activities for accommodating various learning styles, which would make classroom an interesting place for children.

Notion 5: Teaching Feeling of Inferiority

Observe these girls in the class. They are so good; they are always silent in the class. Learn from them how to be in discipline. (Translated from Hindi - '*Ladkiya dekho kitni samjhdar hai hamesha chup baithi rehti hai inse sikhlo discipline main kaise rehte hai*'))

In certain contexts, the teacher positively reinforced certain behaviour such as 'being silent'. The language of the teacher also conveyed a meaning to students about what type of behaviour is accepted in the class. When this strategy failed after sometime the teacher started using negative reinforcement by saying:

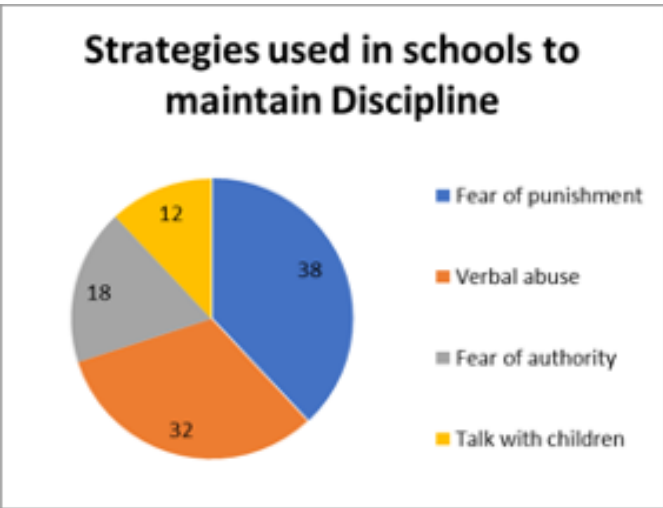
"Whoever (boys) will be talking, I will change his seat and make him sit with a girl."

(Translated from Hindi - '*Jis ladke ne bat ki uski seat badal dungii aur use ladkiyo se sath bitha dungii*'))

There were times when after repeated reminders few children (boys) continued moving in and outside the class. Then during such times, the teacher remarked:

Boys are ill-mannered. Without getting a slap, they will never be silent.

(Translated from Hindi - ‘*Ladke to hai hi batamez, bina thappad ke chup hona nahi ata tumhe*’)



The chart shows the graphical representations of the strategies used by school teachers. It was found that the most frequently used strategy was fear of punishment (38%) followed by verbal abuse (32%) and then fear of principal or senior teacher or parents (18%). And only in 12% of cases conversations were held with children regarding reasons for indiscipline or misbehaviour.

The teachers were aware of the fact that corporal punishment is not allowed. Still, when they were not able to manage the class, especially when they felt that situation was out of control, children were threatened for punishment. On the other hand, children commonly observed (and even part of) verbal and physical abuse in their homes or colonies. Thus, when any teacher threatened them of corporal punishment, they were not afraid of that too. Charles (2014) has defined three types of discipline in classrooms. One, ‘preventive discipline’, where a teacher sets expectations, guidelines and rules for averting any kind of misbehavior by students. Second is ‘supportive discipline’ wherein a teacher observes “any student on the ‘cusp of misbehaving’ and she nips it in the bud, thus avoiding any escalation”. Third is ‘corrective discipline’, which refers to actions focused to correct any behavior that might cause disruption.

However, discipline is not punishment in any situation.

Understanding teachers perspective of discipline

The meaning of discipline was limited to being silent and behaving properly in front of others in the primary school. However, the need for a disciplined life was neither discussed nor practiced. Slaps and sticks were hardly used but its fear was always maintained. The entire teaching learning process was recall or rote memorization based. Textbook chapters were read and then responses of textbook questions were written on Chalkboard. Children quietly copied the responses. The entire day went like this with no change in learning style or teaching methodology. This can be attributed to different reasons:-

Firstly, there is scarcity of resources in terms of physical as well as technological resources. Materials like charts, models, flash cards were not available. A few schools have libraries but books are not freely accessible to children. They were maintained well in stock for the audits. In few schools’ computers and smart boards were installed but those were hardly used by teachers. One, there were not sufficient materials (software) were available on the systems and secondly, teachers were not trained well in handling technological resources.

Secondly, there are 40 to 50 children in a class. It is difficult to organize different activities with such a large group. Moreover, teachers also seem to take the path of least difficulty. They are neither trained nor appreciated for organizing varieties of activities. The school principals and higher authorities like school inspectors always appreciated silent classrooms.

Another factor is that school teachers have additional responsibilities like maintaining records of scholarships, distribution of mid-day meal, organizations of assembly or any other event/ celebrations by planning and conducting activities namely essay writing, poster making, science fair and many others. Teachers felt that there is too much additional work than teaching. The success in additional activities contribute more to the definition of good teacher than success in classroom teaching -learning experience.

Yet another factor is that children are promoted to the next class, because of no detention policy

thus focus on teaching and learning is further lost under the burden of additional work. Another significant factor is the admission of children to their age appropriate classes, as per the RTE guidelines. Due to which there are some children in classes who did not have prerequisite knowledge for that class. Such children were not able to make sense of what is happening in classes. They tend to lose interest in class interaction, thus creating disturbances in class management.

Furthermore, the socio-economic background of children was very different from that of teachers. It was observed a number of times in schools teachers would remark about children and their families like *'ye kabhi sudhar nahi sakti'* ; *Tumhare maa baap ne tumhe kuch sikhaya hai bhi ya nahi'*. This socio-economic divide was a huge barrier to the teaching -learning process. Teachers seem to assume that these children don't require education; they will ultimately be working as maids, peons or servants like their parents. Secondly, children hardly had any familial support for their education. They had nobody to help/ assist them in their education other than teachers. Children coming from the socio-economic disadvantaged group had their own set of challenges in personal lives which were hardly understood in the school.

Lastly, another factor that contributed to the ill managed classrooms was teachers' job satisfaction. There was no tool used for finding their job satisfaction but a large number of teachers spoke about their promotions which were long due or their eligibility to teach higher classes or qualifying tests for higher grade teachers (Trained Graduate Teachers (TGTs) or Post Graduate Teachers (PGTs)). Such kind of dis-satisfaction led to an atmosphere of non-learning in classrooms.

Building a positive environment in the classroom: Action research

In the primary classroom, I observed that children have different preferences, interests and learning styles. Before teaching them, it is important to manage the entire class. To quote Sanchez (2011), "classroom management can't be mastered by reading about it". Therefore, I should not only be prepared for the content (academic work) but also be equipped with strategies of classroom management. In the

following section, I mentioned activities and strategies which worked for my classroom.

We used an instrument named 'Voice-o-Meter' for managing the noise level in the classroom. This instrument also indicates children the level of noise which is acceptable in a particular situation. Its picture was displayed in the class. It has following six levels:

Level 0: Complete Silence - nobody in class can hear you.

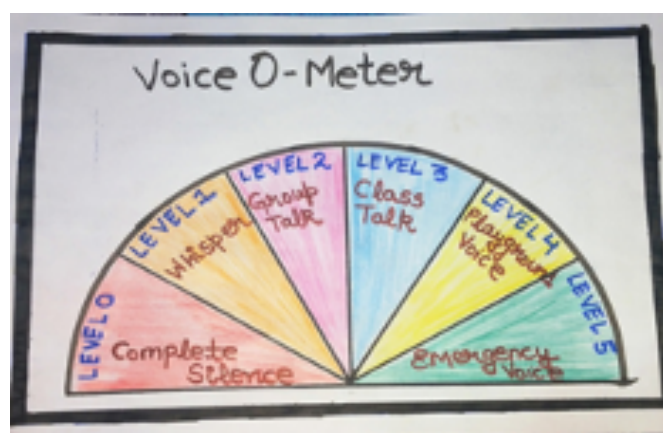
Level 1: Whisper - only the child next to you should hear your sound;

Level 2 Group Talk – During group work, children talk softly to each other and without disturbing other groups;

Level 3: Class talk - In class discussion children are presenting their point of views/ opinions audible to everyone in class; Level 4: Play-ground voice - children are talking freely as in lunch break;

Level 5: Emergency voice - a voice used to alert the teacher that you are in need.

These levels of Voice-o-Meter are adapted from



various other such charts available in the market.



Then some other symbols were also used like hand raise, if any child would like to answer;

raising a finger if any child would want to ask a question and making a 'T' using both hands if any child would like to share something or say something related to the concept being taught in class. These kinds of signs significantly reduced the noise levels in class.

Children also decided the rules they would like to follow all year along the teacher. These are kind of ground rules, that is, compulsory to follow. Only after detailed deliberations, rules and consequences (if rules were not followed) were finalized. It was observed that children do not take rules seriously when they realize that no actions are taken for breaking the rules. As per Osher et al (2010), "classroom rules need to be concrete, explicit and functional". Thus, in this light the following rules were finalized:

We will not speak in chorus

We will speak one by one

We will use symbols if we would like to answer or ask question or say something

We will wait for our turn to answer

We will listen to others; We will not litter in the classroom

We will put pencil shavings and paper in the dustbin

If someone does not follow rules then she/ he will not be allowed to participate in the next activity.

In a classroom a lot of things happen simultaneously, for instance, during a writing task I was helping an individual child, and at the same time observing or monitoring the rest of the class; I also acknowledged other children's request for support; handled noise or misbehaviour and was keeping track of the time. Thus, a teacher is a multi-task master.

Any classroom is a place with rapid events which at times require quick actions. For instance, when I observe a child getting bored, I immediately involve her/ him in the class discussion or ask a question. Indiscipline or disruption often results from children who are getting bored and then they attempt to liven up a dull moment by distracting others by some kind of misbehaviour.

It was challenging to make the classroom a learning place especially when children were not interested. At such times I narrated stories using props like hand puppets or stick puppets or

engaged children in craft activities. This kind of transition from one task to another to getting the attention of children did wonders in my classroom. At the same time, I changed the seating arrangements of children as per the nature of activity. For instance, children were seated in a circle for a story telling; in a semi-circle to observe a demonstration performed by teacher; in groups for experimentation or discussion; on their respective seats for individual writing task or a silent reading task. This kind of variation in seating arrangement also helped children to move around during transition and reduced the restlessness among children.



There is plenty of communication with individual children the entire day. After the initial few days, I realized that some are children in the class are hyperactive and showed minor disruptive behaviour like chatting or moving after completing their task. Thus, for such children, I created a story corner. They were asked to pick up a book and read it when other children are doing their work. Moreover, positive and negative reinforcements were given to children by displaying stars or smileys and frownies respectively on a chart in the classroom. Different types of monitors like row monitors, stationery monitors, worksheet monitors were made, which were changed on a weekly basis. It was always in our mind to keep the children engaged. Even in free times, children were actively engaged using theatre techniques.

In small group tasks it is not fair to expect perfect classroom management. Children will talk, share and discuss their ideas. For instance, in a sharing task on the 'Visit to a Mandi', after initial discussion, there was too much excitement and every one was eager to present their experiences. Then I realized that I need to



change the pedagogy. Thus, I asked each group to take 10 minutes to organize their experiences under broad headings and then present their reports/ findings to the entire class. Thus, children were again engaged in the class.

In another small group investigation on 'what floats and what sinks', all children were busy in



their experimentation and simultaneously recording their observations in a notebook. But, one particular group was working meticulously. The group was positively reinforced as they set examples for others to behave in a particular manner.

Children were clear that if they break the rules action will be taken. A chart about rules of consequence (if someone does not follow rules) was displayed in the classroom. According to the behaviorist theorists like Skinner, when the rewards and reinforcements are used in an effective way, "different types of attitudes can be induced in learners without punishment". Actually, there is no need for punishment.

Thus, children will not be allowed to participate in the next activity, in case they repetitively break any rule of the classroom management. Classes were held every day. Children accumulated experiences, understood routines and norms and realized that rules are strictly

followed without exception. Thus, it provided a strong foundation of conducting activities throughout the internship period of four months. Moreover, all children are observing the teacher's behaviour. Each child sees how others are treated. Thus, a teacher needs to be cautious of her biases avoiding any discrimination or favouritism.

Indiscipline is difficult to be absolutely solved. It



is important to identify, manage and overcome classroom challenges with interpersonal skills. I learnt to be more patient with children. It is also important to give free time and play time to children. I observed that children complain a lot about other children and in between classes too. We decided and made a complaint box, in which children put their written complaints without disturbing class. Those complaints were read every day before dispersal and then resolved. After following this practice regularly, the number of complaints reduced considerably over a period of time.

It is difficult to predict how an activity will go on a particular day and with a particular group of children. For instance, in a group discussion on 'Healthy Food vs Junk Food', children were excited to share their views; they were not listening to others; they were not waiting for their turn; Finally, I stopped the activity and asked all of them to write their views on the topic. At the same time, to negatively reinforce their behaviour, I cancelled their scheduled story time. A classroom is full of life with opportunities to explore and try new things every day. Indiscipline negatively impacts the learning environment.

Besides this, the nature of the task is also of extreme importance. If children find the work to be too difficult then only a few will be able to participate in carrying out the activity and others will disturb the class. Therefore, the nature of the

task should be appropriate to the age and level of children. Thus, it can be summarized that children were given plenty of opportunities to talk, discuss and share their ideas with each other, within groups and within class. In such cases children are having meaningful and constructive talk and which aid in learning. In all such situations it is important to prevent discipline problems initially otherwise it may develop into serious issues.

Conclusions

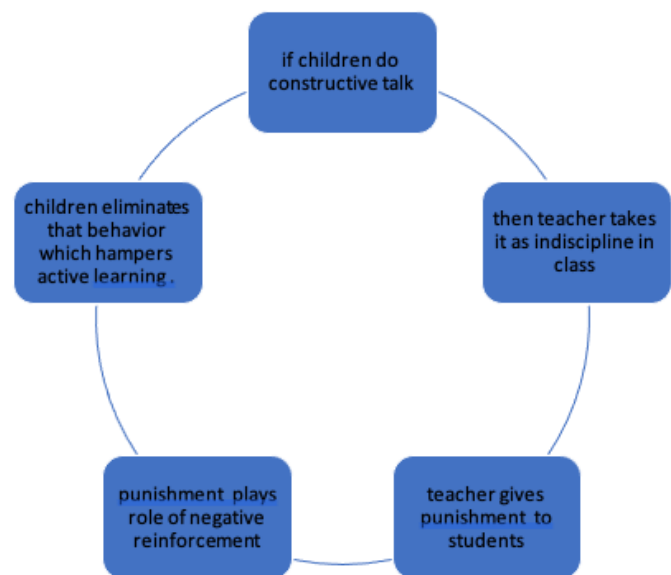
The meaning of discipline changes according to different teachers and different classroom situations. Corporal punishment or its fear does not serve any purpose. It may create a temporary silence in class but in long term it hampers active learning of children. According to Skinner, if “children are punished even for constructive classroom talk then this kind of negative reinforcement will remove that behaviour”. It will hamper the development of thoughts and the natural learning process which happens through interaction with others in society.

A positive classroom environment was created by proper management which begins with having rules of classroom behaviour. These rules need to be strictly followed and in case they aren't followed then appropriate consequences should follow. However, these rules should not be rigid or irrational. In case, children and teachers feel the need to change the rules then those should be changed. In general, after developing a set protocol for classroom management a number of activities like engaging children in learning tasks; drawing; playing games; reciting poems; story telling; theatre techniques; story corner; complaint box and talking to children can be planned and organized.

Also, it was found that attractive and engaging materials in classroom learning activities helped

reduce dullness of the classroom thus, minimizing indiscipline. Such an environment provides all children with a satisfactory school experience while also discouraging misconduct. Thus, classes can be consistently successful, productive and pleasant for all.

However, engaging children in the classroom is much harder than it appears here. It puts a lot of pressure on teachers in terms of planning a



lesson, delivering content and managing classrooms. An activity which may be successful on a day may not be successful the other day. Moreover, duration of an activity (whether it is 40 mins or 1 hour), number of children in class (30 or 50), available space to move around, seating arrangement (as per nature of activity), the behaviour of teacher with children and the content of class are also important factors for building positive environment in classroom. The key to maintaining discipline is keeping children busy and providing them with enough variety in lessons to prevent boredom. To end, I will say Face it, if a class is boring children will be disruptive!

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Awareness in Parents, Teachers and School Children about Mental Retardation: A Community Based Rehabilitation Project in Himachal Pradesh.

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Abstract

This research paper is the outcome of a project on Community Based Rehabilitation which was carried out by the authors to increase awareness of the parents, teachers and students of rural areas of District Kullu in Himachal Pradesh. A Community Based Rehabilitation programme involves measures taken at the community level to use and build on the resources at community level for rehabilitation of the persons with disabilities and provide opportunities for their social inclusion. Community Based Rehabilitation ensures that people with disability are able to maximize their physical and mental ability to access regular services and opportunities up to the level of full social inclusion within their community. The objective to write this paper is to understand that the important aspect of CBR revolves around awareness of people in the community with regard to disability and changing their negative attitudes and behavior towards disability. This project was carried out to increase the level of knowledge of community about Mental Retardation or Intellectual disability and to develop appropriate rehabilitation services for the persons with Intellectual disabilities and also to mobilize the local resources to support them.

Keywords: *Mental retardation, Intellectual Disabilities, Community based Rehabilitation, Home Based Education.*

Introduction

Mental retardation is a condition that not only has medical, educational and psychological implications, but has a major impact on the social system in any given community. Mental retardation since ages was perceived differently by different communities ranging from calling them as devil and evil spirits to good luck and god man carnation. Everybody agrees that whatever is the condition of a person with mental retardation, how the society perceives them definitely has an impact on the way they are treated. The phenomenon of mental retardation has been known for millennia. It has been observed that the phenomenon has a complex nature and is not understood completely by the various sections of the community such as parents, family, professionals, etc., there have been a lot of misconceptions and wrong practices seen across the society. However, in recent decades, serious attention has been paid to it. Considerable scientific information has been built up and published.

In the past, no differentiation was made between mental illness and mental retardation. Mental retardation is a lifelong condition, which cannot be cured. Persons with Mental Retardation

possess the ability to be trained to become independent with systematic and planned support. Mental retardation is not a mental illness. Mental illness can be cured. Persons with mental illness have normal development but suffer from psychological disturbance which needs systematic treatment, sometimes even medication whereas mental retardation is a condition where a child's mental development is not matching with his physical development.

There are many superstitions about the mental retardation regarding what causes and there are common to other disabilities also. The concept of comorbidity of mental illness and mental retardation is not only theoretical but also a practical issue. Some of the common questions posed to the therapist are: Are the two conditions different or same? If different, can a person with mental retardation have mental illness?

In recent decades the issue of mental illness in the persons who have also mental retardation has been given increasing attention. This is because firstly the general recognition of the right of a person with mental retardation to appropriate healthcare. Secondly, following the normalization principle, persons with mental retardation are expected to live in the community

and use community facilities. As a result of the recent works in the field, appropriate and convincing answers and explanations have been given to the above-mentioned questions and concepts.

Person with mental retardation due to less I.Q. can have mental illness, which will be manifested in the form of sudden, unpredictable change in the behavior, mood and or thinking. The nature and spectrum of the mental retardation will be similar in the comparison of the general population. However, the incidence and prevalence of mental illness amongst the persons with mental retardation is higher than that of the general population. This is because of the interaction of biological, psychological and social variables resulting in a typical path of development for a person with mental retardation. This may be manifested with the following deficits:

1. Poor integration of self
2. Deficit in self-regulation
3. Lack of confidence
4. Inferiority complex
5. Anxiety
6. Difficulty in living independently.
7. Due to the mentioned deficit, persons with mental retardation are more vulnerable to psychopathology in comparison to the non retarded individuals. Besides the above factors, the stressful and competitive environment due to disparity between the parental/ family expectations to the individual capacity adds to the problem.

In a country like India, most of the people feel that mental retardation and mental illness is one and the same. This is mainly because of the lack of information, existing among the general public regarding the differences between mental illness and mental retardation. Hence it becomes essential to have clear guidance to differentiate these conditions for developing promising management strategies. Mental retardation depending upon I.Q. divided in

Mild 50-70

Moderate 35-49

Severe 20-34

Profound below 20.

Whereas the classification of mental illness can be classified in two basic categories: **Psychosis** (schizophrenia, manic depressive psychosis) and

Neuroses (anxiety disorders, phobia, obsessive disorder).

Mental Retardation refers to substantial limitations in the present functioning. It is characterized by significantly subaverage intellectual functioning, existing concurrently with related limitations in two or more of the following applicable adaptive skill areas, communication, self-care, home living, social skills community use, self-direction, health and safety, functional academics leisure and work. Mental retardation manifests before age 18 (AAMD1992)

There are three major and important clauses with in the definition:

1. Significantly subaverage intellectual functioning which indicated by IQ which is less than 70
2. Deficit in adaptive behavior which the child/ person exhibits at various stages of development in day to day living.
3. Manifested during the developmental period i.e. from conception of 18 years of age.

Causes of Mental Retardation: Mental Retardation is caused when the brain gets injured or a problem prevents the brain from developing normally. These problems can happen while the baby is growing inside the womb, during birth, or after the baby is born. Many times, even doctors do not know the cause.

Following are some problems that can cause Mental Retardation or intellectual disabilities:

1. Problems in the baby's genes, which are in every cell of the baby and determine how the body will develop, can cause mental retardation. Genes are inherited from both parents and the baby might receive genes that are abnormal or genes might change while the baby is developing.
2. Problems during pregnancy can cause mental retardation. Sometimes, the mother might contract an infection or illness that can harm the baby. Certain medicines used by the mother during pregnancy can cause problems for the baby. Consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs also can damage a baby's developing brain.
3. Insufficient supply of oxygen during childbirth.
4. Premature birth.
5. Serious brain infection soon after birth (Chennat, 2019).

Misconception and Social Practices:

Retarded persons live in the atmosphere created by the attitude held by the people and the professionals they come in to the contact with in addition to those of their families. The person with mental retardation will prosper and improve in the quality of life if these attitudes are positive and supportive. But in reality, by and large all sections of society accept these persons in to the main stream. Especially in a developing country like in India, many misconceptions are wrong practices are seen which are due to their negative attitude, lack of understanding and lack of encouragement.

Misconception:

- 1) Mental retardation is mental illness.
- 2) Mental retardation is due to fate and *karma*.
- 3) Medicines and vitamins can cure mental retardation
- 4) Marriage can cure mental retardation.
- 5) Person with mental retardation becomes normal as he grows.
- 6) Mental retardation is contagious.
- 7) Students with mental retardation cannot learn to read.
- 8) Students with mental retardation can not be successful in the general education setting.

Due to misconceptions, people in general underestimate the capabilities of a person with mental retardation, which in turn hampers the process of rehabilitating them. Hence, there is a need to eliminate these misconceptions mainly through awareness in the society.

Concept of Community Based Rehabilitation (CBR):

All the initiatives and programmes established that Community Based Rehabilitation is no more a pilot project work or programme of reaching the unreached but steadily emerging as a movement for prompting comprehensive care and rehabilitation of persons with disabilities. The achievements and efficiency of existing CBR strategies that are the only way of reaching out the unreached person in rural areas is to initiate and implement CBR for persons with disabilities for developing countries. Comprehensive community-based rehabilitation is not a matter of choice but a compulsion. Community Based Rehabilitation involves measures taken at the community level to use and build on the resources of the community for rehabilitation, of opportunities and social

integration of all people with disabilities. Following are the important aspects of CBR. It is a greatest approach for the development and rehabilitation program within a community concentrating on need-based services.

CBR ensures that people with disability are able to maximize their physical and mental ability to access a regular services and opportunities up to the level of full social integration within their community. An important aspect of CBR revolves around awareness of people of the community with regard to disability and changing their negative attitudes and behavior towards disability. To increase the level of knowledge of contact people and to develop appropriate rehabilitation services also to mobilize the local resources.

Component of CBR**Person with disability:**

It is necessary to educate, empower and rehabilitate them and enable them to integrate as productive and contributing members.

1. Family: Educate them to provide rehabilitation and develop the attitude of acceptance.
2. Community: To provide and promote community responsibility for rehabilitation alone by volunteers with in the community.
3. Rehabilitation Personnel: They act as agents to bring about changes by transforming basic skills and knowledge in the management of disability.

What is Rehabilitation?

The process of restoring the handicap individual to the fullest physical, mental emotional and vocational usefulness (for which he/she is capable) and to tap potentials and channelize his/her maximum development so that he or she could live as near normal life. In a successful rehabilitation programme the community, professionals, parents and disabled persons become active partners and also support each other. Any rehabilitation programme will be sustainable if need is articulated and if the community is willing to meet the need. Rehabilitation programmes are successful if community support is available.

The dictionary meaning of rehabilitation is to return or restore to previous state or condition. According to ILO, "rehabilitation involves the combined and coordinated used medical, social, educational and vocational measures for training or restoring the individuals to the highest

possible level of functional ability. The rural and urban need of rehabilitation programme vary in one or other ways:

Urban Needs:

1. Information about rehabilitation services.
2. Decentralization of services pre- school programme, special school, day care centre and centre for mentally retarded children and counseling services
3. Need of transportation facilities
4. Need for a centre for vocational training, job placement and follow up programmes.
5. Job reservation in public and private sectors.
6. Need of residential institutionNeed of medical therapeutic and care services for severely and profoundly retarded persons in institutional setting or in hospitals.
7. Advocacy and enforcement of laws for protection of rights.
8. Public awareness.
9. Need for appropriate provision of recreation.

Rural Needs

1. Creation of public awareness
2. Provision for prevention, early detection, intervention and management
3. Training programme for village land rehabilitation workers
4. Counseling services
5. Need of anganwadi and balwadis
6. Home based programme/ Home based educational Programme.
7. Training and rehabilitation facilities at community level.
8. Need of developing low cost aids and educational materials
9. Provision for recreational and leisure time activities.

Some landmarks in the rehabilitation of the people with mental retardation:

The advent of sensationalism through the efforts of various philosophers provided a new group of perceiving. American and French revolution encouraged the philosophy of humanism. An awakening (1700-1800) was the result of these historic events which established a new social attitude towards the mentally retarded individuals. This attitude created a positive climate for the young idealistic people to put into

practice the philosophy of humanism and the ideas of Locke and Rousseau. The awakening created an attitude of optimism during the first phase of the nineteenth century. The recognized birth of special education and systematic services for the disabled individuals occurred in Europe in the early 1800s. In 1950, formation of National Association for the Mentally Retarded (**NAMR**) children consisting of parents of mentally retarded children was one of the most important events. Over the years, social attitude towards the mentally retarded people has changed from fear and repulsion to tolerance and compassion. President Kennedy, who had a sister with mental retardation, established the President's Panel on Mental Retardation (PPMR) which was to serve as a guide and a source for national policy in the U.S. In 1963, Congress passed the Mental Retardation facilities and Mental Health Center Construction Act, which established sources for the construction of **Mental Retardation Research Centre (MRRC)** in **1964**. Through the 1970s, the field of special education and the provision of services to the mentally retarded persons have made remarkable progress. As the 1980s began, a two-part philosophy enjoyed an eagerness to increase services and to maximize the quality of these services and an understanding that it was necessary to constantly reevaluate all actions. **American Association of Mental Retardation (1983)**, had issued the definition of Mental Retardation which is most consistent with the definition put forth by the American Psychiatric Association and World Health Organization. It was again revised in 1992. The **Mental Health Act (1987)**, Government Of India, Ministry of Law and Justice, Mentally ill person means a person who needs treatment by reason of any mental disorder other than mental retardation. **Rehabilitation Council of India Act (RCI) (1992)** statutory body under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment to regulate and introduce uniformity in the human resource development in the country. The RCI act is a major move by the Government of India for quality assurance in the education, training and management of persons with disabilities. **World Health Organization (1994)** stated clearly that community based rehabilitation involves measures taken at the community level to use and build on the resources of the community including the impaired, disabled and the handicapped persons themselves, their families and their community as a whole. **Joint position paper ILO, WHO and UNESCO (1994)** reflected that Community based rehabilitation is a strategy within the

community development for the rehabilitation, equalization of opportunities and social integration of all the people with disabilities. **Persons with Disability Act (1995)** has come into force on Feb.1996 as an important landmark and significant step in the direction to ensure the full participation of persons with disabilities in nation building. **National Trust Act (1999)** has made provisions for appointment of guardians for those who have applied, and residential facilities by the organizations who will have to maintain minimum standards prescribed by the Trust in terms of space, staff, furniture, rehabilitation and medical facilities. This is an act to provide for the constitution of a body at the national level for the welfare of persons with autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation and multiple disabilities. **Annual Report (2001)** as per the report of NSSO, the survey indicated that 3% of the populations have developmental delay including mental retardation. Based on this survey it is estimated that there are more than two crore of children/ person having mental retardation i.e. 2% of population for whom the services are to be extended. **NIMH (2001)** organized a programme for parents in which 67 registered parents' organizations participated. The themes discussed during the meet were the National Trust Act, NHFDC schemes and the role of parents' organizations. **8th National Meet at Secundrabad (2001)** was held on Dec.2001 which was attended by 92 special employees, with 75 escorts from 14 states of India.

National Seminar on Mental Retardation (2002) this seminar gives an opportunity to the rehabilitation professionals to have common platform to share the information about different intervention for mentally retarded people. This year the national annual seminar was held in Dehradun in collaboration with Karuna Vihar, 277 participants attended the programme and the theme of the seminar was the awareness and networking of the rehabilitation professional. The **SSA & RTE Act 2009** made provisions for their identification, assessment, home based and barrier free access to education for all children with disabilities of the age group 6-18 years. **The Right to Person with Disability act (RPWD Act-2016)** replaced the PWD Act 1995, also act provides preventive and promotional aspects of rehabilitation like education, employment, and vocational training, reservation, research and manpower development, creation of barrier free environment, unemployment allowances, special insurances scheme for disabled employees and

establishment of home for person with severe disabilities.

Rationale of the study:

Mental retardation is basically a social problem. It varies from culture to culture and also among the person with mental retardation. Because of their deviant behavior they are at the great risk of being devalued by the society because of their low mental and physical capability, they fall below the expectation of the society. A need was felt by the investigators to conduct such a project which leads to the successful orientation of the rural population, parents and students about mental retardation. Efforts to improve their ability to adapt to the society, through education and training need and attention, not only from professionals but also from parents. People with mental retardation are different but their needs are the same as that of non-retarded persons. Therefore, they should be perceived and treated as normal.

Majority of the Indian population lives in villages since independence, in India has made considerable progress in bringing quality in the life of special people, but considering the size of the country with its geographic, socio cultural, linguistic variation a lot more needs to be achieved. So, to reach the unreached, community-based rehabilitation is seen as the only way to reach out and develop programmes for prevention, detection, intervention etc.

Objectives of the Study: The objective of the project studied under following main heads:

Objectives of Identification:

1. To verify the information provided by disabled children through investigators by the volunteers and other people.
2. To know the number of disabled persons in the area by using screening tools.

Objectives of Awareness Programme:

1. To create awareness among the parents, teachers and the school children about Mental Retardation.
2. To remove the myth and misconception about mental retardation in the people of concerned Panchayat.
3. To make the students of the community aware of the role of the society, family and neighborhoods towards disability and mental retardation.
4. To design a Community Based Rehabilitation plan for the rehabilitation of MR children.

Method and Procedure:

This project work was basically a Community Based Rehabilitation activity which includes surveys, interviews, observations and implementation of intervention designed to achieve the target of rehabilitation of mentally retarded children. The investigators firstly prepared the plan of the survey. A semi structured interview schedule containing 20 items was prepared for the parents, students, teachers and community members of the concerned panchayat. An observation schedule was also prepared to validate the information collected by the volunteers. A complete one-day awareness programme of four sessions was designed to sensitize the targeted population. The project work was divided in to three main phases:

1. First phase: Initial visit to panchayat and selection of volunteers.
2. Second phase: Survey of selected panchayat
3. Third phase: Organization of awareness programme.

First Phase: Our first action was to visit Parli Panchayat. It was planned to visit the panchayat on the day of the General House of the Panchayat. Our first visit to “Parli Panchayat” was very successful and we first met the President of Panchayat Mrs. Neelam Chauhan before the general house requested to give us 30 minutes to share our plan, although we had telephonically discussed all our plans with her. Really, it was a very good opportunity to interact with all ward members and many other people together in the Panchayat house. We explained the purpose of our visit to the general house of the Panchayat. Everybody present there was ready to help us. The President of Panchayat introduced some of her colleagues and other members of the community to us. Mr Ghanshyam Chand, Mrs Sunita Devi, Smt. Praveen Kumari, Vimla Devi, Ajay Kumar, Anil Kumar and Tarachand were appointed to help us. All seven were the ward members of this panchayat. We also selected three more persons from the general house of the panchayat. After the general House we held a meeting with all ten volunteers. We noted down the contact numbers of each of these members of Panchayat. We told them about the limitation of the time of our project. We prepared the training schedule and survey schedule on the same day.

Second Phase: During the second phase, we ourselves conducted the survey with the help of these volunteers and they imparted a lot of

information about the different villages of the Panchayat Parli. Our team completed the whole survey in 3 days and interviewed 200 people including the parents, teachers, students and neighbours MR children. The team of volunteers accompanied us to visit all villages, schools and houses of children with disabilities. During the course of the survey, we managed to collect a lot of information about the people and place.

Third Phase: It was the scheduled Awareness programme for the targeted population. This was three hours programme further classified in to three sessions in which first two covering the following topics:

1. First session: **Time 11:00 AM to 12:00 Noon.**
Topic of Talk: Causes of MR -Myths and misconception - Prevention of MR -Relationship and attitude of family and neighbors towards MR persons.
2. Second Session: **Time 12:25 PM to 1:25 PM,**
Topic of Talk: Schools and NGOs working for MR children, importance of education, social interaction and entertainment for MR, porgrammes and provisions for Mentally Retarded Persons.
3. Third Session: **Time 3:00 PM to 4:00 PM,**
Group Activity: Preparation of Plan for the rehabilitation of the MR children in the Panchayat, roles and responsibility of Panchayat Pradhan and Volunteers, Identification of supported services, Role of NGOs and health worker in rehabilitation.
4. Feedback session.

Findings of survey:

1. This Project had been carried out in remote Panchayat Parli of Kullu Block. There were total 17 habitations (group of 17 small villages): Manihar, Jhumi, Baradhal, Rauli, Udsu, Nazan, Ushog, Sadhan, Mathrong, Aisa, Pigrang, Kuin, Kaisudhar, Ukhachin, Khani, Thela and Baga.
2. Out of these seventeen villages, ten villages are remote villages situated at a height of 2940meters above sea level. Most of the houses in the Panchayat were traditional “pahari” “Kathnuma Shaili” constructed with mud, stone and wood.
3. This is the remotest panchayat of Kullu block. The total population of Panchayat was 2196 with 1108 males and 1088 females. The total numbers of families were 356.
4. Majority of the population of Parli Panchayat engaged in agriculture and

horticulture. The crops depend on the rain water. Only a few villages of Panchayats were covered with irrigation facilities.

5. Only 10% people were government employees mostly in class IV jobs. Only 7 villagers were primary teachers and 3 were in class II in government jobs.
6. Only 5% population is high profile families, most of them have apple orchards. Majority of illiterate villagers work as labourers in other fields, shops and in construction works. Majority of the families had a low income profile and very few (only 16) families were under the below poverty line.
7. There were 7 government primary schools, one government middle school and one government high school imparting education in the panchayat. Most of the children were attending the nearby schools in the Panchayat.
8. Majority of the population (70%) of the village had below 10th standard educational qualification whereas 30 % had graduation and Master Degrees.
9. Most of the children attending elementary and primary schools in the Panchayat were anemic as the data shared by the school.
10. 40% of the households in Panchayat had no toilet facilities and they defecated openly in the Panchayat.
11. Most of the water resources get contaminated during the rainy season. There is scarcity of safe water for drinking.
12. Household waste, animal waste and garbage were piled in the open and not disposed off properly.
13. No health facility was available in the Panchayat.
14. Residents of Parli Panchayat were not much aware of the facts regarding disability.
15. Parents and neighbours didn't not know how to handle the situation of disability.
16. The attitude of the family members and the neighbours towards disabled children was found indifferent and ignorant.
17. There were no rehabilitation facilities for the children with disabilities.
18. Most of the parents/community members were not aware about the concept and causes of disability specially about mental retardation.
19. There were no agencies working for the disabled in Parli Panchayat.
20. There were 27 cases of major and minor disabilities found in the 17 villages of Parli panchayat.
21. The disability wise cases were : Number of MR/ Intellectually disabled Children-12, Visually Impaired-7, Hearing Impaired-1, Speech Impaired-4, Physical Disabled-3 Only eight cases were identified by the doctor as M Rs and they were medically certified while other 4 cases were identified during the survey however before that their parents never got their children assessed by the doctor or any medical institutes.

Observation about awareness programme:

It was a three hours scheduled programme and organized at three different venues for three different days. We had trained 370 participants including students, teachers, parents and anganwadi workers. We were supported by the team of 10 volunteers. Some of observations have been listed below:

1. Date and time were appropriate to hold such a programme because of good attendance.
2. Venues were appropriate/ approachable to everybody.
3. Educational Profile of people was low.
4. We succeeded to remove their myths and misconceptions about MR
5. They were interested to know about the facilities available for their children
6. After the programme these people appeared to have understood the basic aspects of mental retardation.
7. Majority of the participants were able to answer each and every item in the feedback form which was filled by the participants at the end of the programme.
8. Especially after the awareness programme teachers and students were able to reflect their responses regarding their understanding about mental retardation.
9. It has been found that 80 % of the participants wanted a well behave with mentally retarded children, they must be deal with sympathetically by all.
10. It was found that still in a few cases parents and other members of the community did not have a clear cut understanding about the reason and fact behind mental retardation. This reflects that more and more such

awareness programmes are required in the community.

11. Another finding of the study reveals that maximum parents were ready to support their wards and agree for the development of their special children. They also felt the need for special training for their children.
12. Although, many participants came to know the different programme implemented by the government for the welfare of the mentally retarded children but they did not able to answer the items related to different acts and legal provision for the welfare of mentally retarded children.
13. A few parents and teachers were enabled to tell the name of NGOs and field functionaries working in the field of mental retardation. Only 20 % participants were able to answer the last item, about the name of the Department working in the field of disabled children.

Summary:

It was a good learning experience for investigators to avail chance to be a part of this community and to support these strata of the society in whatever little way we could. It was totally a new experience to know about the problem of these people who were leading their life with lots of problems around them. This exercise gave us an opportunity to learn about these people and their lifestyle.

However, in spite of their limited resources money and poor quality of life, inhabitants were content and happy with their lives. The social evils like alcoholism, illiteracy, improper planning of family, lack of health and hygiene facilities, lack of basic needs like: Safe drinking water, road facilities and non-availability of health facilities like health centres and other medical facilities.

Although children were being sent to nearby school but there was no special educator in the school to support mentally retarded children. There was an urgent need of rehabilitation professionals, collaboration of NGOs and resource centers for these children in the community for early intervention programmes. Most of the parents were not aware as to how to cope with their MR children. The young girls and boys of the community need to be trained in this regard so that they can take good care of these children.

The awareness programme which was designed to aware the target population was proved

successful in breaking many of their myths and removed many misconceptions about mental retardation.

Major observations of the Project:

Without the help of the panchayat president and volunteers, this community-based rehabilitation project could not have been possible. We realize that no work could get under way till the community is interested. As far as the problem of mental retardation is concerned these people were surrounded by several myths and misconceptions. They were partially ignorant about the issues related to mental retardation. They were not aware of many provisions, early interventions and training facilities available for these children. It was found that when these children reach the age of adolescence, parents become worried about their marriage, academics, employment and social skills. Many parents of children with disabilities become uncertain about their child's future and do not even know where to send their children for education and training.

Recommendations:

For the NGOs:

1. Initial guidance and counselling for the parents, siblings and community should be provided and the community must be provided information about the rehabilitation and early intervention required for Children with mentally retardation.
2. NGOs working in the area of disabilities should come forward to provide support in the process of identification and assessment, education and training needed. These NGOs need to come forward for rehabilitation in terms of employment of persons with mental retardation and also facilitate them to get entered in vocational training institutions.

For schools: Schools should ensure the inclusion of the students with mental retardation/intellectual disabilities with normal children.

1. These schools should have posts of special educators to support teachers and staff as well in the inclusion of these students. Schools must have well equipped resource rooms to assist the students with disabilities.
2. Flexible rule and regulations in curriculum adaptation and instructional strategies.
3. Schools should decide timely in case of severity to assess the prevocational and vocational training needed to work actively

in this area with support of special educators.

4. Schools should take the outer support like to counselling services, assistive devices, therapy etc. to assist these students.
5. Parents should be counseled and encouraged for sending their children with disabilities to school.

For Administrators:

1. Some grants to be released to improve the toilet facilities in the habitats of Parli Panchayat specifically to the people who are below the poverty line.
2. Health and hygienic conditions should be practiced in the Parli Panchayat in

convergence with the rural health mission, a mega project of GOI.

3. Solar lights can be provided with the support of Him Urja Department.
4. More taps for safe drinking water should be installed keeping in mind the cleanliness around the platform of tap.
5. Road conditions should be improved.

For Health Department

1. More awareness needs to be spread among the people of the community regarding cleanliness and hygiene related matters.
2. More awareness related to health and evils like alcoholism, immunization, balanced diet & other work objects is required.

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Perspectives on Participatory Strategies for Inclusion of Girls in Education

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Abstract

Education for girls is essential for the exercise of all other human rights and an important means for upward mobility to achieve higher status, a position that enables them to play a very significant role in the development of the country. Gender differentials exist in access to education. Participatory approaches which are a product of long-lasting interaction between researchers, development workers, government agents and local populations, are positioned as one of the approaches used to impart education. This paper deliberates on the role of education as a tool for inclusion of girls and traverses through the national response to the same. It contemplates over the significance of the participatory approaches for promoting education for girls leading to strengthening of the decentralisation process succeeding in creating space to make the invisible girls visible. It shines light on the complications experienced on the actual implementation of the participatory strategies in the field. Capabilities have to be strengthened both at policy and grassroots levels to address the gender related issues and the participatory methodologies. The success or failure of any participatory strategy rests on its ability to evolve and adapt to local dynamics, needs and interests.

Keywords: *Education for girls, government's schemes, participatory approaches.*

Introduction

The investment in the education of both boys and girls with focus on equity is consistently the most powerful and important indicator of national development, as well as being a vehicle for the advancement of the present and future generations. It is essential for the exercise of all other human rights; while being an important means for upward mobility to achieve higher status, position and that enables them to play a very significant role in the development of the country. Contemporary discourses and initiatives on decentralisation have showcased the exclusion of girls in all sectors of the development including education. Today, their exclusion has given rise to the concern for their active participation and inclusion in the development process.

When the educational opportunities are not available equally to all sections of the society the inequalities in the social structure continue to be perpetuated. The inequalities stem from the factors rooted in the socio-cultural milieu which propagates from a patriarchal mindset and sustains low status of women. The State-initiated programmes in the field of education clearly point out that the major impediment to the people's participation is their social and

economic backwardness. There is thus, great necessity to focus on girls' education leading to their social inclusion.

There is a need to design meaningful interventions and realistic development strategies. The role of meaningful participation of people is now acknowledged as crucial for the success for any kind of programme or policy.

National response to education of girls:

Education for girls in India has also been a major preoccupation of both the government and civil society, as educated girls can play a very significant role in the development of the country. Women constitute about 48% of the total population of India (Census, 2011). The principle of gender equity is enshrined in Indian Constitution in its preamble, as fundamental rights, fundamental duties and the directive principles for reducing the gender gap in education as a focus area. Several strategies have been adopted to promote their participation in education as an integrated part of the planned socio-economic development of the country. Education for girls is increasingly being seen as a basic human right and a crucial input for national development.

Before 1976, education was the exclusive responsibility of the States. The Constitutional Amendment of 1976, which included Education in the Concurrent List, was a far-reaching step. Through the 42nd Amendment, Act of 1976, it has been transferred to concurrent subject, where division of responsibility is of both Centre and State. The Union Government accepted a larger responsibility of reinforcing the national and integrated character of education. The central government continues to play a leading role in the evolution and monitoring of educational policies and programmes. The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and the Programme of Action (POA), 1992 are the notable ones. The government launched '*Bharat Shiksha Kosha*', to facilitate donations from India and abroad for implementing programmes connected with the education sector, in January, 2003.

Several schemes targeting the girl child in the field of education, with the primary emphasis on increasing enrolment were part of the first two decades of policy focus on education. The Ministry of Human Resource Development points at the intensification of efforts to universalise elementary education in the eighties and the nineties with a series of programme and scheme interventions like: *Operation Black Board*, *Shiksha Karmi Project*, *Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project*, *Bihar Education Project*, *U.P Basic Education Project*, *Mahila Samakhya*, *Lok Jumbish Project in Rajasthan*, and *District Primary Education Programme (DPEP)*.

This trend of including the girl child as a special beneficiary of policy finds continuity in all subsequent policy interventions on education, with *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (2001) and *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* (2009-10) also laying emphasis on removing discrimination in access to education. The *National Programme for Education of Girls at Elementary Level* was launched by the government with the view of reaching the hardest to reach sections of the female population and ensuring their access to education. The programme constitutes a significant part of the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* since 2003.

In 2018-19, Government of India had proposed to treat school education holistically, under an umbrella programme *Samagra Shiksha*, that subsumes the three schemes: *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*, *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan* and *Teacher Education*. The programme is aimed at a single scheme for school education from Class I – Class XII; treats school education

holistically as a continuum from Pre-school to Class 12; and supports States to initiate pre-primary education. The programme also proposed administrative reforms, enhanced funding for education with primarily focus on girl education by empowering them, upgrading *Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalyaya* scheme from class 6-8 to class 6-12, self - defence training to girls, stipend to *Children with Special Needs* and enhancing commitment for '*Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*'. Provision of additional support is envisioned through the setting up of model schools, gender sensitization of teachers, creation of gender sensitive learning materials and provision of other need-based incentives like uniforms.

However, national statistics also showed that while improvements in enrolment were tremendous and often surmounted the gender barrier, the tougher challenges were being faced in the areas of retaining girls in school and the quality of education delivered to them. Incentivisation schemes in turn follow a variety of models, including conditional cash transfers, scholarships, subsidised or free transport opportunities for accessing school, uniform and residential schools. Since the decade of the nineties, India has adopted cash transfer schemes with varying objectives. In this regard, *Tamil Nadu's Girl Child Protection Scheme*, 1992, could be said to be the oldest scheme on cash transfer for girl child in the country. There are some national and state-level schemes for residential schools and vocational training and education programmes for women. The Indian government has laid claims to support the education of girls as early as 1968, with the Resolution on National Policy on Education that highlighted the need for enhanced focus on the girls' education.

Among the schemes that have been launched, conditional cash transfers programmes have been used increasingly. There are more than twenty schemes in India that are aimed towards the welfare of girls, mainly in context of promotion of education and age enhancement for marriage. Some of these schemes are *Dhan Lakshmi scheme* across the country (conditional cash transfer for immunization and education and unmarried till reaching age 18), *Ladli Scheme* in Haryana and Delhi, *Girl Child Protection Scheme* in Andhra Pradesh.

Another remarkable policy shift in this period was the movement to a rights-based perspective on education, which considered universal education as responsibility of the State and the right of every child in India. The Constitution of

India, through its eighty-sixth Amendment in 2002, established education as a fundamental right through Article 21-A. In 2009, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act was passed. The RTE Act is a defining moment in the history of education policy in India as its approach is two pronged – on one hand, it consists of provisions that recognise duty of the State and its bodies in enforcing this right, while on the other, it lays emphasis on encouraging and incentivising education among children from weaker sections and disadvantaged groups.

A huge disparity exists: India stands at 74.04% national literacy rate where male literacy rate is 82.14% and the female literacy rate is a dismal 65.46% (Census, 2011). Apart from low levels of literacy at the national level, disparities across regions, gender, etc. are of serious concern. Level of literacy or education is directly associated with poverty, population growth, health and crime rate. Despite its significance, education for girls continues to be a neglected area. This highlights the need to look at the multi-faceted problems facing the girls on their way to join the education bandwagon and better future prospects.

Various studies have reported gender differentials in access to education and that gender differentials could possibly be due to historical attitudes, giving less importance to girl child education, social and family outlook towards girls, engaging girls in non (paid) work etc. (White, Ruther, & Kahn, 2015).

In the field of child education, nutrition and protection, vital differences among boys and girls in their school education, access, usage and perceptions are seen (CRY, 2019). This difference is believed to lie in the social and systemic determinants of education.

Ramachandran (1998) has provided an exhaustive gamut of the issues to sum up the problems coming in the way of education for the girl child. The three types of issues are (1) the Systemic issues; (2) Content and process of education related issues; and (3) Economy, society and culture related issues. Although these issues are not gender-neutral yet it must be recognised that they affect girls in a special way. Systemic issues include problems of access, dysfunctional schools, quality of schools, motivation of teachers, existence of multiple delivery systems- formal, non-formal, condensed, satellite and residential, calendar and timings. Content and process of education are gender stereotyping, perpetuation of gender-bias,

relevance of curriculum, language, joyful learning, ready access to books, magazines, papers and appropriate reading material for the newly literate and so on. Economy, society and culture issues are poverty and powerlessness, status of women, cost to family, child labour / domestic chores, farm / non-farm work, caught up in survival battles, perception of herself, post puberty practices, child marriage.

Participatory approaches to education: If we are to make progress in the future towards inclusive education, we must involve students and trainers themselves in the journey. One of the reasons is the lack of opportunity in the conventional approach to education and its limited applicability in diverse situations and especially in meeting the challenges. There can be no upliftment unless there is social democracy at the grass roots.

The conventional approach of 'giving' in an education imparting situation is being gradually replaced by 'sharing', 'learning together' or acting as a 'facilitator'. The role of a facilitator is to encourage participation without being judgmental and by listening with interest and empathy to help the students to tap into the reservoir of their own abilities gained through their experiences.

Participatory approaches are positioned as one of the alternatives to conventional approaches used in imparting education as they are a product of long-lasting interaction between researchers, development workers, government agents and local populations.

Participation strategies, as against the conventional strategies with 'Top down' or 'trickle down' approach, propose the 'Bottom up' or 'Grass roots' development - helping people directly to help themselves. It is learner centred and strengthens the capacity, the potential and the competence of learners as individuals by ensuring participation of all. Research has shown that the participatory approach leads to increased sharing of benefits and decision-making power in the development context.

It is not easy, however, to institute a participatory method because trainers must also be able to learn and adjust and because it is very time consuming to "support from behind" instead of "leading from the front." In order to rescue "participation" from the realm of fashionable terms with no basis in reality, it will be necessary to exchange information about experiences with this technique that is demanding but essential for creating the self-esteem that girls require in

order to assume a full role in society (Postel, 1997).

Participation remains an iterative process which develops and occurs over a significant period of time as it requires patience and commitment from all and it would be a mistake to expect benefits over a small frame of time.

Problem definition

This paper deliberates on the role of education as a tool for inclusion of girls and traverses through the national response to the education for girls. It ponders over the significance of the participatory approaches to fulfil the need for learning and evaluation. It attempts at understanding participation of girls for learning and leading to strengthening of the decentralisation process succeeding in creating space to make the invisible girls visible. There is a need to strengthen capabilities both at policy and grassroots levels to address the gender related issues and the participatory methodologies. It specifically shines light on the complications experienced in the actual implementation of the participatory strategies in the field.

Methodology

The methodology makes use of the case study approach as a qualitative methodology. Case studies are ways to explain, describe, or explore phenomena. The depth and richness of case study description helps in understanding the case and applicability of findings to a larger perspective.

Sources of evidence for case study include documentation, and archival records. It uses a descriptive case study approach where this methodology is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred. Efforts have been made to answer “how” and “why” questions, because they are relevant to the phenomenon under study.

The methodology includes extracts from documented cases of participatory approaches and their applications in the field of education for girls in the arena of development programmes by the government. It includes the detailed and critical discussions on the selected case study, which is descriptive and reflective in nature and draws lessons for the future.

Results and discussions

A case of applying participatory approaches in DPEP in a remote, poor village in Karnataka is examined and analysed (IGNOU, 2010a).

Participatory Approaches in DPEP: DPEP is one of the first social sector development

programmes where participatory approaches are being put into practice on a very large scale. DPEP is one of the most extensive interventions by the Government in primary education development. It was launched in 1993 in seven states and 42 districts, and has subsequently been expanded to several more states and districts across the country. The broad objective of DPEP is to operationalize the goals of universal elementary education (UEE).

DPEP and Community Involvement: DPEP emphasizes the need for a participatory process, whereby local communities would play an active role in enrolment, retention, learning achievement and school effectiveness. It is done through setting up village education committees (VECs), with members from all sections of the local community with the purpose to achieve active participation from the village community as a whole and to serve as a means to institutionalize the participatory process.

The Local Village Context: The status and dynamics of community participation in a village, *Palmagudu*, a remote, poor village in Karnataka were examined. Most of the inhabitants own small scale land holdings with low productivity. The settlement is a small one, with approximately 36 households and there exists an Ambedkar Colony – a colony of low caste families.

The village has a single teacher primary school, one Anganwadi and the nearest secondary school is seven kilometres away. Although school records show 100% enrolment, the dropout particularly at the class 5 level is high. The location of this Anganwadi in the Ambedkar Colony, was a major bone of contention among the villagers as the parents belonging to the upper castes were reluctant to send their children to the Anganwadi. As a result, the children (particularly girls) were left at home to care for their younger siblings. Lower caste families were also not satisfied and complained about the low quality of food grain provided by the government as an incentive for the children to be sent to the Anganwadi, about the irregular attendance of the Anganwadi worker and the poor quality of care their children receive in the Anganwadi on the fact that they belong to a lower caste. However, the villager's attitude towards education was found positive. The primary school was constructed on land donated by a local inhabitant. The villagers also contributed towards various cultural events held at the school. Despite the fact that the majority of the adult communities were illiterate, the value of formal education was recognised.

Local Community's Experience of DPEP: The DPEP implementation process in *Palmagudu* took a while to gain momentum. The news of the programme first reached the local community in 1994. The teacher received a curriculum from the Block Education Officer, following which he called a meeting of a few senior (male) members of the village community and which led to the VEC being formed. Initially, DPEP – related inputs were targeted more at the school than at the local community. The Project officials visited the village for discussions with the teacher, enrolment figures were updated and the teacher attended training at the Block Education Office. The training had a beneficial impact, both in terms of increasing the teachers' understanding of the program and enabling quality improvements in the teaching/learning methods. Several parents observed these changes and were pleased.

The first attempt to actively involve the Village Education Committee (VEC) was made in 1996 – a considerable time interval after the formation of the body. Three members, including a woman member, were invited for training at the Block Education Office. They found the program to be useful and learnt that the government was offering an annual fund of Rs. 2000 to VECs.

However, the impact of the training program on the village community as a whole was negligible. Most of the villagers were not even aware that the DPEP was in operation. The VEC members who had attended the training program, on returning to the village had a realization of the following questions within them:

“What good is it to send children to school when we have no food to feed them with?”;

“in other villages the VEC ensures that parents are sending their children to school regularly... how can we do the same thing here?”;

“Most of the families are so poor, they need their children's help in the fields”;

“Who will listen to me? I am a VEC member, but I am just an illiterate woman.”

In the early part of 1998, a micro planning exercise was held in *Palmaguddu* for awareness generation. Resource persons and project officials spent an entire day interacting with villagers. The major setback encountered in improving the primary school was the lack of resources to operationalise their plans. They were unclear about how to obtain the Rs. 2000 annual fund. Furthermore, as *Palamgudu* is part of a Group Panchayat, and none of the elected representatives in this Panchayat are from

Palmgudu, they have not tried mobilizing funds. Moreover, within the village there was dispute over whether money should be spent on education or on village development needs.

The Lessons Learnt: Many important lessons have been obtained in the implementation of the participatory approaches and the Strengths and Weaknesses of Participatory strategy have been revealed. A comparative analysis has been made based on the activities suggested in the participatory strategy and compared to actual practice in the field with several inbuilt challenges that cropped up.

For the formation of VECs, democratic means need to be followed whereas it was reported that the teacher formed the VEC. The implications that the information about VEC does not reach the entire village was realized. As per DPEP, VEC membership has to include girls but in reality, it was not initiated, as a result that girls' participation continues to lag behind expectations.

The issue with regards to VEC training included - not being held on time, but instead it took place after several months, and VEC remained inactive during this period, pointing to a lack of commitment and resulting in inefficiency. About the Annual Fund for VEC, the community had inadequate information. As a consequence, the Fund was not used and specifically it was not used for the purpose of activating the VEC body.

Were the people of the village involved? In practice, only passive involvement of people was observed. This clearly shows that VEC is a long way off from playing the autonomous, pro-active role envisaged in the participatory strategy. The strategy envisages the primary (VEC, local community) and secondary stakeholder participation but in practice primary stakeholders were dependent on the secondary stakeholders. This resulted in huge implications for the participation of the local community because the project had not enabled the secondary stakeholders such as project officials to transfer control to the VEC/local people, thereby limiting the quality of their participation.

Participation of marginalised groups including - the girls and the lower castes is envisioned. At the village, VEC was an all-male body because no special efforts were made at the time of VEC formation to include girls and the lower castes. It emerged here that the project strategy did not address the special constraints and problems faced by the girls and the lower caste families, their participation remained limited and was not fully represented.

The lessons learnt from the case study of the *Palmagudu* on the inclusion of participatory approaches in the implementation of DPEP, exhibits that there is a clear mismatch in the policy expectations and practices mired in the ground reality of the village.

The Way Forward: There is a need to balance the strengths and weaknesses of participatory strategies to create transparent, plausible qualitative scenarios without predisposition. Although Participatory strategy has made a valuable contribution to the research community by challenging the historical tendency to ignore and discount the rights of communities under study, the actual working out of this approach is complicated and sometimes difficult. The identification and naming of issues that are frequently encountered by participatory researchers is important to ensuring a more practical and valid understanding of what the approach actually entails. A balance needs to be found in the field between ensuring that the core aims of participatory research are maintained.

Blackburn and Holland (1968) point out that ‘participation would not make sense as long as power-holders do not allow others to participate in processes of setting priorities, making decisions, managing and controlling resources. If there is a low level of democracy and decentralization, the absence of a culture of cooperation among the community institutions at the regional and local levels also impedes the process of reforms.

Cooke and Kothary (2001) point out that there is naivety about the complexity of communication processes, group dynamics and power relations around the concept of participation. They assert that participation in practice is nowhere near to the participatory, bottom-up, open process that it is commonly held to be. Participation can be described as largely maintaining existing power relationships, through masking this power behind the rhetoric and techniques of participation. This masking, therefore, ‘represents the tyranny of participation’. It is the deep-rooted socio-cultural factors that prevail

and come in the way of accruing the benefits of Participatory approaches.

To overcome these challenges, the use of Participatory approaches should be based on knowledge and a holistic understanding of local settings, in order to avoid biases determined by the local institutional and group structures as well as the communication process.

The success of Participation and civic engagement depends on a favourable socio-cultural, socioeconomic and political context, and level of decentralisation. In order to have long term sustainable impacts, Participatory strategies should be linked with wider processes of democratization and decentralization.

Conclusion

The problem of education for all, particularly for girls, transcends the economics of provision and is entwined with critical issues deeply embedded in the socio-cultural and political realm. Therefore, there is a need to disentangle problems of social apathy, backwardness, prejudice and marginalised groups, which are more in the realm of social change than in educational planning.

The events and the nature of the participatory process in *Palmagudu* clearly illustrate some of the key challenges, which policy makers and the practitioners engaged in similar initiatives face. The given descriptive case study has certainly demonstrated that community-based knowledge structures form the backbone of participatory planning and that the success or failure of any participatory strategy rests on its ability to evolve and adapt to local dynamics, needs and interests.

The education of girls plays a very important role in the development of the country. Imparting education using participatory strategies in a realistic manner has potential to become one of the means to stop the perpetuation of inequalities in our social structure, as a means of improving their status within the family and remains as the most powerful tool of change of position in society.

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

Diksha Anjan

Abstract

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

Keywords: *aspirations, elementary school, development, profession, career*

Introduction

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

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

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

What is the need to aspire? What if we don't? Avatar Singh Sandhu in his poem – '*sabse khatarnaak hota hai hamare sapno ka mar jana*' highlights the very need to aspire. To keep up the spirits, hopes and dream despite several failures and sorrows in life, is what the poet wants. Often as a child, we are told of either becoming a doctor, teacher or an engineer. We are given limited options.

This paper has been chosen to widen the scope of available jobs in the market, that is, to introduce the V graders to various career options available for them as per their passion and talent. With this paper, I not just wish to know and record the aspirations of the V graders, but also introduce to them the vast pool of occupations, they could choose from. Also, I hope to eliminate certain gender stereotypes like a nurse or a teacher is a lady and only a father can go out to earn. In 'Neighbourhood attributes as determinants of children's outcomes: How robust are the relationships?', a process was suggested by Wilson (1987) according to which the status, choices or values of the neighbours helps in the attribution of positive and negative attributes in those particular neighbourhoods, which affects the aspirations and motivations of individuals in these areas and thus their achievements.

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

variables have also been used in predicting the educational and career aspirations of pupils like the peers' influence, parental involvement, social support from teachers, neighbourhood and social capital.

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

In 'The cognitive map of occupations: Factor structure in a Spanish sample', Gottfredson (1981) entails that there are three criteria upon which adolescents develop an idea of 'acceptable' occupations, namely, gender (a biological criterion); status (a social criterion) and field of interest (a psychological criterion). The occupational space at the age of seven to eight years can be divided into two parts: jobs that comply with the sex-role criterion and unacceptable jobs (say, traditionally masculine jobs for girls like mechanical engineering and feminine ones for boys like caretaking). Children of age ten tend to restrict their occupations in terms of their social status, which takes place in a 2-D mental space (gender and status) known as 'cognitive map of occupations.' The research domains have coordinates nearly two-thirds of the way along the gender axis. The domain in which the occupational coordinates are lowest in terms of social status and are nearest to the masculinity pole of gender axis is the realistic domain while the domain in which occupational coordinates are lowest in social status and near the femininity pole is the conventional domain.

The next reading, that is, 'Awakening aspirations of primary school students' defines the term *capacity to aspire*. Aspirations are said to be a complex process which are developed by including not just the gender, background, and peer group of the pupil but also by the expectations their parents or carer or family holds for them. The experiences to which pupils are exposed, shape their aspirations. St. Clair and Benjamin (2011) assert that aspirations are not within the control of the individuals as their parents can dissuade them to follow a certain career path. Only some career choices can be considered valid under parents' point of view. The pupils' aspirations often revolve around earning a handsome wage. Also, the

aspirations are influenced by their sense of self and capabilities which target the roles which they find interesting and achievable. There is a symbiotic relationship between the interest in a particular job and skills required for that role, for which children try harder to enjoy the activities comparatively more because of greater competence.

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

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

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

a. Choose one of the following:

1. Caretaker/ carpenter
2. Job which interests you/ job of your parents' choice
3. Better life-style/ better society
4. Good person/ rich person
5. English/ Hindi
6. High income job/ dream job with lower income
7. Private job/ government job Mother's profession/ father's profession
8. What do you aspire for?

b. Do you feel inspired by any of your neighbours? If yes, how?

c. Have your parents ever denied you regarding any career option? If yes, name it.

d. Which of the following occupations would be denied by your parents? Why?

Dancer, Chef, Political leader, Ice-cream seller

f. i) What educational qualifications do you aspire for?

-Till primary school (grade 1-5)

-Till middle school (grade 6-8)

-Till high school (grades 9 and 10)

-Till secondary school (11 and 12)

-Bachelor's degree

-Master's degree

ii) What is your parents' opinion? Give reason

g. i) Do you want to live like your parents lived or are living (in terms of opportunities and facilities available to them)?

ii) If you wish to change, what is it?

Objectives

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

- To inquire about the dreams and aspirations of young children.
- To introduce different professions the learners could choose from, irrespective of gender or post or income.
- To assist understand the relation of the nature of aspirations with the development of the human being.

Methodology

This section addresses the sample size and the procedure for data collection. A mixed approach (both qualitative and quantitative) was employed throughout the whole study. This is a paper which looked into aspirations of the learners, to inquire about the dreams and aspirations of the learners, to introduce different professions irrespective of gender or post or income, and to build an understanding of how the nature of aspirations is related to the development of humans

Sample

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

Data collection

Data for this paper was obtained during the activities planned in the Environmental Studies for the theme – 'work and play', like, drawing how the children see themselves after 15 years; introducing occupations on flashcards; mentioning reasons on 'circle of

influence'; storytelling on 'Shifty McGifty and Slippery Sam' and role-play and the survey questionnaire.

Data obtained from the above-mentioned activities were analysed in the form of tables, pie charts and bar graphs wherever necessary.

Data Analysis

In this part of the paper, the data collected through survey questionnaires and different activities have been analysed with respect to different literatures reviewed earlier.

From the reading – 'Neighbourhood attributes as determinants of children's outcomes: How robust are the relationships?', the survey question was:

- Do you feel inspired by any of your neighbours? If yes, how?

According to the writer, attributes in a particular neighbourhood affect the aspirations of those who grow up in these areas.

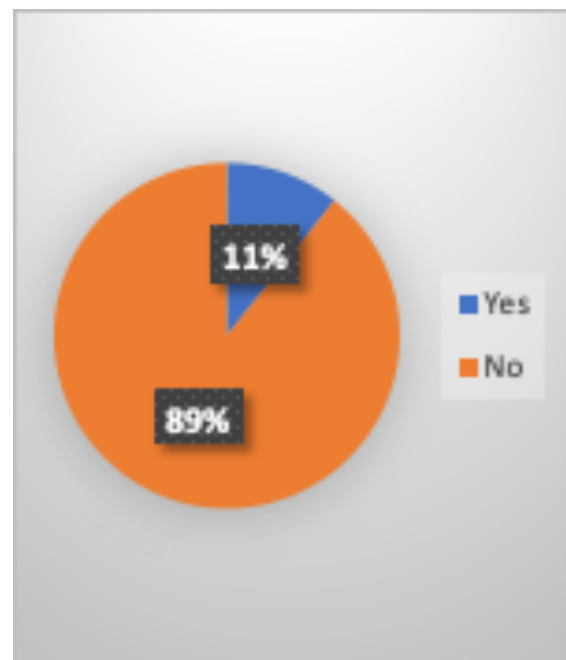


Figure 1: Availability of an inspiring neighbour

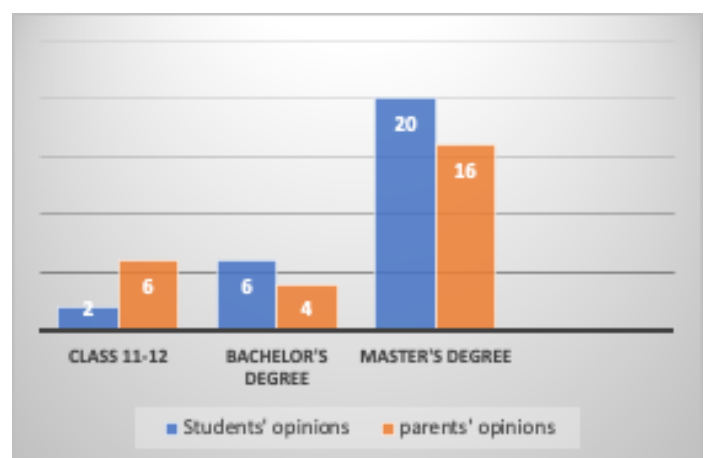


Figure 2: Students' vs parents' opinion of students' educational qualifications.

Article ‘Elementary school pupils’ aspirations for higher education: The role of status attainment, blocked opportunities and school context’ highlights the parental influence for higher education. The survey questions under this article are:

- What educational qualifications do you aspire for
 - Only primary schooling
 - Till middle schooling
 - Till high school
 - Till secondary school
 - Till graduation
 - Till post-graduation
- What are your parents’ opinions? Give reason.

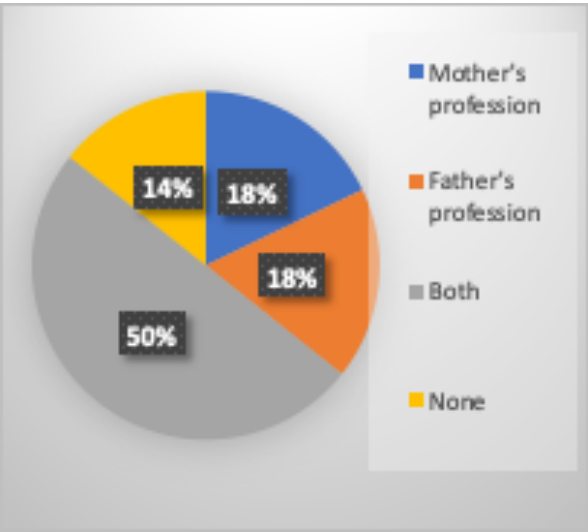


Figure 3: Students’ choice of profession

Another survey question which relates to parental influence for children’s aspirations was to choose between the profession of mother and father.

This article also speaks about the school context that helps in predicting pupils’ educational qualification. As John Dewey states that a school is a society in miniature and that the role of a teacher is to relate home environment with the school environment, an activity – role-play was planned with the learners. With the class of 34 students, seven groups were formed – six groups of five students each and one group of four students. The groups performed a role-play on one of the professions: cobbler, taxi-driver, rickshaw-puller, sweeper, peon, florist and vendor. The objective of this activity was to respect all sorts of labour and develop empathy towards labour classes.

‘Khushbu’ (the name has been changed), a student of V grade was a member with four other classmates and performed a role-play over the struggles of a rickshaw-puller. Co-incidentally, this matched with her father’s profession and this was what made their performance different from the rest. Khushbu was able to narrate several incidents which not only

melted our hearts but also raised awareness about the difficulties faced by the rickshaw-pullers and daily wage earners, like the nights spent on the roadside, unpaid journeys covered, travelling and pulling rickshaw in mid-days with sun at the horizon and also irrespective of rain and fog.

The survey questions and role-play together are in light of the fact that parents and school influence children’s aspirations.

The survey questions from the third article, ‘Capabilities and Aspirations,’ were:

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

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

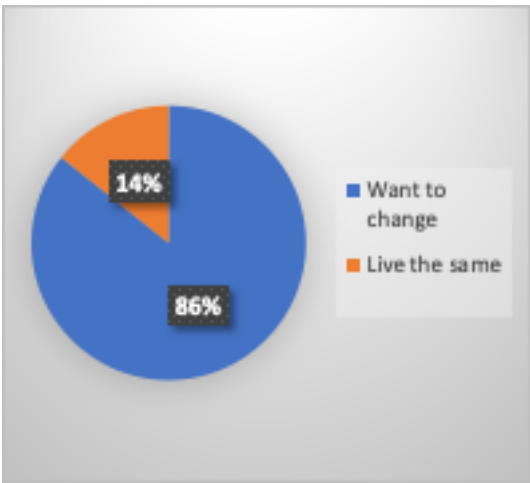


Figure 4: Lifestyle students would like to have.

An activity was done in which students were asked to ‘draw how they see themselves after 15 years from now’. Various responses were given as shown in the table below:

T1: Table showing the aspirations of the students.

Profession	Frequency
Doctor	5
Police inspector	3
Dancer	2
Engineer	1
Air hostess	1
Artist	1
Singer	1
Skating coach	1
Magician	1

Astronaut	1
Prime Minister	1
Actor	1
Ice-cream seller	1
Carom player	1
Teacher	7

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

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

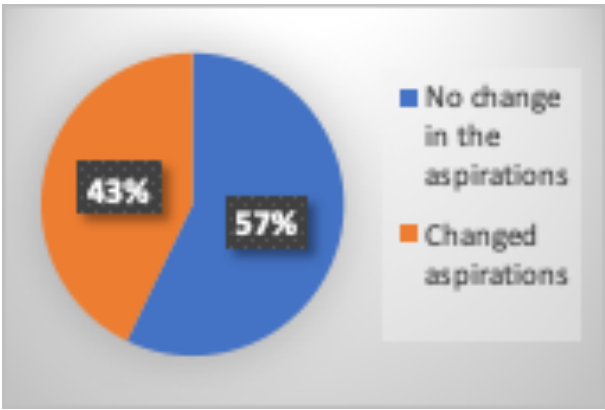


Figure 5: Changes observed in the aspirations over three months.

The article – ‘How do aspirations matter?’ also states that the aspirations may vary with importance and time-scale. The survey question under this article also includes a choice between a better society and a better lifestyle. The survey holds the same opinion as the article does, as about 43% of the learners aspire for a better life-style.

To make sure that every individual is blessed with a talent and that it is important for her or him to identify it and aspire for it, a storytelling session was conducted.

Name of the story – Shifty McGifty and Slippery Sam

Publisher – Nosy Crow

Writer – Tracey Corderoy

Illustrator – Steven Lenton

Genre – Fiction

Summary – Shifty and Sam are two dogs, who are failures in robbing. One day, they planned to rob their neighbour’s house while they would be busy partying. After serving them with tasty items, they decided to rob the place, however it was again a failed attempt. The neighbours praised them for their

hand at cooking and baking and it was then that Shifty and Sam decided to open their café, earn money and respect with their work.

When this text was read in the class, there were some questions raised by the students:

- Are talents hidden?
- Has everyone got a talent? / Is everyone talented?
- How to identify the talent?
- What would be the consequence if I aspire for my talent against the social and financial demands?
- What if I know my talent and I still don’t pursue it?

The answer to the first question was given by one of the students – “It’s not necessary for the talents to be hidden. We may do certain types of work differently and we are simply unaware of the talent that we own.”

“Everyone has a talent, which may or may not be hidden”

“Keep on working and go with the flow and you will realize that you are doing something different or creatively, that’s how you will identify your talent. Sometimes, praises from others also help us know our talent.”

“Meeting the demands of your parents is even possible if your talents help you earn good enough. Society has to be given back. Aspire high and always aspire more for yourself. That’s not selfish”

“Again, the social, personal and emotional or financial priority will come into play. Remember only you can take yourselves to a higher or a lower platform. You can make yourself happy.”

Probably the above statements helped the V graders understand and truly reflect to themselves. Two students were able to make public announcements declaring that no one can mimic like her and no one can dance like her respectively.

‘Cognitive maps of occupations’ states that there are three criteria upon which adolescents develop a sense of ‘acceptable’ occupations, namely, gender, status and field of interest. Based on this, the sample questions were:

Choose one of the following:

- Teacher/ Engineer
- Caretaker/ Carpenter
- Middle class/ Higher class
- Job which interests you/ Job of your parents’ choice

The results are shown in the pie charts. The figures 6 and 7 show that the students’ choices are feminine in nature. This is much in line with the conventional domain of the article - Cognitive maps of occupations.

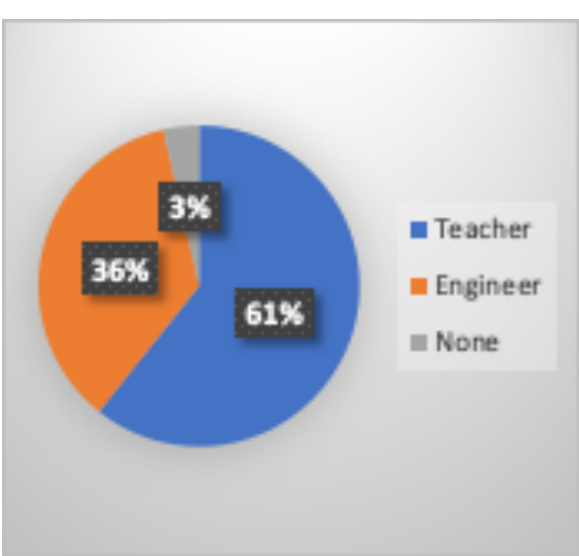


Figure 6: To check the gender-based choices.

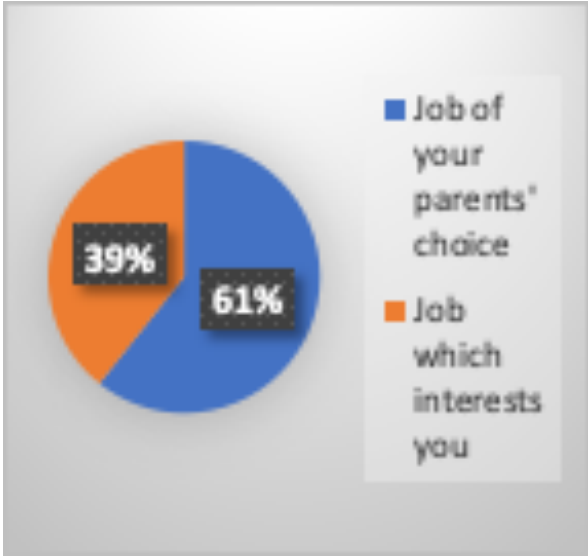


Figure 9: To check the field of interest of learners

- Choose one of the following:
- Good person/ Rich person
- Hindi/ English
- Private job/ Government job

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

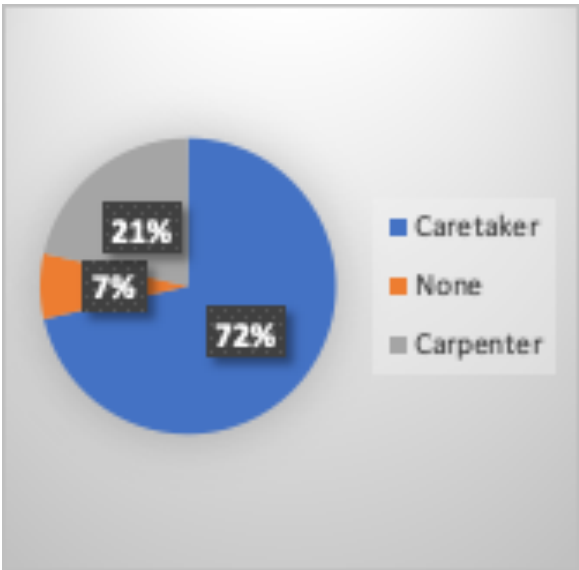


Figure7: To check gender-based choices.

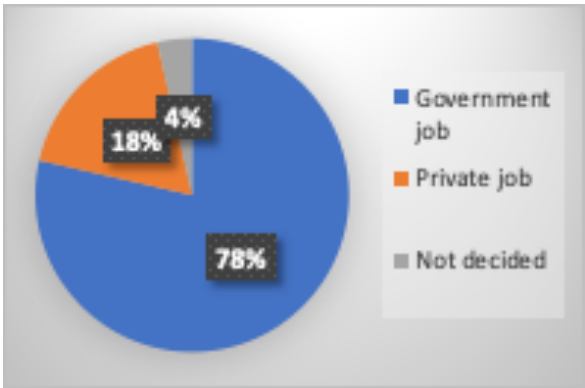


Figure 10: The type of jobs students aspires to have.

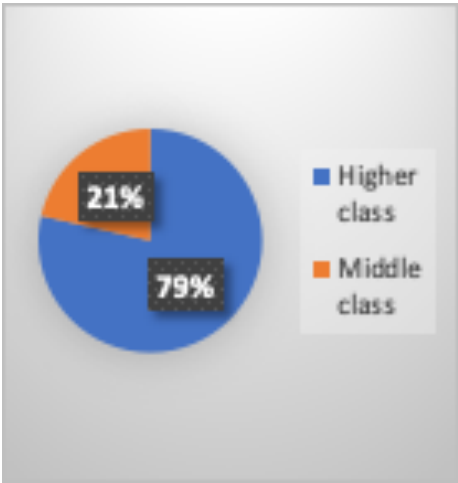


Figure 8: To check the social criterion acting on the students.

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

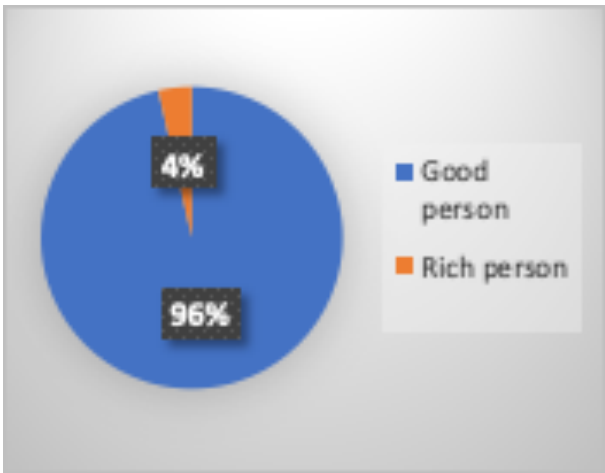


Figure 11: The type of person students aspires to become

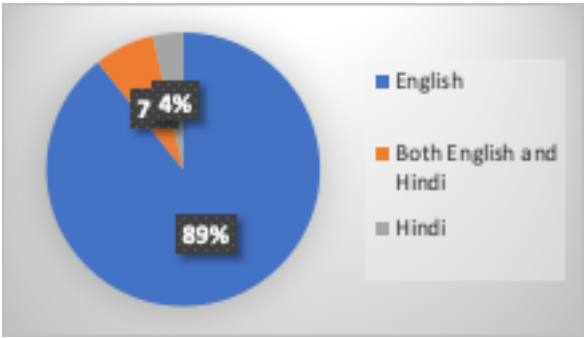


Figure 12: To represent the most influencing language that students wish to master.

The study by Padma Sarangapani does not apply to the V graders as students aspire to be a good person. Figures 10 and 12 are in consonance with the text ‘Constructing School Knowledge’ as students of the author’s study claim to learn English and aspire for a government job, like the sample of this paper.

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

T2: Table showing the frequency of the reasons for selecting a profession:

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

From this table, it is clear that students chose professions which could give them good income. This is much against figure 11 which showed that students aspire for becoming a good person than becoming a rich person. Hence, it can be said that Padma Sarangapani’s study stays valid in this aspect as well.

Money factor and inspiration from teachers, parents and relatives play a dominant role in choosing a profession.

Another question in the survey was to choose between Job with higher income/ Dream job with lower income

The analysis shows that Survey questions from ‘Awakening aspirations of primary school students’ were:

- Have your parents ever denied you for any career option? What is it?

- Which of the following can be denied as your future profession by your parents: Dancer/ Chef/ Political leader/ Ice-cream seller?

The result is as follows:

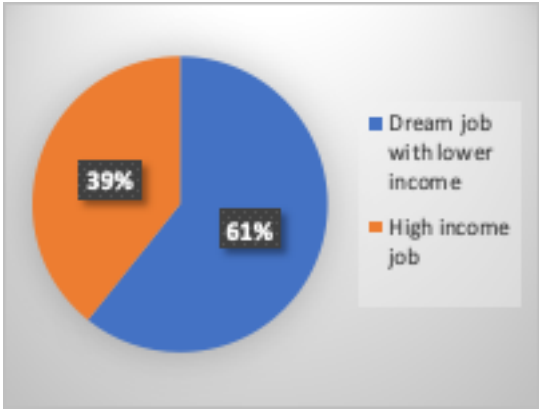


Figure 13: To represent the choice of job in relation to income

Key findings

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

Further research

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

Educational implications

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

Conclusion

This paper has acted as a stimulus upon which the formation of aspirations, its refinement and adaptation of individual or group practices could be reflected and evaluated. To fulfil the objective – ‘to inquire about the dreams and aspirations of young children,’ an activity was taken up where the children had to draw (or simply write) how they see themselves after 15 years. Theories by Ginther, Haveman and Wolfe (2000); Sabic and Jokic (2019); Elsom, Terton and Greenaway (2017) and Hart (2016) suggest that feasibility is subjective and socially situated. It varies as per the agent which can be their resources like some form of capital or their significant others and problem solving will differ.

After 3 months, when in survey students were again asked about their aspirations, 43% changes were noted (figure 5 may be referred), thereby proving the theorists correct. The activity ‘Circle of Influence’ was executed with the objective of enlisting the factors that affect students’ choice of profession. T2 shows the reasons with ‘money’ as the most common factor of influence. Padma (2003) entails that students in her sample aspire for a government job and to become a rich person but in this study only one learner aspires to be a rich person, when asked directly to choose between becoming a rich person or a good person. However, 78% aspires for attaining a government job.

For the objective which demanded ‘to introduce different occupations irrespective of gender or post or income’, several professions were introduced in the form of flashcards. This investigation confirms that there are certain factors which affect the capacity of individuals to be a part of primary and higher education. By favourably this, I mean that the pupils’

aspirations can expand as they gain cognition of the various opportunities or chances available to them. The research agrees with Mullet, Sastre and Semin (1999) as the sample in majority chooses to be caretakers and not carpenters and teachers not engineers, that is, they incline towards the femininity pole of the gender axis (figures 6 and 7 may be referred).

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

‘To build understanding of the nature of aspirations in relation to human development’, role-play was conducted. Students showcased empathic conditions of ‘cobblers’, ‘rickshaw-pullers’, ‘florists’ and other jobs which are considered to be of lower dignity. The research goes in hand with Nathan (2005) stating that the capacity to aspire is related to the past, the history of the group. Reading the interactive book, Shifty McGifty and Slipper Sam, promoted dialogues among the learners and questions from them. The students enjoyed the story. This research also included discussion with children about the aspirations of their parents, the difficulties and formation of the pathways to achieve their aspirations. Gary Crew (1997) has mentioned the future of children as limitless as stars. Children should be encouraged to face the starry sky and should never be criticized. They should dream from a young age.

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National Education Policy 2020: Implication on Mental Health of Students and Teachers

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Abstract

National Education Policy 2020, as we know was declared on July 29, 2020 by the Central Government after an approval by the Union Cabinet. Notwithstanding the undemocratic character of the process of this policy making. The policy claimed to revitalize all and sundry aspects of education. In this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the implication of DNEP 2020 on mental health of the students and teachers in the light of various provisions related to foundational literacy and numeracy, curriculum and pedagogy and term and conditions related to the services of teachers. If we look upon the criterion of mental health that is fulfilment of relationship, adaptability in accordance with given situation, and involvement in productive activities. It appears that DNEP 2020 is not going to provide mental peace or mental health to both students and teachers. For students it is likely to increase their load of learning while giving undue emphasis upon various subjects, skills and especially archaic value. The process of assessment, characterised by extremely centralized structure suggests a level of distrust not only of teachers and students rather of the entire internal mechanism. The provision of conducting internal examinations by external authorities is going to prove to be a deadly burden to students. DNEP 2020 is also likely to increase mental troubles of teachers on a permanent basis through its conception of the structure and mechanism related to recruitment, terms and conditions of service of teachers, and proposal of career management progression which is highly subjective and purely new liberal in all respects. Where there will be no place for a teacher's voice to raise their grievances in the form of any collective entity whether subject organisation/association or teacher union in real sense of the term.

Introduction

National Education Policy 2020, as we know was declared on July 29, 2020 by the central government after an approval by the Union Cabinet. It is important to know that this policy was declared bypassing the parliament of the country, as it was not placed before parliament for deliberation and discussion. Similarly, states were not taken into confidence while preparing this policy. Notwithstanding the undemocratic character of the process of this policy making. Policy claimed to revitalise all and sundry aspects of education. Since the government did not follow the parliamentary convention related to deliberation and discussion on this policy. Therefore, it will be appropriate to call it the Draft of National Education Policy 2020(henceforth DNEP 2020).

In this paper an attempt has been made to analyse the implication of DNEP 2020 on mental health of the students and teachers in the light of various provisions related to foundational

literacy and numeracy, curriculum and pedagogy and term and conditions related to the services of teachers. Analysis is confined upto impact related to mental health, and it has been looked at in the context of school education only.

Before entering into the discussion and analysis of various provisions of DNEP 2020 in the context of mental health of the students and teachers it appears to be worthwhile to understand the conception of mental health in a brief manner. Mental health is often referred to the conditions of mentality of any individual thereby any individual could pursue various activities (mental as well as physical) without any undue stress and tension.

According to Dr. Mike Condra, “ the mental health of any individual can be analysed on the basis of three criterion (1) Involvement in any kind of productive activity. (2) Involvement and pursuance of relationship of various kinds. (3) An ability to adapt in accordance with changing situation in an appropriate manner. He further

opines that mental health of any individual can be viewed in contrast to some symptoms of mental illness such as lack of concentration, unpleasant changes in the behaviour, lack of feeling of pleasure and happiness and irregular and unpredictable expression of some unwanted or an undesirable act". Thus it appears that mental health is that state of mind of any individual in which one feels stress free while undertaking any activity whether it be studying and learning for students, teaching for teacher and pursuance of any work by an individual with which one is associated.

In the light of the broad parameter of mental health, we shall try to look at the various provisions of DNEP 2020 with the view to understand that in which manner these provisions are going to affect the mental health of the students and teachers.

ECCE, foundational learning and mental health

DNEP 2020 claimed to achieve a well-rounded holistic development of learner through the various provision of the same as it states the fundamental principles that will guide both the education system at large, as well as the individual institutions within it are: recognizing, identifying, and fostering the unique capabilities of each student, by sensitizing teachers as well as parents to promote each student's holistic development in both academic and non-academic spheres; according the highest priority to achieving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy.

The underlying assumption of above fundamental principles clearly reveals that put together policy of foundational learning seems to promote the push on acquiring the skills of reading, writing and numeracy at the completion of grade 3 i.e. at the age of 5. This is not merely detrimental to mental health of the children rather equally harmful to the physical health of the children. Though theoretically above two fundamental principles commit to some extent for non-academic aspects of education. However it is evidently clear from public perception (which is being promoted by the nexus of politician, bureaucrats, corporate and the lobbies of the private players which runs all kinds of private schools) that people are by default aspire to make learn their children literacy, numeracy and other cognitive skills at

the earliest possible age. Many researches suggest that people do not seem to be ready to understand the ill-effect of that kind of hasty learning. Prof. Krishan Kumar drew our attention towards the ill-effects of such earlier exposure of reading writing and numeracy to children in one of the high profile webinar held at Indian International Centre on 25th of September 2020. While referring various international studies, he concluded that by all psychological standards and theory of learning. It is inadvisable to expose the children to reading so long they are not able to understand the meaning of particular text which they are expected to read.

Furthermore he pointed out that at this tender age when their bones are in the process of formation and stability it is inappropriate to expose them to the process of writing.

DNEP 2020 recognises that 85 percent of the brain development occurs prior to the age of 6 (though this claim is contested by various studies), therefore best possible effort should be done to provide a conducive environment to children for their holistic development. In accordance with this understanding DNEP 2020 seeks to coin the rationale for beginning of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) from the age of 3. In the earlier years of the education it has been suggested that children should be nourished through good nutritious food and activity based education such as playway activity, inquiry based learning comprising of alphabets, languages, numbers, counting, colours, shapes, indoor and outdoor play, puzzles and logical thinking, problem-solving, drawing, painting and other visual art, craft, drama and puppetry, music and movement. Furthermore policy seeks to achieve a number of skills and values of which many are highly abstract in nature which includes among other developing social capacities, sensitivity, good behaviour, courtesy, ethics, personal and public cleanliness, teamwork, and cooperation etc.

Policy envisages optimal outcomes in the domains of: physical and motor development, cognitive development, socio-emotional-ethical development, cultural/artistic development, and the development of communication and early language, literacy, and numeracy as an overarching aim of ECCE. The list of our referred domain of learning and items of learning is problematic in many ways. The

expectation of the alleged optimal outcome of learning for this very age i.e 3 to 5 are beyond the recommendation of any major theory of learning whether it is Piaget's theory of cognitive development or theory of social learning of Bandura or Vygotsky's theory of Sociocultural Development or any other theory. None of these theories proposes to attach such an abstract and multiple expectation of learning by the children at this age. For all practical purposes it seems utterly difficult to achieve these laudable objectives of Early Childhood Care and Education with the existing structure of Anganwadis, balwadis and pre schools along with the proposed shift in the structure of ECCE. Most of the critics apprehended quite correctly that ultimately it will land upon imposition of literacy and numeracy on children in much earlier age, which has already begun to happen in metropolitan cities, small and semi-urban towns of various states. DNEP 2020 considers basic reading, writing and preliminary operations of arithmetic as essential prerequisite for foundational development of the education of children. On the basis of some dubiously designed survey by various non-governmental agencies it concludes that large number of students of elementary grade are not able to perform the literary and numeral skill as per the expectations adhered to their respective grades/classes. This problem has been highlighted as a learning crisis with best possible drum beats to demonstrate the alleged openness and transparency. (Ironically enough number of open and naked crisis and reality of the Indian society have been dubbed under the carpet by this policy as policy author are totally unaware or knobby about the reality of the caste system, deteriorated condition of the tribal people, subjugation of women, discrimination meted out to person with disability, plight of minority and above all constitutional provision of reservation for SC/ST/OBC/person with disability, women etc.). Policy proposes Activity Based Learning with the help of a workbook and other teaching – learning methods which virtually seem to focus upon learning of literacy and numeral skills. Further the policy proposes National Literacy Mission and online platforms to promote foundational learning which are problematic in various manners. The proposal of National Literacy Mission clearly reveals that policy regards foundational education in terms of numeracy and literacy only, which is one part of

education but it cannot be synonymous of education. The emphasis on online platforms at this level is nothing more than infatuation to concessional plunder by the world of online racketeers with total obliviousness about the impact of use of the screens of various electronic devices such as computers, mobile phones, television etc. Many critics pointed out that learning through online platforms is meant to promote the business of Edu-business Company which are directly or indirectly part of the nexuses which is promoting this kind of idea.

In this very section, the policy talks about promotion and spread of the network of libraries which may be regarded as a welcome step at the outset. However, the preferences of this government in practice suggest merely that if these kinds of libraries are opened, these will be filled with religio-moral and communal literature which is designed to socialise the children to just learn Hindu supremacist ideology. Mere moral preaching through books cannot lead to open ended expansion of mental horizon of any individual/children. These preferences are mentioned in chapter 4 of this policy namely 'Curriculum and Pedagogy' as it states children will have the opportunity to read and learn from the original stories of the Panchatantra, Jataka, Hitopadesh, and other fun fables and inspiring tales from the Indian tradition and learn about their influences on global literature. Policy recognises the importance of healthy and nutritious food in the process of cognitive and physical development and proposes to provide the additional morning breakfast along with existing mid day meal which appear to be positive step for the nourishment of the children. It further proposed to provide dry breakfast in form of groundnuts, channa mixed with jaggery wherever it would be difficult to provide cooked hot breakfast. The alternative proposal of dry breakfast seems apparently to do something instead of doing nothing. However, critics suspects on the basis of concrete evidence that it is an attempt to give backdoor entry to packed food especially to the lobby of biscuit industry. Professor R. Govinda recorded in his speech in one of the webinars organised by Council of Social Development of the Society, New Delhi that we struggle hard to prevent the biscuit industry from entering into the arena of mid day meal. Thus it is sufficiently clear that this provision of dry breakfast is also meant to facilitate the entry of private packed food

industry. Policy promises to have regular health checkup of the students at ECCE level including primary education to the tune of health checkups in the Anganwadis. However it does not mention specific indicators to check the mental health of the children at any level. It is equally important to know that the provision of regular health checkups of the students at least upto the level of matriculation or tenth standard is already there under various schemes so there is nothing new has been initiated under this Policy.

Curriculum and pedagogy and mental health

The issue of mental health of the children has been ignored most blatantly in the section devoted to Curriculum and Pedagogy which has been included as chapter 4 in the document. This section is probably the lengthiest section given in the policy aspiring virtually to cover probably everything in the universe. We will analyse some key areas of curriculum and pedagogy which are clear testimony of the flagrant violation of the indicator of the mental health. For instance, the issue of multilingualism and power of language is the most important concern which is fit for such analyses. This section has been written from 4.11 to 4.21 as part of chapter 4 with great passion as learning of languages itself is an ultimate attainment of moksha or nirvana. This section underscore the importance of acquisition of linguistic knowledge or innate ability of grasping languages by the children from the age of 2-8. On the basis of recent research without singling out any important study and its data in this regard. The prima facie such claims are dubious and controversial in its nature according to Prof. Joga Singh of Linguistics Department of Punjabi University Patiala, Punjab. There are a number of researches and prevailing practices which are contrary to such claims. To him, in countries like China and a number of European Countries languages other than mother language are taught between age of 9-15. He cited many examples in the webinar of All India Forum of Right to Education (AIFRTE) on the subject related to NEP 2020 and issue of languages. From various countries where a number of languages are taught at a later age.

Policy seems to steal undue credit for the inclusion of the idea of education in mother tongue as it contains the provision to provide education in mother tongue/ home language/ regional language upto primary level and wishes to continue the same upto elementary level with

the rider of “wherever it is possible.” This rider apparently meant to provide back door exemption to private schools which are run in English medium irrespective of their eligibility to fulfill norms of Right to Education Act 2009. It is noteworthy that there is a constitutional obligation upon the centre and state government to provide education in mother tongue upto primary level under Article 350A of the Constitution of India. In accordance with the spirit of this very Article previous to educational policy also strongly advocated the idea of education in mother tongue upto primary level. Had this provision been made compulsory to all schools irrespective of their nature and character it would have certainly proved to be a great step to provide some kind of mental relief to the children of India. The way it has been proposed in the DNEP 2020 it will surely increase the mental burden on children which may jeopardize their mental health considerably.

Like the earlier policy DNEP 2020 also contained the three language formula to promote the linguistic and regional harmony in the state. The way this formula has been conceptualised is not free from the biases of the government in favour of Hindi and Sanskrit, which are been promoted both directly or indirectly to appease the Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh (RSS) and its allied organisations. Taken together DNEP 2020 proposes the necessity of learning four to six languages including one foreign language from Grade 3 to Grade 12 which is a tyranny over the mental health of the children. Children will have to study a number of other subjects also which will surely increase their mental burden at substantial level. In order to learn the four to six languages number of projects and activities have been suggested in DNEP 2020 which includes gamification and quizzes on the basis of various apps and other online mediums, which will increase the engagement of students with digital screen which is again injurious for their mental as well as their physical health.

DNEP 2020 proposes elimination of disciplinary boundaries as well as hard separation of the various academic streams such as arts, commerce, science, vocational education and academic education. It tends to replace an existing arrangement of above mentioned academic streams with the jumbling of various subjects and alleged vocation in a strange manner. Though its blueprint in detail is yet to

come through the National Curricular Framework of Secondary Education, yet the outline of the same seems utterly confusing. Critics are of the opinion that this kind of framework may be most troublesome to a large number of first generation learners. On account of lack of appropriate guidance about selection of the subject from the family, they might end up with most unwanted choices of the subject. See an interview of Prof. Rohit Dhankar (Professor of Philosophy of Education) Azim Premji University, Bangalore. If we look at the list of subjects, skills, and values given in the 4th chapter of NEP 2020 from 4.23 to 4.28 we find that an attempt is made to teach too much from Grade 3 to Grade 12 which is a totally unjust and criminal joke with the mental health of the children. These subjects vary in its degree and nature in a comprehensive manner which ranges from physical fitness to artificial intelligence and global citizenship education. Similarly in terms of skills it covers a wide variety of skills ranging from simple communication to mathematical reasoning and artificial intelligence etc.. It seems inappropriate here to give the entire list of skills, subjects and values which is given in the above mentioned points of the chapter 4.

Transforming assessment for student development and mental health

The entire process of education turned largely superfluous when it is integrally connected with examination or assessment. The process of examination proves the most serious blow to the mental health of the children. We have witnessed numerous cases of children suicide due to exam related stress in last many years. This anxiety led to a number of reforms especially to the various provisions of Right to Education Act 2009. DNEP 2020 pushed back the agenda of examination reform at least 10 years back. The careful analysis of the section of DNEP 2020 which is related to the process of assessment clearly testifies this seemingly harsh statement. In the 4th chapter of DNEP 2020 there is a section which runs from 4.34 to 4.42 entitled, “Transforming Assessment for Student Development”. The careful study of this section establishes sufficiently that on the name of transforming assessment policy did not only centralise the system of assessment rather it distrusted both teachers and students. While sealing off non-detention policy in its totality, policy proposed examination at third, fifth and

eighth standard as an internal examination. However, these examinations are supposed to be conducted by an external agency which may even be the National Testing Agency. Furthermore, policy proposes to continue the board exams at 10th and 12th level more or less according to existing patterns. The involvement of the external agency in the initial grades of the school structure (3rd, 5th and 8th) with a view to emphasis on learning outcome without due weightage to process based learning will increase the mental anxiety of children, parents, teachers and heads of the school irrespective of their nomenclature. This stress will surely affect the mental wellbeing of all the stakeholders in a considerable manner. The proposed pattern of board exam with the preposition of minor and major subjects is further likely to compound the mental stress of the stakeholder. The so-called meritocracy approach in the selection of minor and major subjects is likely to prove stigmatic against those children who will make mathematics or science as their minor subject. Policy contained the provision of the National Assessment Centre under the ages of NCERT and agencies like PARKH to carry out and regulate the various aspects of assessment. This step is an indication of extreme centralisation of the process of assessment. A little involvement of the teacher in the entire process of assessment seems to engulf the sense of distrust upon the teacher in the society. In all probability this will lead to the large scale marginalisation and alienation among teachers which will further weaken their academic and social prestige in the society.

In the last part of the chapter 4 on curriculum and pedagogy policy proposes to provide support and impetus to gifted children and advocates the innate talents of the alleged gifted students. Furthermore, in point 4.45 a considerable emphasis is given upon organisation and participation of the children in various kinds of national and international competitions including Olympiads at various levels. Policy also proposes to link the achievements of the students in such competitions with the admission process at higher levels of education (probably at senior secondary, under graduation and post graduation level). These proposals are not only against the theory of learning rather these proposals are also meant to undermine the sense of collectivity at the expense of extreme individuality. The ill-effect of such provision on the mental health or

mental make-up of rural and less exposed resourceless children of urban areas are self evident or self explanatory. This kind of provision may led to exclusion of resourceless children from the entire landscape of education. The provisions are totally against the recommendation and spirit of the most widely hailed report of the National Advisory Committee to reduce the load of learning (which is popularly known as Prof. Yaspal Committee Report on learning without burden). In this report Yashpal Committee seriously recommended the reduction of individuality-based competition.

As the report states, “A number of organisations and departments organise competitions at district, state and national level for students in various fields such as school subjects, exhibitions, essay writing, elocution, etc. Perhaps the spirit behind these activities is to recognise and reward the talent in diverse fields. But, unfortunately this tends to produce somewhat unhealthy singling out of people for their brief moment of glory. Competitions where individual achievement is rewarded need to be discouraged since they deprive children of joyful learning. However, group activities and group achievements must be encouraged and rewarded to give a boost to cooperative learning in schools.

Teachers, teacher education and service conditions

Teachers are the cornerstone of any educational agenda whether it is educational policies, framework or any program of action because teachers are the prime agencies by which educational programs are translated into reality. Previous to education policy accorded very esteemed position to the teachers not only on paper rather they proposed some concrete steps to maintain and uphold the respectable status to teacher in academic and social milieu. They recognised teacher collective in form of their subject association and teacher union and placed onus of them as a collective at least to implement certain aspects related to the educational policies.

DNEP 2020 tends to project illusively enough without recognising the fact that the importance of teachers has been duly acknowledged in earlier policy also. It claims that the teacher has been given a central position in the educational

processes at first time in this policy as it writes “The teacher must be at the centre of the fundamental reforms in the education system. The new education policy must help to re-establish teachers, at all levels, as the most respected and essential members of our society, because they truly shape our next generation of citizens. It must do everything to empower teachers and help them to do their job as effectively as possible. The new education policy must help recruit the very best and brightest to enter the teaching profession at all levels, by ensuring livelihood, respect, dignity, and autonomy, while also instilling in the system basic methods of quality control and accountability.”

The above quote is an opening remark in the DNEP 2020. Apparently it sounds very progressive and forward looking with true efforts to uphold the dignity of the teaching community. The decoding of the implication gradually leads towards a hidden agenda of making teachers such servient of the nexus of politicians, bureaucrats, corporate and private entrepreneurs of various kinds. In this very quote the term quality control is clearly indicative of the corporate style of management in which all the functionaries are viewed as nothing more than cog in the machine. The recent trend of various kinds of contractual recruitment of the teachers with very retrogressive terms and conditions of services are clear testimonies themselves towards the direction which is likely to get followed and the kind of mental trauma which it is likely to produce in the life of teachers.

In DNEP 2020, three different chapters have been exclusively devoted to discuss the role and term and condition of the services of the teachers. Of them two chapters namely chapter 13 ‘Motivated, Energized and Capable Faculty’ and chapter 15 ‘Teacher Education’ are placed in the part related to higher education and chapter 5 entitled ‘Teachers’ is mentioned in the part related to school education. The careful analysis of above mentioned three chapters clearly suggests that there is considerable reiteration and repetition of certain conditionality which have been originally mentioned in the chapter 5th i.e. Teachers. There are some specific provisions related to the terms and conditions of the teachers which should cause serious concern and alarm for the career of teachers and definitely they will take away the mental peace from the

life of teachers. For instance, point 5.5 of DNEP 2020 proposes that, “To ensure an adequate number of teachers across subjects - particularly in subjects such as art, physical education, vocational education, and languages - teachers could be recruited to a school or school complex and the sharing of teachers across schools could be considered in accordance with the grouping-of-schools adopted by State/UT governments”. It implies that teacher of certain subject such as art, craft and physical education etc. will be appointed at school complex level or at the level of grouping of the school under any kind of physical nomenclature and they will have to roam around across various schools and they will not be able to establish constant bonding with the children and teachers of one school. Their nature of job will be unstable at least in terms of workload and station. Point 5.10 of DNEP 2020 authorises State/UT to adapt and innovative many formats, such as school complex, rationalisation of schools, without in any way reducing accessibility, for effective school governance, resource sharing, and community building. For all practical purposes implication of such rationalisation is synonymous to closure and shifting of various schools from one location to another which will render many teachers jobless or partially employed. Furthermore, such rationalisation will compel frequent shifting or transfer of a number of teachers from one place to another which will negatively impact upon their mental health.

DNEP 2020 considered a central piece of innovative idea to its proposal of alleged, ‘a robust merit-based structure of tenure, promotion, and salary structure’ without giving detail with concrete examples of such merit based salary structure. It promises to develop a promotion system in such a way that with outstanding work one can be promoted at higher level at least in terms of salary while technically remaining in the same cadre. (This alleged innovative idea tends to suggest mischievously enough that as if there was not any system of promotion to promote the primary teacher at all. The advocates of this policy are trying to put praiseworthy phrases and sentences in the mouth of the teacher as if primary teachers are most thrilled with these measures and they are likely to be most benefited by this system of promotion.) Policy proposes performance based system of appraisal of the performance instead of temporal promotion and increments on the

basis of the seniority or the length of tenure. According to this document, ‘A system of multiple parameters for proper assessment of performance will be developed for the same by State/UT Governments that is based on peer reviews, attendance, commitment, hours of CPD, and other forms of service to the school and the community or based on NPST’. It is noteworthy that most of the above referred indicators are highly subjective and totally depend upon the whims and fancy of the immediate bosses and bureaucrats to interpret the performance of any teacher in accordance with their own convenience. It is very much obvious that in case concerned authorities are displeased with any teacher they can prevent the promotion and financial benefit of that person. The current practices and autocratic mode of functioning of existing dispensation. All those teachers who do not confirm the ideology and practices of this regime can be conveniently penalised for the same. DNEP 2020 in point 5.20 contained in plain terms that parameters for performance appraisal will be strictly devised at all the levels. It further affirms that, ‘Promotions and salary increases will not occur based on the length of tenure or seniority, but only on the basis of such appraisal’. It evidently establishes that days are about to go when teacher had permanent tenure of service and temporal promotion and increments. New career management system of teacher is purely in line with corporate style of management which virtually terms every worker as casual labour. Coupled with the ideology of Hindu supremacism adopted by current dispensation, this will be led to manifold exploitation of the teacher. Above all this should be taken into account with utmost seriousness that DNEP 2020 does not recognise the existence of teacher organisations or teacher unions directly or indirectly at any level rather it may go into extent upto banning all such disadvantage in one go. How it will influence mental health of the teacher probably need not to be repeated here.

Conclusion

In lieu of conclusion it can be inferred that if we look upon the criterion of mental health that is fulfillment of relationship, adaptability in accordance with given situation, and involvement in productive activities. It appears that DNEP 2020 is not going to provide mental peace or mental health to both students and

teachers. For students it is likely to increase their load of learning while giving undue emphasis upon various subjects, skills and especially archaic value. The process of assessment which is supposed to distrust not only teachers and students but rather the entire internal mechanism of assessment is going to be a deadly burden for students as internal examination is conducted by external authorities. Furthermore, the conception of promotion of national and international competition such as Olympiads at various levels along with its interlinkage with the admission process at higher levels of education is likely to

remain the source of constant tension for students. DNEP 2020 is likely to increase mental troubles of teacher on permanent basis through its conception of the structure and mechanism related to recruitment, terms and conditions of service of teacher, and proposal of career management progression which is highly subjective and purely new liberal in all respects, where there will no place for teacher's voice to raise their grievances in form of any collective entity whether subject organisation/association or teacher union in real sense of the term.

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Mental Health Programme for Schools on Bullying

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Abstract

This mental health program on "Bullying" consists of multiple sessions to be conducted in the month of October as one session per week, starting from October 10 (World Mental Health Day) for classes 9-12. This program is designed keeping in mind the broader context of "bullying culture" in formal and informal spaces both inside and outside the school. It will help in initiating the conversation around the prevalent issues related to bullying amongst students and teachers. These sessions will provide a safe space to students in creating positive self-concept, understanding themselves as well as others and confronting uncomfortable situations that involve unfair acts, mean verbal remarks etc. It will give them a platform where through activities, they will learn to manage their emotions and engage in honest communication, thereby creating an empathetic attitude towards the bully and the bullied. It will also open up the scope of reflecting and discussing prominent issues with a focus on problem-solving instead of playing the endless blame game. This program intends to develop accountability in students for their words/actions and also equips them with various life skills that will help them in challenging the bullying culture.

Introduction/Rationale

Schools are an extension of the primary safe space (home and family) in which the child grows up and learns to engage with the outside world. It shapes the social identity of the child by providing ample opportunities to express his/her individual and collective sense of self. The child experiences school as a microcosm of society that contributes to his/her social development in many ways. Children are prepared there for life to come and face the world. But in the same way, school has the potential to impart low self-esteem, negative self-concept, indifferent and insensitive attitudes or belief systems towards the self and others while shaping their identities.

Bullying is a prevalent phenomenon in schools among students that perpetuate in many forms. It can be physical, verbal or, in contemporary times, cyber on individual or group level. The power relations, formal and informal, lead to misuse of the strength and support that, even though noticed, goes unaddressed. The bystanders unintentionally increase the support system of the bully by not taking any action even if they feel the actions taking place are morally wrong. The person bullied can be affected physically, mentally and emotionally not being able to cope with the situation. The students bullying, being bullied and the onlookers, all lack some or the other life skills needed for a mentally healthy life.

Factors responsible for Bullying

1. Insecurities around Body Image, Self and Identity.
2. Discrimination based on Race, Caste, Religion, Gender, Sexuality, Disability.
3. Ignorant and insensitive attitude towards others.
4. Manifestation of one's weaknesses on others to appear cool, strong and popular.
5. Unrealistic notions of beauty shaped by popular media.

This mental health program is designed to help students understand how self-esteem is shaped and influenced, how everyone unknowingly is a part of bullying-culture and helping them develop some coping strategies after identifying their own position in this structure.

Life skills development

The program emphasizes on the following life skills in the procedure: empathy, self-awareness, critical thinking, problem solving and development of interpersonal relationships.

Objectives of the program:

1. To sensitize students against bullying culture.
2. To make students aware of the acts counted as bullying.

3. To strengthen their critical and emotional thinking.
4. To equip students to stand against any bullying incident in or outside school by fellow students, seniors and teachers.

Broad plan of the program:

1. Four-day program
2. Four sessions: with class 9, 10, 11 and 12 students,

Aspects to be covered in the sessions:

The first session will be reading- based and understanding Bullying theoretically. The students will engage in discussions while the teachers of the school may also be involved in this session.

The second session aims at developing self-awareness in students and acknowledging the fact that everyone of us has something or other to be proud of and feel happy about. The second activity in this session helps students to identify how they would react to some uncomfortable situations and seek alternative ways for it.

The third session is designed for students to empathize with others' perspectives and be sensitive about their feelings.

The fourth session empowers students with some effective communication skills to handle difficult situations. Their skills of problem-solving, communication and negotiation are put to test through a set of two activities.

Session 1 - Theoretical Base

Specific Objectives:

1. To reflect on students' understanding of Bullying.
2. To be aware about the different types of Bullying and the probable consequences of Bullying.

Activity: Open Discussion (30 Minutes)

In the first session of the mental health programme some news articles will be read and presented after the students have shared their understanding of Bullying. Articles will be discussed in great detail to sensitise and inform students about Bullying.

These news articles may include the following:

"A Teacher's Thoughts on Our New National Culture of Bullying" (The Wire, May 7, 2019)

"Is your child being bullied? Deal with it before it's too late!" (The Indian Express, August 6, 2018)

"Anti-Bullying Laws in India" (<https://blog.ipleaders.in/bullying/>)

Students will be encouraged to point out the issues identified in relation to Bullying from the above readings. This will help students realise and vocalise their concerns along with finding solutions to handle them. The facilitator will also get insights into the thinking processes of students which will help her in addressing the upcoming sessions.

Session 2 - Self- Awareness

Specific Objectives:

1. To make them recognise their strengths and what they are good at.
2. To boost their self-esteem through acceptance of self and others.
3. To learn ways to manage one's emotions.
4. To empathise with the situation of others.
5. To critically think and appreciate the perspective of others.

Activity 1: Creating Positive Self Concept (30 Minutes)

Students will be asked to reflect on five positive points about themselves and their mates. The facilitator will encourage learners to take some time and think about them in silence without consulting them with their friends. They will be asked to use words describing their internal characteristics, like "I am a helpful person," "I cannot see people in pain," "I say good jokes" or "I always keep secrets" "I am a good dancer".

The facilitator will encourage students to share these points, both about themselves and their mates. She will tell everyone that we all feel good when others value and appreciate us for reasons we are not aware of. It is equally important for all of us to recognize our special abilities and feel good about them even when others fail to see them in us.

Ask the students if they have ever thought about themselves this way. Some students may say yes, others may say no. Discuss with them how we seldom sit down to think and list what is special about us - our talents, abilities and what we do best. The facilitator may also stress on how and why is it important to know one's own strengths and also appreciate other people's strengths.

Activity 2: Managing Emotions (30 Minutes)

Students will be asked to reflect on incidents of Bullying that may have happened to them or a friend. Encourage them to share the emotions or feelings attached to those incidents or events,

allowing them to freely associate their feelings in a group of three. Facilitator will ask some of the students to describe the event and the feeling associated with the event in a sentence.

For example:

- I felt sad when a senior started calling me Black Beast and even encouraged others too to do the same.
- I felt ashamed when everybody stared at me the day, I was wearing a skirt. Some of them even laughed and shouted Fatso, Thunder Thighs and Bulldozer behind my back.
- I was very angry when a mean guy suddenly barged in my way and I fell on the ground hurting myself.

Facilitator will ask the students how they reacted to the situations cited.

For example:

- I cried a lot.
- I ran away and tied a shirt around my waist.
- I ignored it.

Now the facilitator may ask the students how the same incident could have been handled differently so that there is a positive outcome or accountability on the part of the Bully.

For example:

- I could have asserted myself confidently by telling everyone what my name was.
- I could have looked everyone in the eye and walked with my head held high like the models advocating Body Positivity.
- I could have questioned or confronted him for pushing me on purpose.

The facilitator will conclude by stressing the need to not give in to the Bully's remarks by being meek or weak. It is important to realise the insecurity behind Bullies and not react to situations as affected by them or their actions like crying, looking downwards, shaking with fear etc. Also, participating in the group task will help in building empathy amongst the group members and everyone would learn a myriad of ways on how to respond with an understanding approach instead of acting irrationally. It is important to emphasize the fact that it is in our hands to manage our emotions and we must not allow the situation or circumstances to control our emotions and feelings. Therefore, we should not let negative feelings or emotions govern and belittle our sense of self over time.

Session 3 - Empathize with Others

Specific Objectives:

1. To put oneself in others' position and think from their perspective.
2. To critically reflect on one's words and actions as well as how they have an impact on others.

Activity: Theatre of the Oppressed (30 Minutes)

Facilitator will ask students to get ready for the role playing. They will be encouraged to pair up and decide who's going to play the Bully and the Bullied. They can act out any bullying scene they've come across or witnessed somewhere. They will be asked not to physically harm each other as part of the Bullying act. Bullying is limited to continuous verbal/visual remarks on one's physical appearance or incompetency at a task mostly and if it turns into violent acts it will be counted as physical assault.

Students will be asked to perform the act. These acts will be followed by certain questions to make learners think, question and discuss the prevalence of Bullying at considerably safe spaces like school, home, neighbourhood etc.

The following questions may be asked from the students:

- What is the specific issue showcased in the act?
- How was the experience? Did you feel any kind of discomfort?
- What could be the reasons behind this discomfort you feel? What kind of emotions were evoked?
- What are the possible ways the Bullied could have handled the situation?
- Imagine yourself as the Bully and reflect on the thought process of Bully. Why does the Bully overpowers the Bullied?

The facilitator may conclude by addressing the need to be sensitive towards others and recognizing the needs of others. Not just empathising with the bullied but also looking for reasons behind the Bully's behavior.

Session 4 - Communication and Negotiation

Specific Objectives:

1. To be able to express their point assertively.
2. To resolve conflicts through effective negotiation.

3. To establish good interpersonal relationships.

Activity 1: Making My Point (40 minutes)

This activity is designed to give them space where, through enactment, they can revisit some of such situations and become thoughtful of the need for effectively communicating their thoughts in such situations. Further, this activity aims to assert the role of effective communication in establishing good interpersonal relationships.

The facilitator may begin by asking the students to share an incident where misunderstanding occurred because communication was unclear. The students may be divided into smaller groups of 5-6 and ask them to pick up a chit and prepare a role play on the suggestive plot. The facilitator may note that the plots remain incomplete and the students may be asked to evolve concerns on communication of their own as well.

- Everyday Sonu and his gang of friends stop Sudhir while he is on his way to school. They snatch away his bag and throw away all his books. One day Sudhir decides to talk to them.....
- Rani reaches school late almost every day. The facilitator scolds her, but she does not tell her that she gets late as she drops her younger brother to his school on her way to school.....
- Akram's father gets angry with him over his selection of Humanities stream in class 11 and keeps drawing comparisons with his elder sister who is pursuing MBBS.....
- While Meenu was carrying a tray of glasses to offer water to the guests, she slipped and all the 5 glasses that she was carrying fell and broke. Her mother came and without listening to any of her clarifications slapped her.....
- A teacher of your's once read out loud in the class, a paragraph, from an English test paper of your classmate that was full of errors. A group of students now started teasing that child using that cue.....

Once the students have enacted the plays the facilitator may explain to the group the difference between passive, aggressive and assertive communication. Further, they may talk to them about ways for assertive communication. The facilitator may bring the activity to closure by reiterating the role of effective communication in making one's point clear.

Notes to the facilitator:

1. Passive communication means to communicate in a "weak" way. You have confused body language, which shows you are weak, timid, undecided and have low self-esteem.
2. Aggressive communication means to communicate in a way that threatens to punish the other person if your feelings, opinions or desires are not accepted. You have threatening and forceful body language.
3. Assertive communication means to communicate in a way that does not seem rude or threatening to others. You are standing up for your opinion, ideas, feelings, for your rights without endangering the rights of others. You have strong, steady but nonthreatening body language.

Activity 2: Resolving Conflict Situation (30 minutes)

Through this activity, we may communicate to the students that any conflict situation can be resolved by taking the right actions and with sincere intentions. Instead of arguments and fights, they may be introduced to alternative ways to address conflicting situations through discussion and dialogue. The facilitator may emphasise the importance of keeping everyone's perspectives in consideration while trying to arrive at the most appropriate solution. The facilitator will narrate the short story given below:

HOW DO THEY GO ABOUT IT?

John and Jack are classmates who have been paired by their teacher for a survey based project. John is a high-scorer student, good in extra-curricular activities, and a part of teachers' good books. He sometimes uses this popularity in wrong ways also. Jack, on the other hand, fails at exams often and is never noticed by the teachers. The only time he gathers everybody's attention is when some or the other teacher picks him up in front of the class. Both of them are unhappy with this pairing which the teacher has declared as unchangeable.

The project work requires them to prepare a questionnaire, collect data, analyze it, prepare a report, and then present it in the class. John says that he would have to work much more in this partnership, while Jack doesn't feel confident in working with John as he is scared of being judged and not being able to contribute anything valuable to the project. These feelings are restricting the commencement of their work.

Suggest, how can they proceed.

The class may be divided into two groups. One group will speak in favour of John and the other group in favour of Jack. To manage the students, instructions must be given to engage in dialogue on behalf of both the parties without shouting or arguing. The discussion must aim at resolution and not escalation of the problem. The facilitator must encourage the students to listen to the other's point of view.

In case, the students are stuck somewhere or deviating from the topic, following directive questions/instructions can be dropped for their consideration:

- What problems do both the parties have with each other? How does it impact their self-concept, mental health and the project work given?
- What may be the strengths of both the parties?
- Identify the ways in which the power relations between them can be reduced.
- As the project is to be a team work, in what ways both of them can peacefully engage in it?
- Consider all your options again, and check if they can be acceptable to both the parties. Keep in mind their safety, respect, learning and exposure, and the objective of assignment of the project work.

The facilitator can reiterate the following steps of problem-solving while conducting the activity:

1. P = The first step is to identify a problem (P) and understand its core. Analyzing the situation objectively and considering its possible causes constitutes critical thinking.
2. O = The second step is to examine probable options (O) for solving it. The more options, the better the decision is. This step uses critical and creative thinking and involves decision-making for selection of suitable solutions.
3. W = The third step is to reflect upon the positive and negative consequences of each option (W which stands for weighing the options). This step also uses creative thinking.
4. E = Then the next step is to prioritize your options and keep the best five ways to solve the problem. Electing (E) is the best option and plans for the actions required to implement it.
5. R = The last step is to review and reflect (R) on the impact of the decision. Being able to take action on the decision, implementing it and accepting the responsibility to see it through.

A concluding fifth session may be kept for any queries and discussions over what and why the previous sessions were held and how they will be of help. It will be intended to help students visualize a clear picture in their minds about the objectives, reflect upon them and see if they were met or not.

Religious Prejudices and Inter-relationships among Students: A School Mental Health Program

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Introduction

Religion has become an important factor in education for various reasons. Incorporating religion in education is necessary in today's context as it would not only reduce the religiously motivated hate crimes, but also helps to make students more tolerant towards differences of others. It will also help them to become more accepting, respecting and appreciating towards the views, ideas, beliefs, values, perception and attitudes of others. School is a mini society where students from different religious and cultural backgrounds come to study at the same place. Schools usually become the first place where a child encounters diversity as students from different religion, race, culture, gender, caste, class, and ethnic group learn together in the same class. So, it becomes more important to incorporate/respect values of acknowledging and accepting diversity in students. It has become a need of present time to make the students learn to celebrate diversity without being judgmental about it. It also ensures inclusion of each and every child in the class as students from less familiar backgrounds or from the underprivileged section feels included, respected and appreciated in the class. It will reap dual benefits as it also provides opportunity to students from privileged sections or students from the majority section of the society to know and learn about others different from them, about their culture, tradition, customs, rituals etc. Some students learn these values on their own in the classroom or in their families, but school portraying these values ensures making of an egalitarian society by establishing home-school continuity by reinforcing the same values again. In today's era of mass media and technological advancements students sometimes also come across such content on various platforms which propagate certain types of thought process in them that might affect them or others adversely by making them more intolerant towards differences. Here school can act a change initiating agent by establishing discontinuity in their thought process and actual reality practiced in school. According to Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, students learn largely by observing others, so it becomes important for teachers as

well to portray such values in the classroom which respects diversity. This program will provide opportunities to all the students to share the unique features about themselves, about their cultures, about their religion with each other in the class. Religious literacy ensures over all development of students by making them active, aware, informed and contributing members of the society. Children are like wet clay; they can be molded in any form during their childhood. We can expose students to various cultural and religious activities, so that they can be familiar with diversities prevailing in society. The foundation laid during this crucial stage of their development will help them throughout their lives as they will encounter different types of people later in their life as well. So, they need to know how to deal with it, acknowledge it, accept it and appreciate it. The constitution of our country is also based on the values of socialism, secularism, equality and democracy. These values are of prime importance to the nation as they are highlighted in the preamble as well. The National Policy on Education also focuses on furthering these values in students as one of the goals of education. So, it becomes the responsibility of a school being a secular institution to provide education free from any religious biases and prejudices.

Rationale

The rationale of the program is to make the students understand the concept of unity in diversity. India is a diverse country where every individual has a right to follow, practice and preach any religion of their choice. The constitution of India declares it as a secular country where all the religions live and prosper together in harmony. School is also a mini version of society in which we live, learn and develop together. In school as well one can see lots of diversity as well.

I personally have chosen this topic as when I went into various classes in the school, students asked me about my religious background on the basis of my name. One of my fellow student-teachers was also asked about *sindhur*. I noticed that students have certain religious prejudices which I thought needed to be addressed.

Besides the above rationale of the program, I came across the behavior of students while preparing them for a play to be conducted in class according to plan. None of the girl was initially ready to take up the role of a Muslim which was quite weird. This behavior of students was guided by their religious prejudices and biases. In the class as well, I have noticed few students sitting alone and they were not mixing up in the class as the majority of the class belongs to a particular religious background that is Hinduism. So, it became more necessary to implement the program in the class to make the students more sensitive to this issue and make them able to challenge their own biases and prejudices.

I have taken class VII-D for conducting this mental health program as I personally noticed this issue in their class during my substitution.

School context

School- Government School in Delhi

The school where I implemented my mental health program is a government school in Delhi. Students from nearby residences and locations come to this school. In the school a picture of goddess Saraswati is put up just beside the entrance of the room of the principal. In a few of the classes pictures of Hindu goddesses and gods were also there which is quite weird as government schools are secular institutions. The school is situated in residential areas as a result all the festivals and celebrations are organized just near the school building which disturbs the classes a lot. Mostly the families believing in Islam, Hinduism and Sikhism live in the locality nearby school. So, students with diverse religious backgrounds study in that school.

Class

I have chosen class VII for conducting the mental health program. There are 40 girls in the class. I have taken a few substitution periods in this class where students asked religion-based questions from me and my peers as introductory questions. They have not asked us any questions related to our qualifications instead questions related to our religious beliefs were asked. They also try to guess our religions from our names and attire. In this class, students asked these questions from me as well, so I have chosen this class to conduct a mental health program. Students in the class are of 11 -12 years of age.

Preparations

For conducting the mental health program, I have taken permission from their class teacher.

Also, for conducting the program I have also taken a few substitution periods in that class. For which I have also requested the time table in charge.

Number of hours required

To conduct this program, I have taken 3-4 classes for preparation and for final execution 4 classes will be taken either in zero periods or in substitution periods. Actual execution program will be done in 160 minutes.

Process

This program will be conducted in 4 sessions of 40 minutes each.

Class- VII

Number of students- 40

Time duration- 4 sessions of 40 minutes each (in total 160 minutes)

Session-1

This will be an introductory section in which students will be asked the following questions to know their opinion and past experiences. Students will be allowed to give as many responses as they want to facilitate a healthy discussion in the class.

1. What are the different symbols that you attach to a particular religion that is to Hindu, Sikh, Muslims, Christianity etc?

For this an activity will be conducted in the class in which various things like bangles, Sindhur, cap, orange cloth, green cloth, karha, kangha etc. will be distributed in the class. And students will be asked to identify to which religion they associate these things to. This will help to understand how early students start associating symbols to various religions.

1. About how many religions you are familiar with?
2. Which qualities, features or symbols will help you to identify that the person belongs to a particular religion?
3. What are the qualities that you see in different religions?
4. What markers or symbols help you to identify that a particular woman is married or not?
5. How many of your friends are from the same religious belief as you do?
6. How many of your friends are from different religions?

This session will help to know the understanding of students about different religions and diversity.

Session-2

In this session, students will be divided into various groups of four students in each group with diverse members randomly by counting the numbers from 1 to 10. Students with the same number will be grouped together. All one's in a one group, similarly, two's in another group etc. They will be asked to work in those groups for the second session. This ensured interaction of students with other students of class as well other than their own friends by establishing more diverse groups. After the formation of groups, students will be asked to redesign the national flag the way they want it to be by working in the groups with each other. For which 20 minutes will be provided to them. Before this activity, the teacher will discuss the three colors of the national flag with the students and what they symbolize to stimulate their interest in the activity and establish a purpose for it, then the activity is conducted in the class.

After, the activity each group will be asked to briefly summarize the idea or concept about the flag they have designed.

After this, the teacher will conclude the class by narrating a small story in the class of a father teaching his children about the importance of unity by giving the example of sticks that a single stick can be broken into two pieces very easily, but when all the sticks are together it is very difficult to break them.

This will help the students to create a classroom culture in which differences among each other are accepted and diversity is celebrated. Along with this, students will understand the importance and implication of unity in daily life as well.

Session-3

In this session, a play will be conducted in the class for which few students will be selected and will be made practice before (during free or substitute periods) for the play.

Preparation- For the play few students were chosen from the class randomly and one differently able student was also included to ensure inclusion of all in class. They were made to prepare for the play in three periods which were their free periods without disturbing their education in class before executing the play. They prepared for the play in the science lab

where I assisted them. I have also taken permission from the science teacher for this.

The theme of the play will be on 'unity in diversity' in which one student will play a role of stone while other students will come to make Hindu idol out of it, then other person of Islam religion will come and carve the idol into form of praying Muslim devotee. Then, students playing the role of Sikh and Christian will come and do the same. After this, because the stone is carved into different forms, persons belonging to different religions will fight over it. Then, one person will come and carve the stone into a person holding a stick representing Mahatma Gandhi and that person will make others understand what they are doing and make them realize the importance of unity in diversity. At the end, they will attach a national flag to the stick. And will sing a song, "*hind desh ke nivasi, sabhi jan ek hain, rang roop vesh, bhasha chahe anek hain*".

After this play, the teacher will ask the students what they have understood from the play. Discussion with the students will be conducted in the class. They will also be told why acknowledging and accepting diversity is important. Teachers will also tell them about the importance of discussing this topic by relating it to present day context and experiences of minorities in the country. Views and opinions of students will also be welcomed in the class to make them learn better.

Session-4

This will be a last session which will be a concluding session in which students will be asked about their experience and learning in the previous sessions. They will be asked to share their experiences and those will be discussed in the class. A video relating to religious harmony will also be shown to students on a laptop with speakers. The video will be shown row-wise to students in three groups and other groups were asked to think about their learning from the session while remaining students are watching the video. Teacher will also share her own personal thinking and experiences in the class about her own friends from different religious and cultural backgrounds and how they have added positive values in life to each other by exchanging various ideas, beliefs with each other and how it has made her more open to new experiences in life. Students will be asked about their learning from the video.

(Video - Holi Mubarak by Divya Prakash Dubey - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcw88nd9t3Y>)

At last, students will be asked to make at least one friend from another religion and try to know and appreciate various traditions, customs and festivals they practice.

Follow up:

After one week, the teacher will visit the class and ask students about whether they have made new friends, what they have learnt from them. They will also be asked to share their experiences with others and try to implement these good leanings in every sphere of their life by accepting and appreciating the differences that exist among us.

Report

I have executed the mental health program successfully in the class. Both students and I have learnt a lot from it. I was a bit worried initially to touch this topic as it is a very sensitive topic so I was very cautious during the implementation of the plan that I may not show any biases in the class. I am writing a detailed report on execution of my mental health program and the results of it.

Challenges

Initially students were not able to understand the purpose of activity and why we are doing this as they are not very familiar with such discussion and activities regularly in their class. But after discussing the purpose of it with them and being told about various tasks which will be conducted in the class they slowly started involving.

In the first and the introductory session students were a bit hesitant in giving the required responses to the questions asked in the class and being part of discussion, although, they enjoyed the activity of identifying symbols. But slowly they started initiating things and taking part in discussion without prompting. Then, they enthusiastically enjoyed and learnt through activities in further sessions. Also, during sessions it was quite difficult to involve all the students in the discussion as some of the students try to overpower others, so I started asking questions from others as well, while students were asked to listen to their opinion patiently and then respond.

For the play which is to be conducted in session three, no one was ready to play the role of Muslim. When asked about the reason for it they did not have any answer. Then I told them Muslims are like us, they are also human beings and are no different from us and it is not bad to play a role of Muslim in a play. After persuasion, one girl agreed to play the role. During the

session, one girl was not at all interested in the sessions. She did not participate in any discussion, refused to watch the video and also refused to make friends. When asked about the reason for it she said friends are of no use and they can't be trusted. She also fought with other girl by passing comments and calling her "Mulli". For which I initially tried and put lots of effort to talk to her and involve her in the class. I also tried to talk to her personally but nothing came out of it. She was very disturbing in the class then at last for fighting in the class and passing such comments I scolded her and asked her not to repeat this in future as it is not good and is unacceptable. This episode made me realize how early the perceptions in students about various things are formed. After the session, I asked her fellow mates to talk to her and guide her. They also tried to talk to her in their own way (informal way as friends try to correct each other) these were the challenges I faced during the implementation of the program.

Perspective

My mental health program was more focused on making the students challenge their own biases and prejudices and accepting differences and respecting each other. All the students were involved in the sessions except one student. After a few days, I asked them whether they have tried to make new friends from other religions or not, majority of them said yes which was really motivating for me. They also discussed the culture of other religions in the class. Although there was no drastic change or they did not have long stories and things to tell, but at least they tried and many of them have actually made new friends. Some of them also discussed their old friends as well.

All the sessions were conducted effectively in the class despite of a few challenges. Students loved the play and worked very well in groups helping and assisting the others.

Students' feedback and interaction

Students participated in activities and learnt from it while enjoying it. They were also ready and wanted to conduct more such plans. They also tried to make new friends from other religions. They were responsive during the discussions. By the end all the students were happy with the activity. They were also taught through activities, not to judge others and accept the view of others. It is equally important to listen, accept and respect the ideas of others openly which are contradicting their own ideas.

Session-wise analysis and learning

Session 1 - In this session students were initially a bit hesitant to share their views, experience and opinion. In the activity, they were asked to identify the articles and symbols to which religion do they attach them to. They were easily able to identify them. They were only able to tell about four religions that is Sikh, Muslim, Hindu and Christianity. They know nothing about Buddhism and Jainism. They talked about sindur, bangles and bindi as well. There were also some overlaps in the association of symbols to more than one religion.

This helped me to analyze and understand how strong religious beliefs they hold and how early these beliefs are formed. Also, this provided basic introductory knowledge about students.

Session 2 - In this session students participated really well in the activity of flag making. They learnt and cooperated with each other in the groups. Each group excelled, they did better than expected. They also loved the story narrated at the end and listened to it curiously. They enjoyed interacting with each other and working in teams.

Session 3 - In this session students performed very well in the play. They were so excited that they also brought dupattas and flags of their own. Other students who were audience to the play also seemed interested in the play and they appreciated the efforts of their peers. The differently able student also enjoyed to be part of the play as she rarely gets a chance to participate in such activities as told by her. She has a

problem in her legs. All the students participated in the discussion as well which was conducted after the play.

Session 4 - In this concluding session, video was shown in the class to the students and their learning and experiences from the sessions was discussed one student also told that mother of her Muslim friend treats her like her own daughter without discriminating her on the basis of her different religion. All in all, it was an amazing experience different from regular course studies for students. They enjoyed it, so did I.

Conclusion

To conclude, I would like to say that it was a learning experience for both students as well as for me. Students actively participated in activities conducted in the class. They learnt empathy and respecting the views of each other as well. It helps to create a class room culture in which religious and other diversity is respected. I felt that these activities helped the students to look beyond their beliefs and helped in promoting respectful curiosity among them. They somehow learnt to respect and accept the different religious and cultural backgrounds which are a necessary part of the education system as India is a secular country. It is much needed for overall development of students to make them active, wise and contributing members of the society.

Resources and references :

Holi Mubarak by Divya Prakash Dubey - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xcw88nd9t3Y>

Secular practices for schools, civil society magazine- <https://www.civilsocietyonline.com/column/back-to-school/secular-practices-for-schools/>

Religion in education- <https://www.hastac.org/blogs/emmamclaughlin22/2015/03/25/religion-education>

Teaching tolerance? Diversity, equity and justice- <https://www.tolerance.org/topics/religion>

Religious diversity in classrooms- <https://www.tolerance.org/professional-development/religious-diversity-in-the-classroom>

Religious diversity in classrooms

Resources

Bangles, Sindur, Cap, Orange Cloth, Green Cloth, Karha, Kangha etc--- For session 1

Flags, Dupattas- green, orange and white etc---For session 3.

School Mental Health Programme: Adolescent Identity Crisis Versus Social Expectations

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Introduction

Adolescence is the age of shifting from childhood to adulthood and the young adolescent start to face physical, emotional, mental and social changes in his or her behavior. It is a time where the students start to battle between their upcoming adult roles on one hand, while still having the need to receive love, acceptance, and protection from parents. It is a time where children also undergo an Identity Crisis. They want to be a representation of their 'selves,' and showcase their ideas, thoughts, and habits to the world. However, this search for their own identity and ways to express themselves often conflict with the roles expected from them by their parents, teachers, relatives, peers, and other members of society. This leads to a role conflict between what the adolescents want and what society expects from them. If not guided properly, adolescents are forced into a state of ambiguity and are left with little opportunity to become confident, responsible and healthy adults.

They may choose wrong paths for themselves such as drug abuse or violent behavior or may slide into depression under continuous social pressure. Thus, it becomes imperative to enable students in expressing their identities in socially constructive ways and using their beaming energies towards more positive outcomes. Thus, this mental health program will aim to develop necessary social, thinking communication, and self-expression skills among students of class 9th, most of them ranging from 14 to 17 years of age. The age gap among the students of the same class exists, as many students of this class failed to get promoted to the next class. It is also important to note that students who fail in developing positive social relationships with their peers, parents, or teachers also miss the opportunity to learn skills such as resolving social conflicts, understanding the perspective of others, identifying and analyzing major social problems, caring for others, etc. Every student has the capability to positively contribute to social development, however, lack of necessary skills to identify social issues and failing to consider them as one's own responsibility lead to mere wastage of their individual skills and competences.

Adolescents usually go through a dynamic transformation both at internal and external level, which requires that, the teacher and parents follow an adolescent-friendly approach. It is therefore important to ensure that the needs and wants of students are given priority in the process of learning, self-growth and development. When we identify the need for adolescents to take up responsibilities, maintain commitments, transform challenges as opportunities and understand their own selves better, it is equally important for teachers to respect and value the curious, adventurous, bold, risk-taking nature of the adolescents who are equally friendly, helpful, joyful and sincere if approached and guided in the right manner. There is a need for the teachers to act as role models, guides and facilitators to be able to build trust among students to create more fruitful relationships with them.

This mental health program will thus be an attempt to guide the energies, capabilities, and talents of the students into more constructive fields. The students will be allowed to share their views about the world, their opinions about self, and how they can try to create a balance between the two. An attempt will be made to guide the students to express their unique skills and at the same time, being able to understand the perspective of others. These students are the future of the nation and thus, it is significant for them to value the relevance of their abilities in the nation-building process.

Rationale

I chose class 9th for my Mental Health Program with the students ranging from 14 to 17 years of age. The reason being that during substitution periods allotted to me for this class, I noticed a strong urge among the students to reflect their true selves in terms of their dressing style, behavior, bodily gestures, gait, and other classroom interactions. Some of the students wore fancy caps, had very narrow fitted trousers, girls wore their Kurtis/suits with a shorter length than was prescribed, applied Kajal, kept a ponytail instead of braids. Rings and ear studs were prominent among both the genders. All this took place despite the principal being a strict disciplinarian who gave extensive attention to uniform. I noticed that most of these students were either scolded or beaten during the morning

assembly when the school principal checked the uniforms of the students. The principal also asked many students to go back home for a breach of uniform discipline. Despite such disciplinarian measures, many students continued to follow these practices by finding alternative ways like turning their braids into ponytails, wearing caps, rings, and ear studs once the uniform check was over.

On interaction with students during substitution classes, I found out that two of the students of this class were very good at calligraphy, but were often scolded and punished by the teachers when they got caught doing calligraphy during classes. Though I believe that every institutional setup runs on some basic rules and regulations for its effective working, at the same time, it is also essential that the school conveys the relevance of school regulations to the students in an effective manner. The students were not able to draw lines of distinction between self-expression and code of behavior as per school guidelines. When students questioned such regulations, they got suppressed through scolding, beating, or other such punishments leaving the students in a state of ambiguity. This ambiguity leads to behavior that does not fit within the rigid frameworks of school and is taken by the teachers and parents as rebellious behavior.

We infer from the above discussion that despite restrictions, the young adolescents kept finding ways to express themselves through their dressing style, eating habits, expressions, and choice of their prospective careers. However, they are expressing their identities in a way that was socially unacceptable and violated the rules of an institutional setup (For example, wearing fancy caps in schools is against uniform discipline). Such a form of expression is influenced by many factors such as peer pressure, effects of media and social media platforms, group pressure, and other similar reasons.

Thus, the rationale behind this program is to identify various problems faced by adolescents in adjusting to their society and finding the reasons for the same. It will also try to find out how they deal with these problems. It is also significant to know how the students want to express themselves and finding a midway between their self-expression versus conflicting social roles expected from them. The program will also focus on students' empowerment and capacity building by finding out how their means of social expression can connect to the real world and finding ways to enable the students to

utilize their uniqueness to make more positive and fruitful social contributions.

School context

Name of the school:

Government Co-Education Senior Secondary School, Delhi

Average socio-economic backgrounds of students:

The students mostly belong to lower economic groups. The parents of most students are involved in manual work or petty jobs like working as domestic help, labor, fruit seller, hairdressers, painters, drivers, and hospital non-technical staff, and so on.

Location and locality:

The school is located in an industrial area, well connected to various means of transport such as buses, auto-rickshaws, e-rickshaws, decent roadways, and a nearby Metro station. Most of the students came from neighboring areas. They came either on foot, on rickshaws, or with parents who escorted them on their way to their respective workplaces. While the school is situated in an industrial area, the backside of the school is mostly residential. Also, a few of the students work after school hours in nearby factories or at construction sites with their parents. I discerned this through my interaction with students as well as their teachers.

Other factors

My experiences in the school have directed me to the fact that the school principal laid great emphasis on discipline. The principal was against any new activity that could have possible negative consequences on school discipline. During assembly, the principal often screamed over the microphone and asked teachers to keep checking the bags of the students and to update their Diaries for each minute misconduct or rule violation by the students. Sometimes, the principal also used abusive words during morning assemblies that were directed towards both students and teachers. The principal blamed the teachers for not keeping a tight grip on students' behavior. The teachers, however, seemed to be indifferent to the principal's messages and ignored him on most occasions. Some teachers even smiled at each other to disregard the orders of the principal.

Even though discipline is an essential element of every school, the school principal seemed to consider that maintaining discipline was the sole pillar that will lay the foundation for the efficient working of the school. On interaction with

teachers, I observed that most of the teachers perceived that the principal followed inefficient practices. They complained that the principal relied exclusively on written records as a measure of the efficient running of the school, for example, students should be given some form of written homework daily. He believed in the carrot-and-stick approach as a tool to enhance learning. Minimal emphasis was laid on assessing the students on other standards such as classroom interactions, improvement in performance, Co-curricular participation, and other individual talents and abilities. Events that required students to have an adequate degree of freedom, to express and communicate such as debates, discussion, and art competitions were arranged passively for mere formality. As a result, the students were left with zero opportunity to express themselves in ways other than traditional forms of evaluations such as written and oral tests.

Details of the class

Class: 9th

Strength of class: 52 (31 boys and 21 girls)

Age group: 14 to 17 years

Reasons for choosing the class

My very first interaction with the students was through a substitution period during one of the constitution's curriculum classes, where I was required to discuss the constitutional value of the month "Liberty".

Though this first class had a very rough start as the students tried to create unnecessary commotion in my presence as a new teacher. However, after 20 minutes, I was able to settle their class and initiate a meaningful discussion. I heard from the teachers that this class had a very notorious image in school and was referred to as a "class of failures" by many teachers. Surprisingly, the students gave me a meaningful and positive response, when I tried to initiate a positive engagement and discussion to know their personal views and perspective regarding their ideas of Liberty.

It was noteworthy that most of the students of this class looked drastically different from other sections of the class 9th as these students wore fancy caps and shoes, gold-framed spectacles, Kajal, ear studs, and similar fashion accessories. I had also heard that 2 to 3 students of this class were suspended for a few days for using the pencil sharpener's blade and bulletin board pins during a class fight, causing injuries to one of their classmates. The students regarded

themselves as the worst class and said this is what others considered them to be. It was unfortunate that the students had formed such views for themselves based on the remarks from students of other classes, teachers, and the school principal.

Despite all the negative views that prevailed about the class I sensed a great potential in these students. The students of this class behaved more naturally as against other students who were successfully able to mould themselves into the rigid frameworks laid down by school and society. The students of this class represented a more heterogeneous character where each student reflected vibrant characteristics that they displayed very explicitly. Even though, certain aspects of these students' behavior were not socially and morally acceptable, such as entering into violent situations, rebellious arguments with teachers and classmates, etc.

These students appeared to be fighting to become a version which was closer to their own self rather than their socially imposed identities. Further interactions with the students also displayed some internal and external unrest, where they were seeking answers to the questions that they had about the social restraints imposed on them such as, why they had to wear uniforms in school, how can they positively contribute to their own as well as social wellbeing etc. Also, although those students were shouting and screaming unnecessarily at the beginning of the class, they failed to keep their views when I called them to share their Individual experiences. This represented their lack of confidence in putting their individual perspective which probably aroused from the shortage of self-expression opportunities that they received.

Thus I chose this class for implementing my School Mental Health Programme because I felt that these students were full of potential but lacked proper guidance and direction. This made them behave in a questionable manner. Thus, a program like this might help them in assessing their own skills concerning their capabilities in social development.

Mental health plan

Objectives

The key objectives of the mental health plan will be:

1. To understand the problems faced by young adolescents during interactions with their parents and teachers.

2. To identify the reasons behind such conflicts.
3. To provide a platform to students to identify their capabilities and analyze how they can be utilized in a positive social construction.
4. To build sensitivity among students regarding their own actions and how it can impact others.
5. To develop communication and analytical skills through providing various situations to students for discussion

Preparation required and resources

1. One of my peer student-teachers would be requested to accompany me during all the three sessions to support me in managing the classroom to ensure smooth implementation of the plan.
2. In the second session of the plan, the students will be divided into four groups represented by 4 seating rows and each group will be given one stimulation-based situation as mentioned later in the plan in detail.

Process

Survey Questionnaire
(Mental health program)

The Mental Health Program will be divided into 3 sessions of 35 minutes each. Following is a brief overview of the three sessions which are discussed in detail later:

Session 1: A survey will be conducted with the help of a self-prepared questionnaire to know the choices, thoughts and perspectives of students regarding themselves, their peers, society, and teachers.

Session 2: Situations given to students in the group to analyze and create perspective towards different social situations that they encounter or may encounter in real lives.

Situation 3: Experience and talent sharing session.

Session 1

The following survey will be given to the students and the students will be introduced to the meaning and rationale of the survey along with a brief introduction session on how to answer the questions. The student-teacher along with her peer will assist the students. 20 minutes will be given to the students for the same.

Name:	Age
Gender:	Parent’s Occupation:
Residence:	

Q1. What career would you choose for yourself if you had no restrictions on you?
.....

Q2. Will your parents accept the career choice you mentioned above?
.....

Q3. What are your hobbies?
.....

Q4. Do you ever face a situation where you and your parents differ in opinions or choices? If yes, then mention any two such situations
.....
.....

Q5. Have you ever felt that your teachers scold you for no reason? If yes, then mention any two such situations.
.....
.....

Q6. Are you on social media (WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat etc?)
.....
.....

Q7. Will you add the following to your friends list on social media accounts if they send you a follow request?

	YES/NO
TEACHERS	
PARENTS	

Q8. What is the reason for your answer above?

.....

.....

Q9. What are the 2 things you would like to change about your school?

.....

.....

.....

Q10. What is the importance of school in your life?

.....

.....

Q11. Do you think that you can make a contribution to national development? If yes, then how?

.....

.....

Session 2

In order to promote critical thinking, analytical and communication skills among students, the teacher will give the following situations to the students and the class will be divided into four groups according to their seating arrangement.

The situation will be written on a piece of paper and distributed to each group. A time of 15 minutes will be allocated to each group to discuss the matter and choose two representatives to share the key points of their discussion with the class. The student-teacher will support and guide the discussion.

Following situations will be given:

- Situation1:* A boy from class 9th wants to dress up in a feminine manner, shop a lot of clothes and wear makeup. His friends think that he speaks in a girlish tone. His parents and teachers scold him for his behavior and tell him that he should behave like a “boy”. As a result, he is depressed and stays alone all the time. As his friend, how will you help him? How do you think the boy feels about himself? How can this conflict be resolved?
- Situation2:* Hobbies are an important part of one’s life. We all have some hobbies that we engage in to pass our time. Are hobbies merely for time pass? Or can they be used into more productive ways? Discuss among your friends as to how our hobbies can be used to deal with the many social problems, we see around us?

- Situation3:* A student of XYZ School was told continuously that the viewpoints and perspectives that he puts in his essays and other assignments are not correct. Every time he or she tried to put his or her perspective in class, the teacher rejected it saying that he must provide viewpoints that are similar to the ones provided in his textbooks and course. The student thinks that his or her views are not respected by the teacher. How can these conflicts be resolved in the class?
- Situation 4:* The students of class 9th of a school are preparing a play for their annual function. However, one of the members of the group is not a confident person in public speaking and is scared to perform. What should his or her friends do to solve the situation question?

After the discussion of the problem among themselves, 20 minutes will be given to the students for classroom discussion where the representatives from each group will come one by one to share their views with the class.

Session 3

In this session, 20 minutes will be allotted to a discussion initiated by the student teacher to allow the students to express their views in an open-ended form.

Following questions will be used to promote and guide the discussion:

1. What are the activities you do at home?
2. Would you like to share any experience or situation from which you learned something?
3. What are the key social problems that you see around yourself and want to change?
4. Do you ever feel stressed? How do you cope with it?
5. Which is your favorite TV program, web show or game? Why?
6. What is that one social media trend you love or hate? How do you think the Internet affects our lives?

In the above discussion the students will be chosen randomly to come in front and share their views. Further discussion will then be built over these viewpoints.

After the discussion, remaining 15 minutes will be given to the students to showcase and share their talents and discuss how they can be used for their own benefit and positive social construction.

Analysis report of the program

Analysis of session 1

The survey was conducted on 35 students (18 girls and 17 boys) of 9th class. The responses of students analyzed and the analysis report given as under:

In the analysis it has been found that: The most of the students felt that their parents allowed them to follow their own choices, the teachers imposed greater restrictions over their choices and more than 75% students denied to add either their parents or teachers on social media accounts and mentioned that it will hinder their privacy and limit them in expressing their views.

When asked about the things they want to change in their school, most mentioned their dissatisfaction with the strict attitude principal. Some expressed that they disliked when the principal beat or scolded them without providing adequate opportunity to students to justify their behavior. Some mentioned that they would prefer it more if the principal tried to initiate healthy conversations with them before taking disciplinary actions.

Around 30% students laid stress on providing midday meals to all students which is provided only to the students till class 8th while many students acknowledged the importance of schools in their lives to get jobs, to brighten their future or to gain respect for themselves and their

parents, there were many who chose to skip the question. When the students were asked about how they can work for social upliftment most students directed towards charity and related things which indicates that the students are unaware of the various other ways through which they can contribute to national development such as investing in developing oneself and working sincerely in businesses, organizations etc. Also, the students want to change the teaching methods followed in school and the disciplinarian attitude of the principal. This desire reflects that the students feel restricted in school. Some students mentioned that school should have lesser roles in fixing their dressing sense. They should be allowed to keep hair styles or clothes of their choice and present their unique self. (We can write it as “the school should have directed to minimize their role in deciding the dressing sense, hair style or clothing and let it be the choice of students, so that they can present their unique self.”

Or flexibility should be given to the students in dressings and hairstyle of their own choices, so that they can present themselves in a unique way.)

Analysis of session 2

Situation 1: the students initially said that they will try to stop the boy from using makeup as it does not fit in the roles expected from males. However, other students of the class stated that makeup should not be restricted only to girls and both genders must have equal rights in all forms of expression. The teacher also guided the discussion by taking the examples of male TV and movie actors who wear makeup. It was also discussed that makeup is a form of art, a means to liberation and self-expression. The discussion also went around Section 377 and gender being a social construct. The students understood after some discussion and one student even shared how he works at a beauty parlor and is proud of the same.

Situation 2: the students actively shared their hobbies such as biking, calligraphy, singing, dancing, beat-boxing (using mouth to create music) and writing rap songs. The students also laid stress on how they did not get enough opportunities in school to express their talents. One student who sings and composes rap songs stated that in previous school he used to get many opportunities to present his talents, however he misses such opportunities in this school. The student also complained that he was not allowed to participate in school functions as the teachers did not consider rap music to be a fit

form of expression for school functions, even though the lyrics offered rap music were based on education.

Situation 3: some students focused on the point that students must discuss their problems with the teachers. However, the majority denied the same and shared their poor experiences when they were beaten up or scolded if they asked questions in class. The teachers then laid stress on the importance of effective communication and explained that the students must politely ask questions, avoid chorus discussions and may ask questions at the right time. The students must also try to understand the perspective of the teacher and must politely discuss their issues with teachers. However, the counselor feels that it is very important for a teacher to maintain a congenial classroom atmosphere, where the students feel free to express their views, give constructive criticism and don't feel fearful.

For situation 4: a good response was seen from the students where they enlisted many ways to involve students who face straight stage fright such as:

- Explaining him or her importance of participation for self-development.
- Suggesting deep breathing and other measures.
- Using the student's capabilities through other means like involving him in script writing direction music etc.
- Motivating the friend through cheerful statements and affirmations.

Analysis of session 3

The third session was the most meaningful session of the plan and I got two subsequent periods and there was an elaborate experience and talent showing session.

First 35 minutes were used to discuss the various questions as mentioned in the plan with an active yet disciplined participation from students. It was heart-warming to see that the session had left a positive impact on students and a few students even volunteered to discipline the class to ensure the program went smoothly.

One of the students showed that he has written a rap song on his school life and education and volunteered to sing it for the class. He did not just sing well, but it was surprising to see that the student had even covered important aspects of what education is like and how it should be. It mentioned how the student felt disturbed when teachers scolded him for no reason and how he wants to break the boundaries to reach a world where his imperfections are valued. He desired

to raise the name of the nation to international fame through his songs.

Another girl performed a dance and discussed that she felt confident when she danced and wanted to become a dance teacher. This was followed by other students, showcasing their talents through singing, dancing and poetry. One student shared his love for biking and travel. However, I explained to him to use appropriate safety measures and wait till 18 before starting to ride on roads.

Challenges faced

The implementation of the plan was not without challenges, especially session one, which included an interview-questionnaire session. It was a less effective decision as most students of the class could not write in either English or in Hindi. Thus, the teacher had to assist each student while the answers were provided orally by the students. The questions were thus explained to the students who orally dictated their responses while the teacher filled the form. Many students even cheated and copied the responses of their friends despite being explained several times.

Classroom management was an issue in the first session; however, students were self-regulated and disciplined in the later sessions.

My experiences and students' reactions

The plan enabled me to engage more deeply with the students, understand their issues, perspectives, and view-points and have a closer look at the various factors that affect the mental health and behavior of students. The chief lesson was that I learnt the importance of informal communication and relationships to create a sense of trust among students. The students may seem to be rude and undisciplined from outside but they had a very soft core, an innate goodness and many forms of talents and capabilities which were otherwise ignored in an academic setup where students were judged merely on the basis of marks.

Many students of the class approached me after the programme and thanked me for taking up such a program. Some even called me and my peer student-teachers to take up three free periods more often. Two boys also came to me to ask if they were allowed to perform hip hop dance on the annual function. The school event coordinator immediately denied that no performance should be arranged from this class as the students will create chaos during practice and performance as was reflected in their notorious image of the class. Eventually the

event coordinator agreed to merge these students with a Bhangra group where they two will perform a hip hop mixed with Bhangra. It was good that the students showed interest in school activities and also got an opportunity for the same.

Though, it is difficult to comment on the long-term impacts of the program, I sensed some positive changes in some of the students during daily school interactions. All in all, it was a learning experience to know the complexities of students' behavior and their viewpoints. It is important for all teachers to understand the context and background of each student and then create his or her teaching pedagogy to suit the requirements of the class. This will also enable the students to identify their individual skills and analyze their importance in real life.

Mental Health Programme on Creating Adolescent Awareness in the realm of Sex and Sexuality

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Introduction

Adolescents comprise 18% of the world's population with 88% living in developing countries. India has the largest adolescent population of 243 million with more than 50% of the adolescents living in urban areas. With such a huge population which will be experiencing adulthood in future lives, we have socio-cultural issues determining the veracity of chains in terms of bodily changes.

As they grow up, young people face important decisions about relationships, sexuality, and sexual behavior. These decisions can impact their health and well-being for the rest of their lives. Young people have the right to lead healthy lives, and society (schools) has the responsibility to prepare youth by providing them with comprehensive sexual health education that gives them the tools they need to make healthy decisions. But it is not enough for programs to include discussions of abstinence and contraception to help young people avoid unintended pregnancy or diseases. Comprehensive sexual health education must do more. It must provide young people with honest, age-appropriate information and skills necessary to help them take personal responsibility for their health and overall well being. Providing young people with the skills they need is key to healthy decision-making.

Sex and Sexuality education is the provision of information about bodily development, sex, sexuality, and relationships, along with skills-building to help young people communicate about and make informed decisions regarding sex and their sexual health. Sex and Sexuality education should occur throughout a student's grade levels, with information appropriate to students' development and cultural background. It should include information about puberty and reproduction, abstinence, contraception,

relationships, sexual violence prevention, body image, gender identity and sexual orientation. It should be taught by trained teachers. Sex and Sexuality education should be informed by evidence of what works best to prevent unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, but it should also respect young people's right to complete and honest information. Sex and Sexuality education should treat sexual development as a normal, natural part of human development.

Program objectives

1. Familiarizing learners about the physical changes while adolescence approaches, and thereon discussing openly about them in a congenial environment.
2. To help learners overcome and realize the taboo associated to sex and sexuality.
3. To make the learners understand, accept and appreciate the difference and variety in the realm of sexual orientation and rigid physical manifestation of sexuality.

Program rationale

Entering in the age of puberty, adolescents have many new things and ideas regarding sex and sexuality to explore. These inquisitive concerns of the future adult if left unattended can lead to a lot of complexities within the individual. These complexities can in turn disrupt the optimum functioning and contributing capacity of the individual. It is very crucial to render them a safe and sound counselling to sail smoothly through this phase of physical and mental transition, in terms of sex and sexuality orientations. Adolescents at this stage also enter into a web of confusing and misleading information on varied aspects of 'sex' and 'sexuality'. Rationale behind the program include:

- To help adolescents clearly understand changes in the wake of maturation and thereby

debunk the myths and misconceptions associated to sex and sexuality (e.g. Kissing makes one pregnant, Masturbation weakens the body and many more of such nature)

- A responsible sense of understanding, appreciating and respecting all genders in society.
- To help adolescents in getting comfortable about the physical changes in the body and understanding their happening in a particular sequence and manner.
- To create mental readiness among the adolescent group in general and individually differentiated adolescents in particular. It would thereby help in shaping up more informed adults for all future roles.
- The issues, problems and sexual technicalities become gender fluid, thereby creating greater consciousness and awareness for social issues crippling the psyche of the community at large viz. Menstrual health, Early marriage, Pre marriage pregnancy etc.

Target-group

The need to define the target group arose because of the culture and geography specific variance in the age group that is considered in the category of adolescents. While some of the nations range adolescence from 13 years till 16 years of age some others consider the starting point of adolescent years at 11 years of age also. So, for our program purpose we have weighed heavily in favour of WHO prescribed range, which is standard for all the government run programs exclusively for adolescents. This range is from 14 years to 16 years of age, as it is the period which also happens to be the time of maximum transitions and inexperienced massive changes redefining the personality, interests and likes of the adolescents. With reference to sex

and related issues, also this age has telling impact on the impressions that remain for the most substantial part of life. For the reason of malleability in this age it is the right stage to constructively and through dialogue instill a good decision taking and value assessment predicament among the learners in this particular range of age.

Grouping basis

We are considering a mixed grouping of adolescent learners with a vertical grouping pattern to be followed. The learners in the session would be around 50 to 60 in total. This would allow for greater latitude to the program conductors with reference to conducting activities and ensuring active participation of all the members. This would increase the total spread of the takeaways to other members in the class effectively and would avoid burnout. The teacher along with our volunteer would conduct a quiz in the class and on the basis of diversity, inclusion, awareness, leadership potential, maturity , understanding of issues we will handpick 12-15 learners from each class (Classes 9 to 12) thus creating a vertical and heterogeneous group for the program. This is favoured because of the given set of reasons as:

- An in-depth and all-encompassing understanding of a critical issue at hand, which can be dealt in with participation of diverse individuals at varied levels improving the overall effectiveness of the program.
- A healthy interaction and common participation with the juniors and seniors could go a long way in improving the treatment dynamics of adolescent issues at hand.
- Misconceptions and misnomers would be dealt with more effectively because of multiple perspectives.

Plan of the program

Two days Workshop on Sex and Sexuality: Awareness and Concerns among Adolescent learners Venue: Conference Hall, Department of Education (CIE), University of Delhi Day 1, Friday, 3 rd May 2019	
Timings	Details
9:00-9:30 a.m.	Introduction of the participants: Expectations from program
9:30-10:30 a.m.	Welcome Address by Prof. Namita Ranganathan (Head and dean, Department of Education, University of Delhi) about the Workshop
10:30-11:00 a.m.	High Tea

Session I	
11:00-12:30 p.m.	“Breaking the ice”- Chit based activity Coordinator- Team CIE (Mental Health Group for the program)
Session II	
12:30-1:30 p.m.	“Group Talk on a video titled “Sex Chat with Pappu ”
1:30-2:00 p.m.	Lunch
Session III	
2:00-4:30 p.m.	Bol’ Movie Screening followed by a discussion on movie with students
Day 2, Saturday, 4 th May 2019	
Session IV	
9:30-10:30 a.m.	‘SEX & SEXUALITY’ group quiz
10:30-10:45 a.m.	Tea Break
Session V	
10:45-11:45 a.m.	Activities and takeover by ‘TEAM TARSHI Talking About reproductive and Sexual Health Issues’
Session VI	
11:45-1:30 p.m.	‘Sexual Orientation of individuals is socially determined’: Debate (Team CIE will coordinate)
1:30-2:00 p.m.	Lunch
Session VII	
2:00-3:00 p.m.	DOUBTS & ISSUES: Discussion and clarification
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Valedictory Session
4:30 p.m.	Vote of Thanks

Activity description

Chit based: Ice breaking activity

This activity is inclined towards creating familiarity with the topic amongst learners. It will also help in understanding the doubts, confessions and queries of the learners. In this activity we would be asking the learners to write down about the conceptions and doubts, queries or first thoughts when they listen to the word “SEX” or “SEXUALITY”. We would be placing a large glass bowl titled MY THOUGHTS and another large glass bowl titled POST WORKSHOP. Attempt is to understand the anxieties, fears and inquisitions of learners in the adolescent stage of their growth. This activity would also form our basis to gauge the learning and awareness levels with reference to topic of sex and sexuality. We are also trying to dissociate the taboo associated with the topic as prevalent in society.

Video clipping “Sex chat with Pappu”

This is a ten minutes snippet talking about the issue of wider understanding of the physiological changes happening in the adolescent years and their implications on the overall growth and understanding. It openly talks about the psychological issues concerning the attainment of puberty. A ten minutes clipping would thus help in forming the base to the changes they are encountering and how it is interpreted normally. The discussion post video would aid in sharing of concerns with ease on a topic that is considered a taboo socially.

Movie screening “Bol”

This activity for movie screening is aimed at creating greater consciousness about the issue of sexuality and exploring alternate sexual identities. The implicit social and greater underpinnings are further explored through the layers showcased in the movie. We will be dividing learners in groups of five members each and thereby discussing the underlying analyses of the movie and its situations. How comfortable

they were and what was the cause of worry for them.

The collected list would be handed over to the TARSHI team in order to accommodate their session accordingly for suitability according to the target audience.

Quiz on sex and sexuality

This activity of Quiz is aimed at recapitulation of the sessions held on the earlier day. We will also look at the major issues and concerns touched upon, topics of discord, disconnect and dissociation. This will also clarify the ideation of physicality, psychology of sex and greater issues confronting sexuality. We will be noting down the issues on the blackboard and thereby looking at societal and context specific digressions as well.

Team Tarshi

TARSHI is a registered NGO based in New Delhi, India founded in 1996 and registered under the Societies Registration Act in 1997. The session with TARSHI is intended to provide professional intervention in the sensitive issue of Sex and Sexuality awareness, specifically in Indian context. TARSHI (Talking about Reproductive and Sexual Health Issues) works towards expanding sexual and reproductive choices in people's lives in an effort to enable them to enjoy freedom from fear, infection and reproductive and sexual health problems. TARSHI's work on sexuality is from an affirmative and rights based perspective, a fresh change from perspectives that often restrict sexuality within disease prevention, violence against women, or sexual minorities' framework. This would definitely enhance the perspective of the learners and adolescent to multiple complex issues layered within the context specific location of SEX and SEXUALITY in society. We will peep into the various dimensions of interpretations from a social perspective and try to build up our own narratives through the training program by TARSHI.

Debating Activity

Through this final activity we are looking forward to instill confidence and openness regarding the stance adolescent learners take up. Now, this stance needs to be rationally justified in the wake of informed choices one looks to go with in their lives. And, thereby it necessitates the need to rationally justify the same in the light of sexual preferences and interpretations. Deciding on conducting a debating session was not all about winning and losing. It has got more to do with the appreciation in the variety of

justifications and rationalisations which can emerge out of differentiated versions of the topic we discussed during the last sessions.

The final understanding activity

In the final doubts and issues clarification session we would again relook at the gains through the lens of the workshop. We will distribute blank chits and would now ask them to jot down the interpretation of the terms sex and sexuality post workshop. Some of the adolescent learners if they want to come up and talk about the issues and problems will speak about the experience they had in the workshop. The empty glass bowl will be filled with interpretations post the workshop. These interpretations and the transformation can be studied and referred to in order to bring relevant changes in the program design for future purposes.

Methodology

When we look at the methodology followed in the activity and program design there is a strong tilt towards GROUP BASED and OPEN INTERACTIONAL methodology. The basic intent is to help the adolescent open up about their ideas on sex and sexuality through visual appeal, discussions, video based and expert based experience sharing opportunities. Beyond the normal dynamics of formal program design we look forward to moving from the Sir/ Madam interaction, to a friendly approach wherein the specialised expert through their set of activities listen to these adolescents and sort out the creases set in because of the environmental, social and cultural factors.

Conclusion

The topic pertaining to the physicality, sex and sexual related issues has a lot of pre conceived notional value attached to it because of the socio-cultural ethos prevalent in the milieu of the entire population.? With special reference to the emerging and juxtaposing value frameworks in the present Indian context the workshop can serve as a small peephole to understand and lead the adolescents towards reflective stance on issues that are more contrived and skewed towards the mere physical aspect of the topic. The multiplicity of views would certainly help the learners to come up with their own versions of interpretations and clarity.

Book Review: The Sackclothman by Jayasree Kalathil

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The Sackclothman is a simple and sensitive story through which the author has touched upon how children and adults experience loneliness, anxiety and sadness following some trauma or grief. Both adults and children may go through the same pain but react differently. In the adult's world it is often assumed that children are not deeply affected by grief. They find it easy to move on and live happily. They are expected to return to normalcy sooner than the adults.

The book presents a heart touching account of the feelings of an eleven-year-old girl, Anu who lost her elder sister. After her death, her mother gets depressed and is unable to focus on the daily household chores and pay attention to Anu. Even though Anu wished to engage with her mother in doing the usual activities, no one in the family understands that such a young girl can help her mother in coming out of her depression. Anu's father also comes home late and is often drunk. Anu not only misses her elder sister but also misses the love and affection from her parents. The school has also become a sad place for Anu as she hates to listen to the whispers about her family. She often feels that no one would understand her feelings and there is no point in sharing them with anyone. Some of the lines in the book are so simple yet very powerful in expressing her state of mind. For instance, on the last day of school the teacher asked her, "Looking forward to your holidays Anu". She replies, "Yes". But deep inside she felt very anxious and sad as she has no plans for holidays. She would miss her elder sister badly as this would be her first holiday without her. While other friends may be visiting their relatives, she can't even do that. She would be lonely and at home also would miss the positivity. Anu thinks that there is no point telling the teacher how she felt as she would only pity her.

Children feel that no one would understand their pain and thus, suffer in silence. The value of emotions cannot be overemphasized. Most experiences of children in school do not focus on the emotional aspects of the child's life. Oftentimes, teachers and other adults do not forge deep emotional bonds with children. The pre-service and in-service teacher education programmes also do not focus on training the teacher to 'listen' to children. In our school system, these responsibilities of talking to

children deeply are relegated to specialists, or the counsellors. There are hardly any counsellors available, more so in the rural areas. Some children who've experienced loss or bereavement, or suffered abuse find no recluse in the school system.

The book also presents an interesting aspect of life that is 'being stuck' through the story book that Anu is writing. Even though the heroine of her story book has magical powers, she has nothing much to do with those powers. Through this story, the author has perhaps depicted Anu's state of mind also.

Another central character of the story is Chaakupranthan. His actual name is Narayanan but no one knows him by this name. He has no home and takes shelter in the post office veranda. People in the neighbourhood provide him food but no one talks to him. When Anu started talking to him she realized that Chaakupranthan had a son and he missed him badly. Anu wanted to know more about him but she was always advised by his father to stay away from him and even provide food from a distance. Infact, at one occasion Anu's uncle, Raghu Maman said that it is 'shameful' that Chaakupranthan is allowed to wander freely without the people in society doing anything about it. The mentally ill persons are rendered nameless and relegated to the margins of society.

Through Chaakuprntahan, the author has highlighted certain social stereotypes about depression and being normal. He is treated as insane and people ask their children to stay away from him. He is forced to shave his head and go to a mental hospital. The loss of identity through a new name provided by people, forcefully shaving the head and sending him to mental hospital all symbolize how people lose their identity while going through depression.

The book has some illustrations which may be Anu's drawings in her diary. The illustrations represent various emotions like fear, loneliness, happiness and sadness that Anu may be going through. Some sketches are almost blank with just random lines representing how sometimes one may experience a state of blankness.

In the end the book provides hope when Anu's mother suddenly realizes how Anu is also

suffering. When she gets a fever quite similar to her elder sister, perhaps it triggers her emotions. Her father also brings her favourite sweets and shows affection. In her dream, Sajichechi, the elder sister paints her toenails blue and plays hide and seek with her but Anu can't find her. Anu seems to have finally come to terms with her loss in her life.

Chaakupranthan also ran away from the mental hospital. The heroine Daisy also gets back her magical powers. All of these symbolically represent that depression and other mental illnesses could be treated and there is always a place for hope in life.

There are not many books on the theme of childhood and depression. It has been felt often that children need to be protected from these harsh realities of life viz. mental illness, death. However, these realities do exist in children's lives. By not acknowledging them, we've done a disservice to children and the families, by imposing a norm of a 'happy' family. Children's literature on this theme is rare and very welcome.

The story of a young girl grappling with alcoholism of her father, the loss of her sister, depression of her mother and her intrigue with the strange man with mental illness, needs to be engaged with in every school classroom in this country. It is a useful and sensitive addition to any children's library or teacher's resource room as it navigates the difficult terrain of alcoholism, bereavement and depression. By bringing specific issues like psychological illness and mental illness, teachers can be responsive to the particular circumstances of children in their classroom.

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