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Lead Theme

Changing Policies and Quality Concerns in Indian Higher Education

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

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Education has multifarious goals such as gaining knowledge, skill development, personal and social development. It is a door to the past as well as the future. Education equips one to live in the present and prepares him/ her to cope with futuristic demands. The content and strategies of education therefore should be revised from time to time to meet the ever-changing social demands. In a country like India with huge socio-economic geographical and cultural diversity; making education accessible to all and incorporating this diversity is challenging. However, Educational policies had underwent revisions and now we are on the threshold of a new policy and a new era. At this juncture, it is apt for LISSAH Journal to discuss the policy aspects of Higher Education in India.

Outcome-based education has much contemporary relevance but social work education right from its beginning had far sight and has in its curriculum, fieldwork as one of its components with a focus on imparting necessary skills for the students in order to meet the expected outcome of the course. In the article Outcome-Based Education in Social Work: An Analysis of Undergraduate Social Work Program written by Anithamol Babu and Akhil P Joseph, the authors establish how social work education through its theoretical and practical components ensures the development of knowledge and various skills such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking, research etc which are the expected outcome of the course.

The digitalisation of entire aspects of life has been a major challenge witnessed by humankind in the covid era. Though life is coming back to normal, humans have not been able to attain digital de-toxification and debris of this is likely to continue. Article Zoom fatigue The Challenge of Zoom Fatigue Among Students In India by Anamika D documents the growing concerns of e-learning and put forward suggestions to deal with Zoom fatigue.

Filed Practicum is an integral part of Social Work education and every university has its guidelines and prescribedgoals to be attained in the syllabus. The paper Building Remote Communities Through Service Learning Projects in Graduate Programs: A Community Intervention

Model From South India written by Dr Sreepriya CK, Fr.Joseph Melettukochiyil CST, Dr Pavan John Antonyis an article that explains how LISSAH College had gone beyond the minimum prescribed goals of the university and brought about drastic changes in the lives of the people of Puduppady Panchayath where it is situated by incorporating a community intervention model for rural development in the field practicum of social work education.

Education today is highly structured and formal with pre-determined learning outcomes with a focus on specialisation. Anything that does not follow these procedures are not valued when it comes to employability. In the article 'Transference of Medical Lore; The Pedagogy of Ethno-Medicine Among Traditional Healers of Kerala' by Muhammed Shareef CK and Amal Sana Faizal KP, authors through content analysis and filed work among traditional healers of Kozhikode and Malappuram district of Kerala emphasise how informal education survive in the world of formal education concerning transference of medical lore.

The article titled Education: The Tool for Empowerment and Social Transformation by Dr Francis KM examines the views of various thinkers on education and establishes that empowerment and social transformation are the two major aims of education.

Change is the only permanent phenomenon on earth and every aspect of life is subjected to change. It is also mandatory for the educational sector to undergo constant changes in lieu with the changing social demands. This issue of LISSAH Journal has three articles that discuss National Education Policy 2020. The article titled Quality Building In Indian Higher Education: Analysing Some Forsaken Ground Realities by Prof Savio James V closely examines the salient features of the National Education Policy and critically analyses each feature and points out the limitationsfaced when a policy is implemented. The second article, Transformation to Centers of Excellence: Case Study of Public Schools In Malappuram District authored by Amala R, Muhammed Ashraf TM and Aswin Alfred, highlights the positive results in the educational system, after the General Education Protection Initiative in 2017 with first-hand information collected from 6 public schools in Malappuram district. The third article titled The New National Education Policy (NEP) as A New Hurdle for Women In Education And Development In India- A Call For Gender Mainstreaming In Policy Making written by Aswathy Anna

David brings to light certain aspects of NEP that might act against gender equality and mainstreaming.

Quality research contributes to the existing realm of knowledge of every subject and profession and it is the responsibility of every professional to contribute to the growth of the subject and profession through their research. Though research projects are now incorporated in the syllabus for various courses, a real contribution to the subject apart from mere fulfilment of academic requirements is less even in the Indian Higher Education system. The paper 'Strategies For Improving Research Culture In Indian Higher Education System' by Anusree.S.L critically examines the existing research culture inhigher education in India.

The article titled Tribal Experience Tribal Experiences of Policy Shift In Education; Case Studies from Attappady, Kerala written by Ms Varsha Sivaraman addresses the impact of a policy shift in the education of tribes in Attappady and addresses the issue of dropout among tribals and exposes the social, economic and cultural factors that hinder the educational attainment of tribals with some practical suggestions for the situation to improve.

OUTCOME-BASED EDUCATION IN SOCIAL WORK: AN ANALYSIS OF UNDERGRADUATE SOCIAL WORK PROGRAM

*ANITHAMOL BABU, AKHIL P. JOSEPH**

Abstract

Within the framework of India's future educational development programmes, the promotion of high-quality higher education is a priority. Improving the quality of higher education was considered crucial for young people to be able to effectively participate in a knowledge-based economy, enhance their competitiveness in a globalised world, acquire skills related to global and national standards and increase opportunities or social mobility. Outcome based education is an education system that prioritises goals, purposes, achievements and results. All decisions relating to the course, assessments and education are determined by the final learning outcomes, which students must check at the end of a program or course. The current article analyses the outcome based education in the undergraduate social work program. According to the new education policy, the undergraduate program will open entry to the social work profession and PhD degree.

Key Words: Outcome Based Education, Social Work Education, Course Outcomes, Blooms Taxonomy

Introduction

The Outcome Based Education (OBE) is an educational approach in which the curriculum is driven by the outcomes a student should unveil at the end of the course, particularly in professional knowledge, skills, abilities, values and attitudes (Rao, 2020). Therefore, each outcome of the course/program has its goals to attain. Teachers' different understanding of how goals or learning outcomes related to educational planning is a major challenge in implementing the OBE system since teachers are the facilitators of learning according to OBE (Bolander et al., 2006; Morcke&Eika, 2009). Likewise, it is reasonable to assume that teachers have different interpretations when implementing OBE since different solutions can be applied to learn/teach something (Asma&Norhayati, 2016). However, the OBE system opens new doors for students to learn and apply better

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since it focuses on the outcomes to be achieved after the completion of the programme. In the OBE system, students have the freedom to study the course content using any type of method they are comfortable with. The clear, straightforward outcomes provided by OBE form a framework that helps the students with decision-making and helps the teachers in the assessment and evaluation (McNeil, 2006). Spady (2004) identified four basic principles for OBE. Which are: Clarity of focus: The educational system needs to be very clear on the goals that students should pursue; High expectations: All students are expected to achieve the outcomes; b. Designing back: The starting point for curriculum design is the outcome or end product; all teaching and learning activities, including assessment, must be aligned; c. Expanded learning opportunities: Since not all students learn in the same way or at the same time, multiple learning opportunities should be offered.

Taxonomy of learning and Levels of Complexity in learning

In 1956, Benjamin Bloom led a group of educational psychologists to classify important levels of intellectual behaviour in learning. It becomes a classification consisting of three overlapping areas: the cognitive, psychomotor and affective (Pierce & Gray, 2013). Traditional education always focuses on the cognitive field, which is often used to organise learning goals, assessment methods, and strategies. Cognitive domains is considered as the areas of a more detailed knowledge base in six stages: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating. The Affective domain of Bloom's taxonomy considers simple to complex levels from assessment of receiving phenomena, responding to phenomena, valuing, organising, and internalising values. Receiving is the lowest level in the affective domain in which the student passively gives attention. The last domain of Bloom's taxonomy is the Psychomotor domain which proceeds from simple to complex levels starting from assessment of perception, set, guided, mechanism, complex overt response, adaption and origination (Bloom, 2013)

Outcome-based education and Undergraduate Social Work Program

Undergraduate programs are the first level of higher education since higher secondary education, but Social Work is a subject for the Humanities stream in secondary level education. The Undergraduate Programme in Social Work aims to develop and disseminate knowledge, skills and values by promoting, maintaining and improving education and research in a place necessary for the functioning of individuals, families, groups, organisations and communities in society. The programme is committed

to creating a diverse learning environment that respects everyone's dignity and values and understands the circumstances. It respects the individual's uniqueness and provides professional programs that lay the foundation for population practices with broader goals.

The Learning Objectives-Based Programme Framework (LOCF) for undergraduate education is a framework based on anticipated learning outcomes and academic standards that graduates and degree holders should attain. Degree attributes, qualification descriptors, programme learning outcomes, and course learning outcomes are important outputs that support curriculum planning and development. Given the pressing need for professional social work to address the issues presented by a constantly evolving society, this Z-to-A method is crucial. The fundamental mandate of the task that needed to be completed was to describe the expected results more precisely and accurately while adapting them to the necessary professional capacity. Each element has been defined and explained, including the degree qualities, qualification descriptors, programme learning outcomes, and course learning outcomes.

The modern world witnessed the evolution of new practices, where reality and context have changed, and therefore learning strategies must also adapt to these changes. The LOCF's Choice Based Credit System (CBCS) broadens students' options and allows them to select between two types of required courses (core or skill growth). According to the UGC (2020) criteria, the BSW curriculum has incorporated fresh ideas and lessons learnt, and its standout components make it applicable to the modern practice environment. Therefore, future graduates interested in social work education and practice will find the LOCF-prepared programme for BSW to be of utmost significance. Enhancing their abilities, improving their employability and forming them into more diversified and dynamic BSW students.

Levels of Outcomes in Undergraduate Social Work Program

The Undergraduate programme in Social Work is designed to achieve the programme's objectives, which prepares students for general practice activities at the entry level for professional access (UGC, 2020). In general bachelor's programmes, the outcomes can be defined at three levels: (a) Programme Outcomes (POs) or statements that describe what the students graduating from general programmes should be able to do, (b) Programme Specific Outcomes (PSOs) which are statements that describe what the graduates of a specific programme should be able to do and (c) Course Outcomes (COs). Every programme must meet the PSOs and the POs specified at the Institute/University and programme levels.

Understanding the characteristics of the chosen POs will help to pinpoint the activities that will address these components. It should be kept in mind that any activities designed to address the POs should provide students to gauge their planned goals. For instance, while everyone agrees that critical thinking is essential, no programme contains activities that specifically address and encourage it. Through disciplined analysis and assessment, critical thinking improves any subject, content or domain. Knowing the components of thought is necessary for analysis, whereas understanding the standards for review is necessary for assessment. Assessment and solving the problems of a society can be attained through the knowledge, skills and attitudes attained from various domains such as humanities, sciences, mathematics or social sciences.

The course outcome is achieved through learning, which students have learned after completing the courses selected for the program. The term course refers to the individual subject that makes up the programme's components. The course learning outcomes refers to what the student will achieve after learning a particular course related to an interdisciplinary/ interdisciplinary field or area. Some courses are well structured, and compulsory/introductory courses are very strict at certain phases/stages of learning. Some courses give more freedom to learn course combinations according to each student's preferences (like electives). The course's learning outcomes correspond to the program's learning outcomes. Learning outcomes at the course level depend on the learning process in defined under the graduate program. Students can achieve both program-level outcomes and course learning outcomes.

Outcomes during Field Education:
The Signature Pedagogy of Social Work Education

Field education is known as the signature pedagogy in the social work curriculum since it integrates classroom learning and practice (CSWE, 2008 & 2015). Thus, field education is very crucial for the development of undergraduate social work students. It helps the students to process the supervised classroom instructions on concepts by using the professional skills and techniques they studied into the application level through behaviours at work. Therefore, field education in social work is a two-way integration of learning that helps the student contribute to their professional growth as upcoming social workers (Shulman, 2005a & 2005b). For field education, students should be placed in social welfare agencies, development agencies, and community-based organisations for children, youth, women, and the elderly for on-the-job education to get

hand own experience and exposure on the situations and contexts they need to work in the future.

When students undertake to learn in the realities of agency life, a vehicle is established to integrate theory and conceptual frameworks acquired through courses (application), develop and refine skills, and examine attitudes and values. In addition, students have the opportunity to analyse the effects of social welfare policy on programs and services, opportunities to develop research questions about internship efforts and opportunities to evaluate practical efforts. Field practicum allows students to confirm the validity of the content studied in class by application. The progressive and mutual relationship between theory and conceptual frameworks and practice becomes a dynamic in the teaching-learning process of field education through field instruction and field supervision. Field education enables students to integrate the knowledge, emotions and practice aspects into their social work education. It is designed to produce a competent, knowledgeable, self-assessing, professionally thoughtful social worker.

Through field education, students must be able to implement strategies to use the agency's structure, mission, protocol, and communication channels to adequately and effectively prepare for action with individuals, families, groups, organisations, and communities. They will use working relationships with formal and informal networks and resources using organisational, collaborative, and leadership skills to influence larger systems and engage and strengthen the community. They will demonstrate practical approaches consistent with the client's systems, problems, and different roles in social work using self-reflection, critical thinking, problem-solving, and evaluating the effectiveness of the intervention. In addition, they will be able to present themselves as a member of the social work profession by advocating for social work, values and ethical reasoning. demonstrate personal initiative, strength, self-awareness and professional behaviour; and the adoption of continuous learning.

Field education is also considered as a course in an undergraduate social work program. Thus, it will also have course outcomes for assessing what the students should achieve after the completion of their field education. The primary learning outcomes for graduate students are the ability to demonstrate knowledge, values, and professional skills in the social work profession when working in practical contexts of individuals, families, groups, communities, and organisations. Social sensitivity, critical social engagement, effective communication, and teamwork are

the other learning outcomes expected of BSW graduates. Students can also do fieldwork in administration, planning, or policy development activities too. Social work schools offer orientation and training to instructors in the field and link to the undergraduate program and intended learning outcomes through some form of field contact or field seminar. The field education supervisor from the organisation and the institution will evaluate to what extent the students achieved those outcomes based on the performance of the student.

Methods of Outcome Assessment/ Evaluation in Social Work Education

Training in how to promote outcome-aware learning and make sure that intended learning outcomes (ILO) are met is necessary for outcome based teaching and evaluation (OBTE). We must give the appropriate training to the members of the board of studies in a university or an autonomous institution to write the results since choosing courses and programmes is a crucial prerequisite. Every institution can determine the outcomes of its courses and programmes in a perceptive and long-sighted manner since outcome determination is a knowledge-based creative exercise with flexibility and choice (Kalfa&Taksa, 2015).

Higher education institutions must ensure that the content in a curriculum and established results are correctly matched. Training in ILO compliant evaluation techniques is a crucial component of OBTE. The approach that is frequently used is criterian reference assessment (CRA). The quality assurance of the outcome based education is ensured, when the ARC is well-supervised, the instruction is well-adapted to it, and the assessment of student's performance at the ILO is well-established. To provide better education for all students and teachers, educational institutions must be prepared with ILO-focused courses, programmes, curricula and CRA. There is currently a global consensus that higher education institutions must adhere to a well-planned teaching and learning system that includes curricula, courses, instruction, and test design that adheres to international standards (Fanghanel&Trowler, 2008). In this situation, higher education and research institutions must restructure their courses to meet the OBE's specifications.

There are numerous ways to categorise assessments, such as diagnostic, formative, or summative, and most are logical. Assessment is a process of evaluating students in relation to and prior to their exposure to a particular educational intervention. This kind of assessment's major goal is to maximise the learning process by determining the students' academic

needs. Creating a profile is frequently done to determine one's strengths and weaknesses. With the progress towards OBE, the importance of this type of evaluation must be increased. The formative style of assessment involves evaluating pupils while they are still in the learning process. This kind of examination serves two purposes. They start by giving feedback to both students and teachers, who are in charge of directing learning. Second, the assessment process produces learning on its own. As a result, formative assessment is crucial to education. A summative evaluation, the third sort of evaluation, is often conducted after the period. This kind of evaluation is done to determine whether the learner has retained the material. As a result, these evaluations are typically cumulative and evaluate whether the student is qualified to start a career (Dent, 2013).

Provided that COs are carefully prepared to reflect the course's intended outcomes and the selected POs and PSOs, the attainment of the COs should lead to the achievement of the POs and PSOs. We can only rely on the existing common evaluation mechanisms for the services implementing the programme. The evaluations include intermediate periods, final exams, assignments, reports, demonstrations and laboratory/ live performances. If the valuation is consistent with COS, it is easy to calculate the return by following an unusual but academically sound process. Calculating order implementations is a unique and flawed process. However, continuously improving the quality of learning requires a coherent and clearly defined process. Outcomes based education requires teachers to communicate the intended outcomes, the topics they will study and what they can do at the end of the semester. It is established through systematic research and on-site visits and tells students that COs significantly impacts student performance at the beginning of the semester.

Graduate Attributes after the Completion of the Undergraduate Program

Graduate attributes are the skills and qualities a student should obtain after the completion of the graduate programme through achieving programme outcomes, program specific outcomes and course outcomes. Following are the few specific goals of the outcome based social work curriculum.

a.   To help students understand their relationships with other areas of social care, philosophy, values, ethics, business, and social science history.

b.   Provide students with information on basic and complementary methods and basic principles of professional social welfare.

c. Teach students the value of research and research based practice. Develop problem-solving and decision-making skills.

d. Train professionals in different social environments and address modern issues and problems, such as marginalised and exclusive population groups;

e. To identify the needs of students, young professionals, individuals, groups and individuals at all levels of the community who are sensitive to social issues related to changes in society, culture and the technology-based economy;

f. Train young professionals with excellent communication skills and continue to motivate lifelong learning, focusing on skills and competencies in all areas of social work practice.

g. Promote graduates' understanding of design and development at the national and international levels. It focuses on national policies aimed at sustainable development.

Social work education promotes the vision of working for an equal society by embracing the values of social justice, human rights, empathy, hard work and honesty towards students. Outcomes based education is on the assumption that all students and graduates are unique. Each student or degree is specific to their previous level of learning and experience, life experience, learning methods and approaches to future behaviour related to their career. The quality, depth and scope of the learning experience offered to students will help develop special features. The graduates' characteristics reflect an understanding of academic knowledge and shared skills, including general skills that all students must master, manage and demonstrate in different fields and contexts. Therefore, following are the some of the attributes that graduates of social work should attain after the completion of the programme:

a. Knowledge: Ability to demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of one or more subjects included in an undergraduate program. Awareness on social attitudes, social issues, social legislation and rights-based approaches.

b. Communication: The ability to effectively express ideas and ideas, listen attentively, analyze, read and write, and demonstrate their ability to make complex information available to other groups clearly and concisely. Develop oral and nonverbal communication skills, prepare and present documents/reports/PPT. Using ICT in different learning situations demonstrates the ability to use, assess

and use various related sources and develop digital skills to meet professional needs.

c. Critical Thinking: The ability to apply analytical thinking to information systems. Analyse evidence, arguments, claims, and beliefs based on empirical evidence. Identify relevant assumptions and effects. Critical evaluation of practices, guidelines and theories in accordance with consistent scientific knowledge development methods and commercial development methods.

d. Problem solving: Capacity to solve different issues by applying the competencies to solve different kinds of problems by stepping out of comfort zones and facing unexpected challenges.

e. Analytical Reasoning: Ability to use secondary data to identify an appropriate resource/database. Analyse and synthesise data from multiple sources to draw practical conclusions.

f. Research-related skills: Basic techniques and scientific attitudes as a researcher, finding a problem and developing a research design, ability to plan, conduct and report research. Ability to create case studies and documents for best practices, analyze data with appropriate software, and create native data.

g. Collaboration and teamwork: Ability to work efficiently and respectfully with other teams. Facilitate cooperation and coordination between groups and groups for a common purpose and act effectively as participants.

h. Reflection: Identify expertise and skills and take steps to meet the situation's needs.

i. Self-motivated Learning: Ability to identify needs and mobilise resources to track and evaluate plans. Ability to guide clients in the right direction in society/ work environment.

j. Diversity management and inclusive approaches: Able to respect and appreciate diversity (caste, race, gender, exclusion), multicultural values and beliefs, diversity management, and approaches that allow to understand and evaluate approaches that are as inclusive as possible from a global perspective.

k. Ethical awareness and reasoning: Adopt moral and ethical values in a person's lifestyle, develop different positions/discussions on ethical issues, and use ethical practices in all tasks. The ability to identify ethical issues related to work and prevent unethical acts such as data manipulation, forgery, misrepresentation, plagiarism

and intellectual property fires. Understand environmental and sustainability issues and acts objectively, fairly and sincerely in all aspects of social work.

l. Lifelong learning: self-taught and self-centred continuous learning aimed at personal/professional development, information, improvement of attitudes and skills and retraining skills in different fields.

Conclusion

It is a new experience for Indian universities to design and conduct undergraduate programmes to attain specific outcomes. Outcome based Education made its way exactly when the ruckus about decentralisation within educational institutions was going on. There is no doubt that OBE is a particular keyword that applies to all higher education sectors. It assesses students' success based on their own values, skills and knowledge. A sound learning management system (LMS) integrates well with performance and provides scope for development and efficiency. Finally, as an outcome of the training, some essential benefits are explored in the OBE field. It is creative, flexible, and react quickly to new technologies to solve the problem in a better way. It is engaged in a continuous learning process with flexible learning method of empowerment that allows students to participate in the decision-making and management process. It provides the knowledge, skills and guidance to students that they need to succeed after leaving institutions. Outcome-oriented education creates transparent expectations at the highest productive level. In this system, students and teachers know the expected outcomes where the consistency of efforts are highly required from the part of students.

OBE does not provide any special educational skills. Students can understand and make decisions based on their interests and abilities that emerged from their exposure. In OBE, teachers assess students' outcomes based on the criteria set out in the course outcomes. It will give an idea of the student's progress periodically, and students will have an idea of how they will evaluate at the end of the course. Thus, outcomes based education can change a student's learning experience, and educational institutions must adapt to improve their knowledge and skills. OBE does not encourage to be a topper than other students. Instead, it helps them stay productive in the long run, gain experience, and build a better thinking process. Further efforts are needed to improve and strengthen academic resources and the learning environment, improve the quality of education and research at all universities and improve the employability of graduates through institutional care based on curriculum reforms based

on outcomes and learning outcomes. Future studies need to analyse a model undergraduate social work program which follows outcome based curriculum framework in India.

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THE CHALLENGE OF ZOOM FATIGUE AMONG STUDENTS IN INDIA

*ANAMIKA D

Abstract

Zoom fatigue has been a latest phenomenon exemplifying new physical and mental health challenges for students across. The utility of zoom video conferencing technology has undoubtedly helped students during and after the pandemic to ensure continued learning. However, there are several disadvantages such as blurred vision, puffed eyes, lethargy, heavy head, irritability, suffocation, stress, tiredness, sleeplessness, and eyestrain after excess use. Notably, there is a widespread realization that remote learning leads to social isolation among learners. Quite vividly, the educational innovation of zoom has a multifarious impact on the student community which is still undocumented adequately and hence unaddressed. As it is a less researched physical and mental health problem among remote learners, it requires multidisciplinary attention to outline the impact and introduces policy-based measures. In the Indian context, there were access issues due to the minuscule or less availability among economically weak students whereas those who had access faced zoom fatigue. Additional psychological problems such as quality internet connection may further enhance anxiety and stress during lecture hours for students. Based on the emerging evidence, the paper argues for the rational use of online learning technologies such as zoom to ensure optimal benefits and harm reduction. Furthermore, the paper established the need for mental health interventions and strategies to rectify the adverse impact of excessive zoom-based learning engagement in India.

Key Words: Zoom Fatigue, Mental Health, Online Learning, Digital Divide, Education, India.

Introduction

'Zoom fatigue' is a less researched and hurriedly propagated phenomenon among the students who have been using video conferencing technology for learning purposes. Zoom fatigue carries varied consequences on the users, especially on their mental and physical health. Lee (2020)defined 'Zoom fatigue'referring to previous study(Wolf, 2020) as excessive use of the digital platforms for the exchange of ideas leading

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to exhaustion, anxiety, or burnout. Sitting for hours before the screen, gazing continuously over it while having almost no body movement makes students tired and exhausted. Furthermore, watching oneself continuously over the window as if sitting before a mirror for hours makes a person more conscious and anxious. Understanding the psychology of videoconferencing is not only associated with screen but also emerges the need for understanding the body-mind relationship.

The lived experience of past classrooms versus the current virtual classrooms altogether paints a very realistic, however, a completely two different experiences, especially for university students. There was a time when in-person lectures were a place not only to learn but also to meet friends, chitchat, and share all new happenings on the campus before the lecture begins. Once the lecture began, the leftover talk would continue over the given break or sometimes in between the taken break for a cup of coffee along with a friend. During an exhausting or uninteresting session, small talk was sufficiently helpful to overcome it. However, with the advent of the zoom room, students are being deprived of the in-between chitchat, coffee break, getting over boredom along with a company, and left to deal with everything all alone. In simple words zoom converted group learning into individual learning in an isolated manner, just you and your clicks from one lecture to another. The precious in-person social interaction has gradually vanished with the emergence of zoom-like learning technologies.

The lack of human interaction and talk in between is perceived as a major factor for stress while having an online engagement for a longer duration. Rump and Brandt (2020) mentioned that "around 52% of the respondents miss small talk and lack networking to the extent that it leads to stress among them while using the zoom platform"(p.6). Conversations between the sessions lighten up the mood, make learning joyful instead of being too technical, and focused as seen in the case of virtual sessions as compared to live in-person lectures in the classroom. Bailenson (2021), and Fosslien and Duffy, (2020), emphasize that listening on the video is not the same as compared to in-person communication. Users exhibit a constant eye gaze to show they are listening on video calls, which differs from listening in person when such staring would be considered rude. Maintaining such a consciousness throughout the lecture arguably ruptures the peaceful state of mind making one irritable, anxious, and tired.

The Rising Zoom Culture within the Indian Education System

During and after the coronavirus outbreak, a digitally mediated

synchronous learning environment mostly through platforms such as Zoom has contributed extensively to maintaining the functionality of the education system, making it highly useful, and solving the purpose of distancing. Zoom classes and platforms became one of the most preferred modes for universities to reach out to students for lectures, training, conducting workshops, and other modes of teaching and learning without compromising their educational year. Patnaik and colleagues (2020) note that Zoom uses on a daily basis with the number crossing 300 million, and it has made Zoom one of the most preferred modes for video conferencing (Cited in Ngien& Hogan, 2022). The number is growing constantly among the Indian users making India the second most user market for zoom.

Better connectivity, quality, and affordability of the technology make zoom easily available and usable. Gilbert (2020) and Kingsley-Hughes (2020) underscore that "Zoom's popularity is attributed to its user-friendly interface and better video quality compared to other platforms (e.g., Skype, Google Hangouts)" (Cited in Ngien& Hogan, 2022, p.1). Within the education system, says Mpungose (2021) "Zoom became one of the video conferencing technologies (VCTs) that gained the most popularity in the education sector after the COVID-19 pandemic" (p.3). Both, during and post-pandemic, digital literacy, and its application gained major attention in academic administration. However, the core area mostly remained restricted to the application and usage of the digital platform for the learners and educators.

Challenges and pathways from Zoom to the Zoom fatigue

The utility of the virtual classroom has undoubtedly helped students during the stressful time of the pandemic. On the contrary, it has become challenging to ignore the disadvantages it brings to the learners. Excessive screen time shared by the remote learners tends to produce burnout and mental exhaustion frequently among the users, affecting the quality of learning time. Academic counselor of IGNOU, Pathak (2016), citing an example from India about digital detox states, "Number of people whose lifestyle is compromised due to online time is going up significantly" (p.1). The pandemic period made it fully transparent that health problems growing among the Indian users due to excessive digital involvement. Ngien and Hogan (2022), in their study, clearly established a relationship between the zoom users using zoom room live and zoom exhaustion.

Experiencing hours and hours of screen time becomes unavoidable for students. Initially, during the beginning of Covid-19 and during the pandemic, online classes became saviors for students without wasting

their semesters or a year. Gupta and colleagues (2022) showed that virtual learning imposes an undesirable impact on the Indian learners compromising their wellbeing and productivity. Furthermore, continuous screen time leads to tension among the Indian students making them eat unevenly and frequently.

Unfortunately, the side effects of the continuous screen time are unforeseen to the remote learners. Rump and Brandt (2020) highlight that "zoom fatigue can trigger poor psychological well-being due to irritability, stress, forgetfulness, and nervousness"(cited in Ngien& Hogan, 2022, p.2). In such a given situation, it would not be wrong to depict that a student undergoing digital stress and fatigue will not be able to do justice to online learning. Health problems such as forgetfulness and nervousness will make the entire learning experience compromised. Moreover, having performance anxiety will turn out to be an additional loading factor on the students in such a competitive world. Ravindran and colleagues (2014) highlighted that exhausted zoom users experience attention difficulty, less interest, and are willing to leave the meeting early.

Experts and scholars frequently bring into discussion the long-term impact of the psychological problems of remote learners and practitioners. Zoom fatigue and its health-related consequences are not only interfaced by Indian students but also worldwide. Due to excessive screen exposure, users are more likely to develop health conditions that if ignored may become chronic.

The Growing Concern for the Zoom learners in India

India has a two-fold struggle while dealing with the virtual education system. First, the struggle is to provide sufficient digital resources to needy students. The second struggle is about dealing with the mental health issues of the e-learners. Quite vividly, the Indian education sector has been struggling on both fronts.

So far, the primary focus of academia is more on the execution of educational technology safely and maintaining privacy. IravatiDamle mentioned that Zoom is more focused on meeting privacy and security challenges (Business Standard, 2021) which clearly suggests evidence-based advocacy efforts to integrate mental and physical health impacts. Importantly, zoom is able to deal with the low bandwidth issues in the Indian context and introduce the 'Focus Mode' for the students; such facilities demand additional screen engagement.

Support systems for the students are no doubt coming up; however, it is yet to be proven in terms of their impact. Mpungose (2021) asserts that virtual fatigue can be seen as one of the drawbacks of video conferencing. Al-Samarraie (2019) claimed that there is some new obstacle within higher education due to digital learning using video conferencing technology as it may not be able to provide the required learning outcome and method of teaching.

In the era of connectivism, where technology is a major part of the learning process, it becomes difficult for the users to relate the fatigues and uneasiness directly with the technology. It has been seen that users are not able to identify the root cause of the exhaustion, making it a very confusing state and deal with the problem directly. Remote users especially students encounter diverse mental and social conditions. From time to time scholars have raised the issue of social isolation among virtual users (Forrester et al., 2005; Kwon et al., 2010). In addition, Zainal Badri and colleagues (2021) highlighted referring to previous studies (Andrews &Tynan, 2012; Dzakiria, 2008; Goode, 2010) that virtual users face adjustment-related pressure.

Improper and unorganized time management among the organizers is highly problematic and painful where the lectures, meetings, or workshops are stretched to lengthy hours resulting in burnout and fatigue for the participants. A poorly executed and unexpected duration of lectures and discussions compromises the interest and engagement of the attendees. The growing situation centers on the voice for having a holistic approach to dealing with the emerging mental and physical health concerns due to excessive screen engagement and unhealthy technological engagements among the students.

Dealing with the Zoom Fatigue

Education has become an emergency matter, and along with it, educational technologies have been positioned as a frontline emergency service. In such a scenario, one cannot ignore the other aspects related to the newly and poorly implemented e-methodology for teaching students. There is a need for a well-researched and tested pedagogy for digital teaching and learning, especially for educators. Mpungose (2021) affirmed that the "educational technology is not only about hardware (computers and other devices) and about software (Internet and other applications) but is also about the pedagogy (teaching and learning methods) that each lecturer needs to possess (self-identity)" (p.7). Having such an approach in academia will predominantly reduce unpredicted abstract emotional

challenges being faced by the students and make it stress-free healthy and happy learning.

A multidisciplinary approach is required for capacity building to install skills and approaches to deal with the emerging digital health concern among the students. WHO Global strategy on Digital Health 2020-2025 (2021) proposed to "develop capacity-building methodologies, tools, and training materials to help member states to identify, systematize and share good practices and lessons learned on digital health." (p.49)

Verma (2018) described digital detox as a circumstance where the remote user stops using virtual technology and gadgets and uses the opportunity for communicating with peers and non-digital activity. Such a technique enables an individual to relieve stress and anxiety incurred from being over-occupied by the high utilization of digital devices. In such a scenario, digital detox would be highly useful for the students in order to overcome virtual fatigue and adopt it as one of the good practices.

In addition, it is indispensable to highlight the emerging situation of zoom fatigue among the Indian students and take it to the level of policy and advocacy in the education system not only in India but also at a global level. The emerging health conditions among the remote learners set an alarm for the institution to have an optimal and healthy use of a zoom-based classroom. An introduction of several mental health interventions and strategies to rectify the adverse impact of the technology in order to enhance the learning experience of students in India would make students' digital resilience. Having a safer transition from virtual learning to blended learning would make it more adaptable for Indian students to meet the structural and mental health barriers in the learning process.

Furthermore, awareness among the students about the emerging health issues due to digital fatigue would make learners take self-responsibility and establish a defense mechanism against the emerging health problem. Encouraging Indian learners and supporting them, sufficiently enough to share their challenges and health problems helps them to open up and look for solutions. The introduction of free support groups and a supportive atmosphere works wonders with a higher level in academia. The higher education system should bear the responsibility to deal with the emerging technology-driven health problems among the students and incorporate training and workshops for healthy digital practices mostly from the student's perspective. Here, having an infrastructure to support digital transformation both for the students and for educators would suffice to a certain extent. Proper documentation of

causes related to digital fatigue among the Indian students is required as it leaves the scope for further research, intervention, and policymaking.

Conclusion

Within cyberspace, the concept of Zoom fatigue among the students is less documented, less studied, and less attended area, which demands more digging, attention, and exploration. Post pandemic era is witnessing a big amendment in the pedagogy of teaching and learning. Therefore, it needed a new approach for preparedness to deal with it, especially in streamlining the mental health of the students in the higher level of education in India. The comfort and easy adaptability of the remote learning via Zoom VCT is a surface level of implementing the remedial measures to deal with the method of remote learning as compared to classroom learning for the students. Pal & Patra (2021) in their study explored the virtual learning from a student's point of view and noted that "the onset of this new paradigm of "online only" education has placed a great burden on the students, and it is needed to investigate into their perceptions of using video technology for fulfilling their learning needs" (p.11). The actual scenario is revealed at the depth where mental concerns such as fatigue, social isolation, irritability, low concentration, anxiety, and many more emerge at the surface due to continuous and frequent usage of screens among the students of higher studies. Sharma and colleagues (2021) emphasized the need for "awareness about webinar fatigue and the importance of "less is more" and "quality rather than frequency" with regard to webinars should be campaigned massively" (p.1).Policy-based measures need to be incorporated in order to ease the online learning experience of the students making it mandatory for students to follow user-friendly thumb rules and guidelines for healthy learning. The impact of digital media on the health of the students is an emerging field of exploration and leaves room for an in-depth study and research from a social and psychological perspective in the education sector. Williamson and others (2020) highlighted that "Technology is not a neutral entity that simply does well when people have access to it – it is a complex and social-cultural artifact" (p.6).

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BUILDING REMOTE COMMUNITIES THROUGH SERVICE LEARNING PROJECTS IN GRADUATE PROGRAMS: A COMMUNITY INTERVENTION MODEL FROM SOUTH INDIA

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Introduction

Settled life in India as per the recorded history dates back to the Indus valley civilisation of ancient India which is notable for its two cities Harappa and Mohenjodaro. Historians had not mentioned about villages in this era. Early mention of villages was made during the Vedic period. The establishment of kingdoms paved the way for the emergence of kingdoms as cities and far-off places with less development as villages. Then onwards villages have been the nucleus of Indian social life. India is still dominated by villages and majority of its population are villagers. As Mahatma Gandhi said the soul of India lies in her villages. Villages over the years had been subject to transition. Even then throughout transition, Indian villages have maintained its unique features. On one hand Indian villages are dependent on agriculture and known for its simple and straight thinking and life. Indian villages are inhabited by people who manifest a deep loyalty to the village and adhere to their traditions and values but on the other hand the village life depicts a state of deprivation and dependence. There is a dearth of quality education and health care. Agricultural scenario face a lot of setbacks and local handicrafts are not receiving their share of promotion. Superstitions have still not been completely eradicated and lack of infrastructure is prominent in villages. All these leave immense scope for development workers in Indian villages.

Key Words: Covid 19, Pandemic, Psycho-Social Perspective

1.1 Villages in Kerala

Kerala is a narrow strip of land on the southernmost tip of the Indian peninsula. The Kerala state came into force on November 1st, 1956. Kerala then consisted of only five districts. The number of districts later increased to 14. The districts are divided into taluks which are further subdivided into

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villages. At present, there are 63 taluks and 1452 villages1. The villages in Kerala may not fit in perfectly to the picture of villages drawn above as in other parts of India. Kerala is one of the developed states of India; the Kerala villages also show glimpses of development. Compared to the north Indian villages, the socio-economic conditions of villages in Kerala is much better due to the Kerala Model of Development. There exists high literacy, high life expectancy, better health care and a high female sex ratio in Kerala. The major reason for this achievement is Kerala's focus on the service sector. On a comparative level throughgh villages in Kerala stands high on the pedestal of Indian villages, it does not mean that the place is free of problems. There exists chronic unemployment, budget deficits, lack of political will and specialised services. More over the process of rural development in India and Kerala is haphazard raising some villages as model villages and leaving others as underdeveloped villages. Here arises the significance of social work professionals to accelerate the rural development process in the state. It is with this conviction that Little Flower Institute of Social Sciences and Health (LISSAH) which is predominantly a social work college was established in 2003 at PudupaddyPanchayath, one of the remote villages in the northern part of Kerala.

1.2 Social Work Profession

Social Work is a Profession to enhance human capacity to solve complex social problems in order to create a more humane and just society. At a micro level social work deals with individuals, at a mezzo level it deals with groups and at a macro level it deals with communities. At all these levels the focus is on identifying, promoting and enhancing the strength of individuals, groups and community to tackle the complex social problems around them and mitigate the effect of such complexities and make life more fulfilling and meaningful.

Fieldwork in social work education provides the student with an interface between classroom education and actual practice. The student is provided with opportunities to:

• Develop practice skills by applying classroom theory to real-life situations

• Determine which approaches work in practice and how they must be adapted to specific situations

• Understand the effect of the organizational context on professional practice while developing skills in agency-based social work

- Learn to use supervision and consultation appropriately

- Begin to engage in self-assessment

- Develop a professional identity

Field education consists of both an agency placement (internship) with supervision provided by professional social workers.

Social work practice can be extended to anywhere there exist human beings. The profession strives to bring about better understanding and adjustments between people and between people and environment. Therefore communities especially rural communities constitute an inevitable practice setting of social work in India.

Ever since its inception the LISSAH has been motivated by the Gandhian Philosophy of Education which has inspired the social work philosophy as well. "Gandhain philosophy of education is naturalistic in its setting, idealistic in its goals, pragmatic in its methods and humanistic in its outlook2". He said, "By Education I mean an all round drawing out of the best in the child and man –body, mind and spirit". For Gandhi individual development and social progress are interdependent. Gandhi believed that through education in schools and colleges, students should identify themselves with the poor and the downtrodden in the community. They should develop a willingness to spend a part of their time for the welfare of the society. "If your education is a substantial one, it should spread its odour in your surroundings". Inspired by Gandhian philosophy and by imbibing the spirit of the service learning concept, the field work is carefully planned at LISSAH by adopting innovative Community Intervention Strategies. It provides the students both an opportunity to master their professional skills and develop an attitude that appreciate the value of service to mankind . All these efforts will eventually prove beneficial for the community as well. . They are motivated to go beyond the university syllabus and is always in the fore front in re-designing the life of villagers of North Kerala, especially in puduppadypanchayath. This paper is focussing on such an initiative by the institution that links social work education based on gandhian philosophy & service learning concept with rural development. The objectives of the paper are as follows:

- Assess the socio economic profile of the community

- Identify the development needs of the community

- Develop action plan for community Development

- To develop professional competencies of the students

2. A Review Of Service Learning Projects

Definitions of service learning vary considerably among those who embrace it (University of Colorado, 1998)3. Kraft (1996) presents a similar argument in his discussion of the practice of service learning. He states that some agreement has been achieved on the definition of service-learning in recent years, but actual practices do not always match the definition4.

2.1 Defining Service Learning

In service-learning settings, students are expected to provide direct community service as part of a course, to learn about and reflect on the community context in which service is provided, and to understand the connection between the service activity and the learning objectives of their course (Driscoll and others, 1998)5. Service-learning courses require many ingredients: faculty time and expertise, coordination and planning, transportation, community time and expertise, student time and commitment and resources to fund supplies, materials, and products, to name a few (Driscoll and others, 1998)6.

Holland and Ramaley (1998) have opined that a comprehensive assessment design for service learning projects not only measure the impacts of the learning activity, but help to enrich and sustain the underlying community partnership itself7. However, as they are new initiatives in higher education, service-learning programs and community-university partnerships depend on effective assessment strategies to generate the evidence that will sustain internal and external support and document impacts (Holland and Ramaley, 1998)8.

2.2 Assured Benefits

Service-learning projects have great add-ons, these projects can ensure consistent quality of effort and experience, build the body of knowledge about best practices, develop the evidentiary argument for additional resources, motivate others to participate by documenting outcomes, and generate ideas and lessons learned to share with others9. While attitudes and understandings are formed in "discourse communities" that involve relationships, to change these, new communities and new relationships must be forged. Rather than engaging in blaming teachers, students, or parents, community-based service-learning can help forge solutions that involve changing these larger structures (Vasquez, 1994)10. Service-learning that is group and community-oriented begins to build

those supports, contributing to peer group norms and values that define school as a place for meaningful learning and community problem solving. In addition it remains a valuable tool for promoting a sense of agency in students (e.g., being able to act rather than being acted upon).

Also, service-learning may contribute to improving school culture through its beneficial effect on teacher–student relationships. It does so by opening the school door to activities that potentially can change the quality of relationships between students and teachers (Shumer, 1994); levelling power differences, it helps promote the reciprocity and cooperation that facilitate mutual learning11. "Service-learning involves and immerses students in relational learning environments and engages multiple senses and intelligences. Learning becomes more accessible by expanding the definition of competence and redefining the relationship of teacher to student and student to learning. The teacher, rather than simply being the provider of information and the evaluator of competence, is the creator of environments where students learn by doing, working with others, and reflecting on their experiences" (McPherson &Nebgen, p. 1)12.

2.3 Multiple Research Evidences

John Dewey, an advocate of service-learning, believed that students would learn more effectively and become better citizens if they engaged in service to the community and had this service incorporated into their academic curriculum (Dewey 1916)13. Based on a study conducted in 1984, researchers reported that 27 percent of all high schools (public and private) in the United States offered some type of community service and 9 percent of all high schools offered service-learning, defined as curriculum-related service programs (Newmann and Rutter 1985)14.

Loesch-Griffin, Petrides, and Pratt, in their evaluation of a service-learning program in California, found that students who participated in service-learning became more dependable for others and felt more comfortable communicating with ethnically diverse groups (Loesch-Griffin, 1995)15. Recent studies confirm these findings. Furco, for example, provides evidence that participation in service-learning helped students "feel empowered as they take on leadership and adult-like roles" (Furco, 2002)16. Melchior and Bailis (2002) show statistically significant positive impact on scales that measure personal and social responsibility connected to social welfare, community involvement, acceptance of diversity and acquisition of communication skills17.

There is a mounting body of evidence documenting the efficacy of

participating in service learning during the undergraduate years (Astin, Sax & Avalos, 1999; Batchelder & Root, 1994; Eyler, Giles & Braxton, 1997; Eyler& Giles, 1999; Hesser, 1995; Rhoads, 1997; Sax, Astin&Astin, 1996)18-25.

2.4 Challenges in Service Learning Initiatives

The complexity of service-learning results in two major impacts on assessment strategies. First, given limitations of organizational time and resources, an investment in service-learning must be measured for its impact and effectiveness in serving the educational mission of the institution. The return on the effort must justify the investment. This internal, more academic purpose for assessment is also essential to sustaining institutional commitment or expanding faculty involvement in service-learning courses. Faculty wants to see evidence that service-learning is making a difference in the learning of course material, student development of social responsibility, or community conditions (Holland, 1999).

Second, an assessment of service-learning that focuses only on students will not capture essential data on the impacts of service-learning on faculty, community partners, and the institution. A service-learning course may meet objectives for student learning, but faculty must also monitor the intense impacts on other participants to improve and sustain the working relationship that is the underpinning of successful service-learning experiences. For service-learning to be sustained, the institution, faculty, students, and community partners must see benefits of shared efforts. Each of these constituents holds different goals and expectations for the project; arrives with different experiences, assets, and fears; and operates from a different sense of power and control. Overcoming differences requires the cultivation of a partnership based on knowledge exchange. Research on the characteristics of partnerships reveals that commitment to assessment activities can help the disparate members of a partnership track their progress and learn from the experience of working together. Assessment tends to put all partners on equal ground by attending to the participation, satisfaction, and perspectives of each stakeholder group (Holland and Ramaley, 1998).

3. Methods

This paper discusses about field work which is an integral part of social work education that is planned at Little Flower Institute of Social Sciences and Health by imbibing the true spirit of Gandhian Philosophy of

Education. A Community Intervention Model for PuduppadyPanchayath was adopted in the field work of Social work students at graduate and post graduate level. The research method explains the conceptual framework of the Community Intervention model and further describes the research design, sampling design and the data collection procedure.

3.1 Community Intervention Model – A Brief Overview

The ultimate objective of the community intervention model adopted by LISSAH is rural development. As envisaged in the motto of the college "Towards Life in its Fullness", this model aims at helping each individual in the community to lead a fuller life. The basic premises of this model are

- People's Participation
- Neighbourhood Committees
- Programme Planning & Implementation
- Networking
- Political and Social action

This model believes in bringing about the individual and collective participation of all people in the Community. Individual participation is intended in the concept people's participation and collective participation is made possible through neighbourhood communities. Programmes were planned to meet the developmental needs identified through the survey and its implementation part was shared by the college and the Panchayath with the participation of the community members. The interventions by the college are described in detail in the action plan. As part of programme implementation, networking with various institutions within and outside the community were made. Political will is essential for any developmental tasks to be completed in a democratic country like India hence efforts were taken to convince the administrative authority to act for welfare of the people. Community volunteers were also trained in initiating social action against social evils. A diagrammatic representation of this model is given below
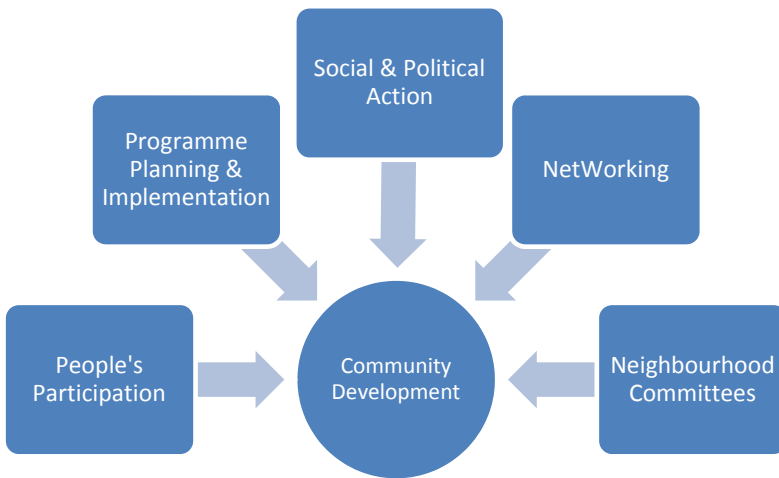
3.2 Research Design

In this research an attempt is made to assess the developmental needs of the community and then after initiate measures to bring about positive changes in the community. Through this survey the areas that require immediate as well as long term intervention were identified and an action plan was prepared and implemented as a continuation of the survey. Hence this is an action research which brought about the participation of the community members, the research institute (college) as well as the government officials.

3.3 Sampling Design

The sampling design adopted is the dense sampling method introduced by Coleman in 1959. A dense sampling is the one in which the researcher selects 50% or more from the population. In this study out of the 9000 families in the Panchayath, 6350 families were included in the study which constitutes 70% of the population. A survey covering the entire population was not possible due to the unavailability and incompetence of people to participate in the survey.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

The method of data collection is a survey and tool used for it is a questionnaire which contained both open ended and closed questions. Therefore both quantitative and qualitative data is used for the study. The survey was done by 120 post graduate and undergraduate students with

the help of professors of the college, government officials and community members. An analysis of the results of the survey was followed by an action plan for the community.

4. MAJOR FINDINGS

This survey was done in PudupadyPanchayath during the period January to March 2012. PuduppadyPanchayath is situated in the Koduvally block of Calicut district. It is 40 kilometres away from the Calicut town and lies adjacent to the Western Ghats spread over 64.75 square kilometres. The survey covered all the 21 divisions of the Panchayath. The Panchayath consists of 9000 houses. The total population of the Panchayath is 37034(18096 males and 18938 females). The indigenous population in the area is 1230 which constitute 3.3% of the total population. Data is analysed using simple percentage. The major aspects of the Panchayath revealed by the survey are described under the following heads.

4.1 Age Composition of Population in PuduppadyPanchayath

Table 1

Age Composition of Population in PuduppadyPanchayath

Age Group	Number	Percentage
25-34	34	0.5%
35-44	754	11.9%
45-54	1781	28.1%
55-64	1726	27.2%
65-74	1225	19.3%
75-84	533	8.4%
85-94	188	3.0%
95-105	35	0.6%
Above 105	3	0.04%
unknown	70	1.1%

Out of the 6350 people interviewed it is known that 28.1% of the population belongs to the age group 45-54 years, 27.2% belongs to the age 55-64 and 19.3% belongs to the age group 65-74 years. Large concentration of population is seen in the middle and old age. There is less concentration of people in the younger age group. This is the result of the decline in the birth rate. The family planning programmes have been successful in PudupadyPanchayath as in the other parts of the state. It also

has to be noted that 1.1% of people are not aware of their age or date of birth.

4.2 Religious Distribution of the Community

Table 2

Religious Distribution of the Community

Religion	Number	Percentage
Christian	1181	18.6%%
Hindu	1442	22.7%
Islam	3727	58.7%
Total	6350	100.0%

This table shows the religious wise distribution of people in the community from among the 6350 families interviewed. As revealed by the data Muslims constitute the majority (58.7%) of the population. It should be specially noticed that as against the religious distribution of the population of Kerala as per the 2001 India census, where the Hindus constitute the majority (56.26%); in PudupadyPanchayath Hindus constitute only 22.7% of the total population. Christians constitute18.6% of the population.

4.3 Basic Facilities

Table 3

Basic Facilities

Facilities	Available in percentage	Not Available
Terrace House	51.1%	49.8%
Toilet Facilities	91.8%	7.2%
Well	60.9%	59.1%
Electricity	92.8%	7.2%

It is understood that only 51.1% of people live in terrace houses. The rest of the 49.8% live in different types of houses such as tiled houses (0.3%), thatched houses (10.5%), rented houses (1.8%) and sheet houses (31.7%). Data is not available regarding the rest of the 5.5%. 7.2 % of them do not have toilet facilities. Only 60.9% of people have a well in their compound. 9.1% of people depend on public well or other natural

sources of water such as pond, streams and rivulets etc. 7.2% do not have electricity.

This table shows that few families in the community are deprived of even basic facilities such as house, water, toilet and electricity. The data will be an eye opener for the Panchayath administration to take up action for rendering basic facilities to its people.

4.4 Educational Scenario

Table 4

Educational Scenario

Levels of Educa-tion	Number		Total
	Government	Private	
Pre–Primary/ Kinder garden	37	0	37
Primary Education	1	0	1
Upper Primary	1	0	1
High Schools	1	3	4
Higher Secondary	1	1	2
College Education	0	1	1

There are 37 pre-primary schools (known as anganwadi in native language) functioning in this area as part of the Integrated Child Development Scheme of the Kerala government which is supported by the UNICEF. Anganwadi provides informal education to children before they enter the formal education system. The panchayath has total 8 schools of which 4 are government schools and 5 are aided schools. There is only one college in the Panchayath. The table reveals that the number of educational institutions in the Panchayath is less. The table reveals a dearth of educational facilities in the Panchayath and a need to bring about attitudinal change among children towards education.

4.5 Agricultural and Labour Scenario

Table 5

Agricultural and Labour Scenario

Jobs	Number	Percentage
Working Abroad	127	2%

Agriculture	809	12.7%
Business	267	4.2%
Daily Wage workers	2682	42.2%
Driver	264	4.2%
Govt. Jobs	91	1.4%
House Wives	67	1.1%
Unemployed	19	0.3%
Priests in different religion	36	0.6%
Working in Private sector	61	1%
Retired employees	52	0.8%
Self Employed	64	1%
Teaching	49	0.8%
Data not available	1762	27.7%

The above table clearly states that majority (42.2%) of people in PudupadyPanchayath work for daily wages.12.7% residents are agriculturists. 4.2% are involved in business, 4.2% work as drivers, 0.6% is priests belonging to various communities, 0.8% are retired employees, 1% is self employed and 0.8% is involved in teaching. 2% works abroad. 0.3% are unemployed and data is not available about 27.7% of people.

The agricultural and labour scenario of Pudupady Panchayath is pathetic. The agricultural scenario of PudupadyPanchayath is dominated by cash crops. Main cereal cultivated is rice. They still depend on traditional methods & have not yet utilised the potential of upland paddy cultivation, vegetable cultivation and organic farming. Most of the people do not have a secure or white collar job. People are engaged in low profile jobs. This is an indicator of the low level of education of the people in the area and also the low quality of life of the people.

4.6 Tribal Life in the Panchayath

Tribes constitute 3.3% of the population in the Panchayath out of which 2.3% are adults and 1 percent is children. The total tribal population is 1230 out of which 870 are adults and 360 are children. There are 14 tribal colonies inhabited by various tribes such as Paniyas, Karimbalar and

Kanikkar . Every colony consists of 18 to 20 families. The average size of the population of a tribal family is five. As universally noted alcoholism is a major problem in tribal colonies. Both men and women are consuming alcohol. High drop out rates in the schools is another major problem noticed among the aborginals.

4.7 Social Problems

Diagram 1

Social Problems
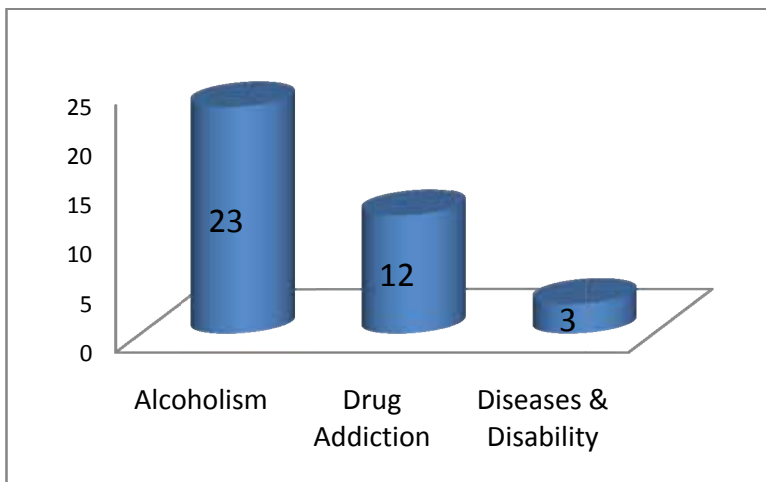
The diagram above describes the extent of social problems in the community. 23% of people are addicted to alcohol out of which 2.3% are tribes. 12% is addicted to drugs and 3% suffers from diseases or disability. All these three problems affect the physical and mental health of the person. Moreover it affects the family members and society at large. Addressing these problems should be the priority of the Panchayath in its future developmental activities.

5. Action Plan

All the problems   revealed by the survey can not be intervened by the college. The areas that needed immediate intervention and those possible within our limits were taken up by the college. Suggestions were given for the rest of the areas and its implementation was left for the Panchayath administration. The action plan is linked with the field work of social work students which will be continued by the students in the successive years. The areas intervened are given below.

- Alcoholism
- Drug Addiction
- Toilet Facilities
- Diseases & Disability
- Agricultural Development

5.1 Alcoholism

Intervention against alcoholism targeted two sections of population. They are the addicts and high risk groups such as youth and children. The intervention for the addicted group focussed on convincing the alcoholics that alcoholism is a disease which needs to be treated. As they are not an organised group, an awareness class was not possible for them. Hence posters, banners and charts prepared by the graduate students were posted on all public places even near the liquor shops. Group Work, one of the primary methods of social work was practiced with the family members of the addicts by the postgraduate students in which all efforts were made to convince them of the need and possibilities of treatment. Those who expressed willingness to undergo treatment were linked with the de-addiction centres in urban areas. Street Plays were conducted continuously for a week in different schools and public places in different parts of the Panchayath to depict the cause, stages, effect of alcoholism which ended with a message to refrain from it. The purpose behind these street plays was to develop an anti-alcoholic new generation.

5.2 Drug Addiction

Any campaign against drug addiction has to be on a long term intervention. Understanding this fact, community volunteers were identified from the local clubs and they were given training to carry out an anti- drug abuse campaign in the community. The training was organised by the college with the help of social workers from de-addiction centres. Training made them aware of the harmful effects of drug addiction on the person, his family and also the community. Further the training focussed at awakening them as responsible citizens to free their community from the curse of drug abuse. The community volunteers were also introduced to the concept of social activism to be practiced against the drug suppliers in the community. As a continuation of the training a rally was organised by the trained volunteers covering high school students from various schools in the Panchayath with anti drugs slogans.

5.3 Toilet Facilities

Sramadhan or manual labour is an essential part of field work for social work students. The purpose behind including sramadhan in social work curriculum is to bring about an attitudinal change in the students towards appreciating manual labour. Appreciation for manual labour is emphasised by both social work and gandhian philosophy. As part of the rural camp and NSS camps at the college, students participated in the manual labour for constructing two toilets in the 19th ward of PudupadyPanchayath there by making it a ward with 100% toilet facilities for all families. Similar work will be continued in the coming days. The funds for this was mobilised by the village administration.

5.4 Diseases & Disability

The practice of Community Organisation one of the methods of social work which is mandatory for social work students was linked with the community needs. Hence our students organised three medical camps for the community people on general medicine, ayurveda medical camp and an eye camp. The camp was motivated with the purpose of early diagnosis and treatment of diseases. Free medicines were given for the local people through the camp. 40 people were detected with cataract in the eye camp and all 40 of them were taken for free cataract operation to Eye Hospital, Angamaly as a follow up of this medical camp. In mitigating the sufferings of people with disability and chronic diseases the newly identified members through the camp were linked with the palliative care unit already functioning in the Panchayath which was also an initiative of the college few years ago.

5.5 Agricultural Development

Neighbourhood committees of farmers were formed under the leadership of the college and panchayath. The purpose behind the formation of neighbourhood committees is to provide a plat form for the agricultural labourers to come together and voice their individual and collective problems. It is expected that through these communities they may emerge as a collective force and bring their problems to the notice of the panchayath administration. The neighbourhood committees are expected to help the farmers know about the strategies and best practices done by others.

6 Impact Of Community Intervention Model

The impact of the community intervention model is two fold. On one end it leads to the professional development of the social work students and on the other end it brings about improvement in the life of people in the community

6.1 Impact on the community

The survey reveals a complete picture of the socio-economic profile of the community. The problems that needed immediate intervention were intervened by the college. Community has been educated about the harmful effects of drug abuse and alcoholism . Long term awareness campaign has been initiated. A responsible team of community volunteers motivated to fight against drug abuse has been created. A networking between the Panchayath and service institutions in the urban areas has been established. The report has also identified future areas of intervention that could be a base for long term development projects.

6.2 Impact on Students

Students were involved in all phases of the project right from the preparation of the questionnaire, conducting the survey, analysis of the results, preparation of report, discussion on the report with the panchayath authorities and the planning and implementation of action plan. This has helped them in developing a research aptitude and improved their analytical, networking, rapport building, interviewing and reporting skills. Moreover students got an exposure to the real life of villagers and their problems. Leadership qualities and self confidence have been instilled in them.

7. Conclusion

The ultimate aim of social workis to bring about changes in the broad social conditions that contribute to the development of people and society. It is a moral binding on all social work educational institutions not only to mould the students capable of becoming such change agents but also to be a change agent itself. In India, a macro level social work intervention necessarily has to focus on rural India as Gandhi has envisaged that the future of India lies in her decentralised and self sufficient villages. Through the service learning project initiated by the college the aim has been to create both social workers capable of initiating positive changes in the Indian society and also to materialise the dream of rural development.

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TRANSFERENCE OF MEDICAL LORE; THE PEDAGOGY OF ETHNO MEDICINE AMONG TRADITIONAL HEALERS OF KERALA.

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Introduction

The duality of epistemic knowing and gnostic knowing is debatable in understanding health pedagogy. Owing to the structure of knowledge, which is rooted in practical knowledge, inherited knowledge and people's ingenuity can be traced out in both biomedical and ethno-medical traditions. This particular knowledge structure is also accompanied with a lineage of transference. Inarguably, western objective medical knowledge sharing to the succeeders take a domination over non-western subjective medical knowledge based on heteroglossia and the same have been celebrated throughout medical episteme. This obsession kept away the ways in which folk health knowledge transferred over generation. In such a context, this paper tries to articulate the strategies through which folk healers preserved and offered their 'health knowledge system' to their generations. Along with this, the tradition of healing than curing which is based on pluralistic methods are also rearticulated in this article. The major population of the study is the traditional healers of Kerala, but the reachability of findings is far more applicable in every society, particularly in every functioning ethno-medicine and in understanding the credentials for a successive transference. This particular study attempts to put forward a comprehensive understanding on how informal education survive in the world of formal education through its distinct and complex ways of experiment and prospects particularly taking instance from the subtle processes in transference of medical lore.

Key Words: Traditional healers, Medical lore, Informal education, Ethnomedicine, Pedagogy, Kerala

Introduction

The domain of pedagogical endeavours is not free from the obsession of being 'scientific'. somewhere along the way, the latent effect of colonisation is still in practice, guerrilla efforts have been initiated

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to equate everything 'scientific' as 'western' and everything 'western' as 'scientific'. This urge to be 'scientific' reflected throughout the plethora of literatures available on the theme which usually focus over defining and redefining 'formal education'. This inclination led to the meagre exploration of informal modes of education and thus eschewed a significant epistemological category that is relevant until one's last breath. Consequently, Discourses on pedagogical understandings rarely encounter with informal education and its pathways. this resulted in unrecognition of the aspects of informal education that are vigorously exercised in the spheres of human society. Health domain is such a sphere that is primarily and appreciably marked from the formal medical episteme based on monoglossia i.e.; the westernised biomedicine. Accordingly, the criteria for labelling certain treatment practices as 'medical knowledge' thus only restricted to mainstream treatment practices which disregarded the medical knowledges based on heteroglossia. The unrecognition of Ethnomedicine by the clinical pharmacological investigations validate the aforementioned findings. An approach to recover from these epistemological handicaps is a belated concern that reflects upon the informalized frameworks of knowledge in the health domain which might enlighten the knowledge structure and its dispersion politics. In this paper, researcher address the subjective medical knowledge of the population of Kerala which is preserved through informal education and extended the concentration on the medical conceptions and practices of customary individuals, particularly, medical lore and its epistemological premise.

Once we document the treatment complexities of Kerala disclose the fallacy in the myth that traditional medical knowledge is not necessarily to be Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy only. Even in these recognized traditional medicines consists of various genres within themselves that extends as separate branch of medical knowledge. Kerala, being a state in India where pluralism in medicine is experienced has also have its own genre of medical knowledge. Historically, Kerala had been the shelter for various indigenous folks that enriched its cultural heritage. Hence, habituating and immigrated folks carried rich medical knowledge along with them that augmented medical lore of the society. Different genres of medical practices are practiced within different community residing in Kerala which once again exhibited the complexities while addressing the health pedagogy. but, these separate genres, which developed as the ethnomedicine of different communities has kept ignored by labelling unscientific. Such mainstream unrecognition has nothing to do with the efficiency of these ethnomedicine which is

deep rooted in culture of its practicing community. In the contesting field of evidence based medical practices, knowledge of ethnomedicine survived from generation to generation through employing culture as the avenue of transmission of this medical lore. As an epistemological premise concreted in respective 'culture' of the society, there do have societal norms and values that governing medical lore. For this very reason, the feasibility in acquiring the benefit of the ethnomedicine is not desirable in acquiring the knowledge of ethnomedicine. A strong sense of meticulousness is operating in sharing and transference of the same which make this informal knowledge system complex to assimilate. Shaba sharif, the Mysore healer of haemorrhoids(piles) abducted by the Nilambur industrialist in 2019 was murdered in October 2020 due to the refusal of sharing the secret formula he uses in his therapeutic practices for piles. His negation to disclose reiterate the exercise of prescriptive norms in sharing that all healers obtain as a part of his/her cultural capital. Even though he did have the possibility to save his life by disclosing the confidential ingredients he uses in his single medicine therapy, he refused to do it. The exacerbation of assaults didn't convince him to transfer the knowledge for merchandizing purpose. This uncloud the fact that there do have essential credentials necessary for transforming the knowledge which is ingrained in the personality of the healer and peculiar way for storing and preserving these complex therapeutic practices. Followed over these facts, this study focuses over the Comprehensive understanding on how informal education survive in the world of formal education through its distinct and complex ways of experiment and prospects particularly taking instance from the subtle processes in transference of medical lore among traditional healers of Kerala.

Methodology

The central question addressed in the study is, 'how the knowledge of ethnomedicine is transferred hereditarily without failure?'. In order to obtain the answer, qualitative approach has been used by the researcher to delineate the blueprint for research. Obtaining the targeted population was a herculean task due to the unavailability of adequate official statistical information about the practitioners of ethnomedicine. Data collection procedures have conducted in two phases by using two types of data collection method.1) content analysis of the already established works over traditional healing practices and ethnomedicine. This phase of data collection helps to figure out the prime knowledge over the research question which become an aid for fieldstudy.2) fieldwork have been

conducted among the traditional healers of Kozhikode and Malappuram district of Kerala. First sample is collected from the suggestion of ASHA (Accredited Social Health Activist) worker in the locality. Accordingly, the researchers approached the first sample and then the suggestions were taken from the first sample and approached the next sample. Already published literatures over traditional healing practices of Malabar is used as secondary data. And the same has been helped to locate the population of the study as well as to collect primary data. Primary data have been collected from 50 samples through fieldwork using key-informant interview, focus group discussions and questionnaire tool which consisted of open-ended questions which is designed to figure out the mechanisms used by the healers to preserve and transfer their knowledge. This proposed study will include research analysis tools such as Thematic analysis and Narrative analysis for qualitative data and Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software for questionnaire analysis. The different phases of research will be conducted without compromising the research etiquettes and written consent of each participant have been taken

The art of transference

Young (1976) formulated two kinds of knowledge transference in worldwide. The first kind is the 'accumulating medical system' which is based on formalized teaching or written forms of teaching conducted in institutional setup. The second kind is the 'diffusing medical system' where information is kept as secret and very rarely shared in between practitioners specialized in different illness (Singer and Baer 2012). Evidence based medical knowledge transfer belongs to the former type of knowledge transmission while Ethnomedicine based knowledge transference belongs to the latter. In the case of latter, medical knowledge is 'conserved' within the practicing community and opted measures for concealing the same within the members only. Through the fieldwork, it is observed that there exists confidentiality in materials used for the preparation of herbal medicine within the practitioners of different specialisation. For instance, healer A who mastered in single medicine therapy for snake bite and antivenom denied to share his secret ingredients with the healer B who mastered in single medicine therapy for thyroid. This doesn't mean that these healers are egocentric, but compelled to follow due to the norm practiced by the forefathers of these local medics. These strict followed norms are more necessarily practiced in the case of single medicine therapies and therapeutic practices assisted with spirituality, while other modes like practices assisted with herbal medicine and dietary

practices is much more inclusive for all the community members. Based on the responses and observation accumulated during fieldwork it is comprehensible that the art of dispersing this informal medical knowledge take flow in three ways through two modes. Let's profile over the modes in order to better understand the flow of knowledge.

Oral tradition

As per Kargbo (2008), oral traditions are the memories and living recollections of the past that have been sent, described and shared all through culture. Oral tradition incorporates an assortment of social and cultural legacy, strategies and resources transferred over ages to qualify as oral traditions through word of mouth and observation (Zimu-Biyela, 2016). It comprises of proverbs, poetry, songs, myths, riddles and folklore etc. as methods that are utilized to communicate and transfer knowledge about a community's customs, rituals, conduct and culture in general. The key-informant interviews with the healers acknowledged that the prominent and general mode of knowledge sharing is happening through oral tradition, but not always based on deliberate conversation. Respondent A narrated;

"I have acquired the knowledge of herbal plants and its uses from my childhood days. My father was the healer of manjapitham (jaundice) and a gnostic person of our locality. I remember when I was a kid, I accidently plucked kurunthotti (SidaCordifolia) from my home garden and got scolded by my father. That was the first time he revealed me about the benefits of the plant. later on, I shared the same with my friends during our play times and as the kid of the healer, I used to play the role of local medic in our playgrounds. When I grow- up, with God's mercy I acquired the skills of my father. It was a long-term process and am still a learner"

This proposed response delineates the possibility for learning in non-institutional setups, such as playground. Similar responses which spotlight the role-played by socialisation have been met throughout the investigation. Socialization includes both teaching and learning and is subsequently the means by which cultural and social continuity are achieved. In the context of ethnomedicine transference, most of the agents were belong to 'primary socialisation' which is mostly in all cases 'family'. The knowledge base is also reinforced through secondary socialisation, where playgrounds and role playing being a brilliant example on how basic information about herbal medicines is shared among peers. Through the role playing of 'significant others' and 'generalised others' and being the spectators of the same, children of the community started to share vital

information they gained from their families who expertized in different ethnomedicine epistemes. The same become the groundwork for creating base and in future, contributed to advance over the same. Many of them specialised in their community medicine and extended their service to whole community. Respondent B who is an expert in antivenom stated,

"we are not offering our practice for solely monetary benefits. We seek it as our culturally assigned task. It's our duty to serve our service to our community and we are happy in doing so. Even though we are ready to share our knowledge, acquiring skill in respective knowledge is not desirable for everyone. This is why some of us still holds the title of experts. for instance, if a man has bitten by a snake, only a skilled healer could grasp the species of snake in prime facie through analysing the wound. This requires a strong sense of discretion that instantly mention a panacea for the illness. Such a skill is only acquired through lived and practiced experiences"

Respondent B's argument mostly states about the requirement of deliberate actions in acquiring the desired knowledge. This conclude that, simply living in a society and the cultural setting never offer skills but, individual efforts do. It is the learner's duty to enhance the un-deliberately gained knowledge through conscious efforts extending from, being the observer, being the helper, being the communicator, being the participator and finally being the practitioner. Respondent C's statements valid in this context where he narrated the step-by-step process that made him renowned for the herbal medicine and dietary therapy for Jaundice.

"I was an observer of my father's treatment practices. Later I become the helpmate of my father and get to know more about the ingredients used for making medicines, its measurements, the desired temperature and so on. Still, my knowledge was half filled because I was still haven't met with the cultural credentials required for the practice. Such a thing will only develop when we start to encounter with the beneficiaries especially during handing of the medicine, we prepared. A very benevolent approach towards the ill person is mandatory. Then only they feel confident which aid in enhancing their mental health. A sense of belief in what you consume and what you offer is also necessary."

As because the ethnomedicine is rooted in culture, ritualistic belief does hold a concrete position throughout the therapeutic practices. For instance, *thangals*, a caste among Mappila's are the experts of spiritual healing and psychotherapy within the Mappila community of Malabar. Here, Epilepsy ill person within the community seek a blend of religious

and medical treatment practices. Such 'psychological healings' and 'cerebral reliefs' practiced through spiritual assistances contribute greater benefit in mental health of the ill person. however, this knowledge premise is usually ignored from scientific exploration by quoting as 'unscientific'. Such knowledge transmission is only confined within the caste of *thangals* and their expert title cannot be shared outside the caste. This is another area of research possibility where informal education and social hierarchy came under one umbrella.

Knowledge on dietary practices is transformed in an interesting manner. During seasonal variations, certain food item is largely consumed while some 'other' items are strictly unfollowed. For instance, people during the *karkidakam* season in Kerala encourage the intake of *karkidaka kanji* (medicinal gruel) while discourage the intake of moringa. This act of preference will be visible in most of the kitchen and the act which do have a strong medicinal base for body rejuvenation become the part and parcel of everyday life. These family practices can be marked as one of the dietary practices of healing in ethnomedicine, which can be placed under the genre of seasonal medicine therapies. Such 'food-medicament routine's knowledge transmission is much more focused on the strategies for healing than curing and transmitted to coming generation without any hesitance.

Knowledge based on ethnomedicine is also shared through proverbs.A proverb is an insightful and keen, traditional saying that communicates an apparent truth in view of experience and common sense. During the fieldwork respondents shared few of the proverbs that spotlight the hands of medical lore of the community. These proverbs are not designed for disclosing the medicaments of herbal medicines, but most likely to convey the three 'R's, i.e.; relevance, rules and requirements of the ethnomedicine. These vernacular statements have a great reachability and helps the community to comprehend the same in respective contexts. To list a few;

Table 1:List of Malayalam proverbs

Malayalam proverb	English translation
1. ''Rogikrogivaidyan''	The ill person is also the healer of illness.
2.''vaidyanodum vakkeeli-nodumkalamparayarudh''	Never tell lie to healers and lawyers

| 3. rogiyavunnadhin-munpvaidyaneparijay-apedanam" | Get to know about the healer before getting ill |
| 4. ''than paadhidhaivam-paadhi" | I need to do my half; the rest half shall be done by Lord. |

The community practices

According to Ngulube and Mngadi (2002) a community of practice (CoP) is the group of individuals who work collectively in a responsible manner to share their assimilated thoughts and ideas. Communities structure communal gatherings to share tacit (traditional therapeutic) knowledge with one another. Zimu-Biyela (2016) expressed that knowledge sharing through community practice is a procedure that has existed and utilized for a long stretch of time. Traditional therapeutic knowledge can be saved through communal gatherings where socialization happens through experiences, knowledge and ideas. A community of practice is made by individuals who take part in the process of collective learning in the shared domain of human endeavours similar to instances like, a tribe learning and struggling to survive, a band of performers attempting to track down new types of expressions, a group of people working for recognition of their identity in educational institutions etc. A community of practice empowers the sharing of knowledge through apprenticeship. Zimu-Biyela (2016) states that the sharing of knowledge through communal gatherings has been drilled by communities for an extensive stretch of time however this training is in challenge because of reasons related with modernisation. As indicated by Zimu-Biyela (2016), a community of practice is comprised of three extents specifically: the group member who have an expert topic, the group member with a trustful relationship and a strong sense of commitment to the objectives of community of practice. He further states that apprenticeship (advancing by doing) is as yet viewed as a typical device in safeguarding native knowledge in communities. Respondent D stated

"women do have a great role in preserving the medical knowledge. Being a vayattatti (Indigenous midwife) for last 25 years, I used to share post-delivery medicines prepared by my own for the new moms. The medicine is prepared collectively in a hut and only trustful people are allowed to enter. During this time, we tend to share the knowledge as well as the errors previously happened while preparing the medicines. It is a

great help which helps the others not to repeat the mistake. And also, if there are more than 3 or 4 new-borns in neighbourhood, we collectively make oils that nourish the baby skin."

Another respondent E stated that

There are around 22 helpmates for me. Every one of them is very passionate to acquire knowledge. But this is the matter of health, of life in reality. So, disclosing every secret is not desirable. Merchandizing intention is not encouraged by me. Only people with community orientation are welcomed. I can remember more than 300 herbal medicines and few secret ottamoolies (single medicine therapy). I prefer to share my long-standing knowledge only when I get to know about their intention.

Both the responses rely on the factor of 'trust' and 'ethics' in transforming knowledge. As because, such knowledge is primarily stored in memory, stealing of the knowledge is undesirable. This also rise a problem of 'mandatory transference', where apprenticeship become an easily available technique for preserving knowledge. The discoveries of Coleman (2013) give proof on how traditional therapeutic knowledge proprietors protect their knowledge through apprenticeship which happens under the direction of a perceived traditional therapeutic knowledge proprietor who confers this knowledge for a long time and in some cases paid for training others. This implies that people who are specialists are the ones in particular that is eligible for sharing this knowledge with others. But this mode of transmission has limitations while the expert passed away or vanishes. So, apprenticeship alone can't be viewed as a compelling method for protecting these kinds of knowledge.

The flow

From the comprehensive understanding of the questionnaire used for deriving information from the field, the conclusion obtained is that the dominant flow of knowledge transmission in ethnomedicine is occurring through three ways; oblique; horizontal; vertical. vertical transmission happens from parents to their youngsters, horizontal transmission between people of a similar age and oblique transmission from people of one generation to unrelated individuals of the future generation. (Hewlett and Cavalli-Sforza 1986). Generally, the healers shown an interest in transferring their hereditarily transferred medical knowledge towards their children. This is primarily because one's own child is believed to be the easily accessible trustful person for transferring the knowledge. Such flow of transmission that happens without any cost is known as

vertical flow and is mainly depended on child's attitude. the second type of flow, the Horizontal flow can happen in between healers (belong to same generation) themselves. Healer 'A' shares his knowledge of expertized arena in exchange of Healer B's knowledge. This transmission occurs either for supplementing the knowledge or for monetary benefits. the same flow can also occur in the absence of parental generation (Setalaphruk and Price,2007). In certain cases, practical knowledge about herbal plants is obtained from peers especially in the case of children residing in orphanage or religious organisations. At the time of fieldwork, one respondent expressed his views supplementing the aforementioned statement. The respondent who is now a renowned expert of bone injuries gained his primitive knowledge of treating bone ailments from his friend who belongs the Kurikkalcaste of Mappila community.

The third type, the oblique flow is the significant type which helps in preserving such knowledge in desired hands. When close blood relationship become the only criteria for transmission of medical knowledge reduce the possibility of elevating the peripheries of existing knowledge. through employing oblique flow, the knowledge will disperse in to wider hands and thus make the process of conserving knowledge feasible.

"There are other people who are not your kids yet when you are alright with their disposition you could transmit your knowledge and that kid will praise you lifelong similarly as I generally praise the kurikkal (master) who educated me"

This response reiterates the education heritage that have been glorified throughout Indian culture. Informal education has hardly or never defined from this perspective. But once we obtain the empirical understanding of these eschewed learning practices of ethnomedicine, we can mark an ideal relationship of a learner and tutor which is concreted in cultural entities.

Do Informal knowledge is relevant in health domain?

The answer is yes. World health organisation (1986) defined health as ''A state of complete physical, mental and social. well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity''. as a complex domain, many aspects of health are not disclosed enough and no mechanism is potential enough to cure every health ailment. Hence, depending solely over one genre of medical knowledge will not provide desirable results persistently. As far as living habits of men changes, list of diseases is exacerbating and the control is not always cohesive within the periphery of evidence-

based treatments. Here arises the need for considering the eschewed traditional and complimentary medical practices in to the realm. Such epistemological premise which has been ignored on the sole reason of not being 'formal' do hold a significant space in health domain. During covid-19, where biomedicine competed its hardship times, ethnomedicine helped people to enhance immunity through locally available herbal medicines. Somewhere along the way in this hard time, ethnomedicine supplemented biomedicine with its therapeutic practices.

Informal knowledge is also sociologically relevant. The indigenous medical stores which is locally situated will help in reiterating the community bond and exchange of stored knowledge. Moreover, the majority of possessors of informal knowledge of health domain falls under the therapeutic practices of 'subalterns' or 'have-not' classes. Hence, preserving their knowledge is significant in two ways. Firstly, as because such knowledge doesn't fall under the mainstream knowledge system, there is high risk for unrecognition and abeyance. Secondly, in a society where resources are inadequately distributed, people belong to different class experience treatments differently. Hence, ethnomedicine become the adequate alternative for this population. Further, in ethnomedicines, the training of permitting clients to set up the medication breaks up the information among expert and lay person. This is different from the expert-driven and profoundly professionalized frameworks of medication like biomedicine or even laboratory-focused ayurveda, where the patient is simply a passive listener. Such an inclusive attitude is robust enough to questioning the postulation of 'monopoly of knowledge' and associated 'mechanical obligations' designed on the basis of superior-inferior principle.

The major criticism faced by ethnomedicine is that it undergoes various trial and error stages. But, the output after every such stages are the most furnished and advanced knowledge. So rather than being sceptical about this trial and process, the focus should give on the final product which is rich in high curative potentiality. Another dimension of the strategy of ethnomedicine promotes better environment for mental health. Health, also being a ''state of mind'' emphasize on not only physical health but also on mental health. Hence a more holistic and individualistic approach is the need of the time and the same is the modus operandi followed by ethnomedicine. so, the relevance of such informal epistemological premises is never subsiding even in the era of artificial intelligence.

Conclusion

Medical lore's premise in sensory knowledge, is very close to the epistemology talked in the antiquated Sanskrit medical texts: *pratyaksha* (information acquired through the senses), *anumana* (meaning inference) and *aptaupadesa* (guidance from proper authority). Throughout in the process, it binds past, present and future of the community in general. However, most of these insights kept ignored and never given the deserved position in educational curriculum. Including the relevance of informal epistemological premises in the formal educational curriculum will help in mainstreaming such knowledge and can also develop as a new technique for preserving the same. Such an initiative in health pedagogy will diminish the obscurity between evidence based medical episteme and ethnomedicine. This qualitative study attempted to derive the art of transference in informal knowledge particularly in health domain. The intention of the researchers was to magnify the subtle process of transference and to provide the reader with the viability of 'medical lore' in the world of formal knowledge.

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EDUCATION: THE TOOL FOR EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

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Abstract

We all understand and agree that Knowledge is Power. This power is needed for a successful and happy life and hence it is to be acquired and nurtured. But his power is achieved not for domination and control of others, but used carefully for the wellbeing of the society. In our Education System, we need to focus on the real learning which consists of Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes. Besides, we need to focus on the long-term goals and end results of Education. In this Article, Dr. Francis K. M has analyzed the purpose of Education, the meaning of Knowledge as Power, meaning of Empowerment, the details of Life Skills, the social dimensions of Education and Social Transformation and the Roles of Educational Institutions.

Introduction

The most important tool for empowerment the social transformation is education, because *knowledge is power*. The purpose of education is making persons with integrity, competence, social commitment who are able to fulfil the roles and responsibilities of life. Education and the process of learning involves *Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes*. It helps one to engage in the process of socialization, empowerment and commitment, leading to social transformation. But often, these primary goals get eclipsed and diluted due to the absence of clear understanding and convictions. The values are to be focused on and cherished, thereby bringing back the attention of all concerned to impart and manage an education system for empowerment of the individual persons and transformation of the society for a better and happier life with a firm belief that *another world is possible.*

Understanding Power

The word 'Power' is to be understood in detail. Power means 'the capacity to do something'. Traditionally it refers to 'a force exercised by individuals or groups.' The two important aspects of Power are *Forcefulness* – the ability or official capacity to exercise control or

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authority and *Effectiveness*- the ability or capacity to act or perform effectively. *The word Power comes from the French word 'pouvoir' which means 'to be able'. Forcefulness carries the connotation of furthering one's own ends at the expense of others through domination, coercion or manipulation. This is the negative exercise of power. The positive exercise of power is concern for others - helping people formulate their own goals and providing them with the means to achieve them. The positive exercise of power makes both you and others feel more powerful.*" (1)

Acquiring power is an essential aspect of life by which one is able to make decisions, act according to the decisions, make and manage things happen, avoid or deter the harmful actions for oneself and others. In order to be healthy, active, happy and be useful to the society one needs to be powerful; but the negative aspects of power are to be carefully avoided.

The traditional understanding of power as forcefulness is to be critically looked at. It is explained as 'power over', showing power as constituted through discourses and people being constructed as subjects in discourses. But now there is a basic dislike of institutional structures because these tend to centralize power, to control participants and force them in to a standard mould. Thus 'power over' is a matter of strength or force-physical, economic or social. Networking which operates horizontally and cooperatively may be an alternative to hierarchical institutional structures and domination with the power. *"Power over means power of one person or group to get another person or group to do something even against their will. It is manifested very plainly in decision making by individuals or groups or who wins in a conflict, whether it is countries over territories or husbands over wives. 'Power over' may be enforced through violence or fear or by social rules by which the poor or the weaker are compelled to accept and adhere to the will of the stronger."*(2)

'Power from within' arises from the understanding that one is not helpless, not responsible for all the problems and is restricted in part by structures outside oneself. 'Power from within' is spiritual strength and uniqueness that resides in each one of us and makes us truly human. Its basis is self- acceptance and self-respect, which extends in turn to respect for and acceptance of others as equals. The Empowerment Approach to development seeks to identify power less in terms of domination over others and more in terms of the capacity of people to increase their own self-reliance and internal strength – self-empowerment.

'Power from within' is internally generated and is fundamental power on which a beginning of an answer to the powers of capitalism, patriarchy and social discriminations rest. In contrast, there is *'power to'*. Empowerment based on 'power to' involves gaining access to a full range of human abilities and potentials. The 'power to' is enabling and creative power to do greater and new things and taking pride in what people do is liberating experiences.

'Power with' is the capacity to achieve something with others what one could not achieve alone. *'Power with'* is present in all societies and is expressed in all actions performed by more than one person. It is not only the capacity but an awareness – 'a sense of the whole being greater than the sum of the individuals or parts', especially when a group tackles the problem together.

Building 'Social Capital' is the 'power with' ie the Associational Strength with people especially the powerless and the disadvantaged. The marginalized sections get their strength and capacity to act in their togetherness with others. Thus Associational Strength is a powerful resource to achieve the goal but it is easily forgotten. The prominent resources people often count are only men, money and materials ie human resources, financial resources and material resources. The power of networks, associations, linkages and the connectivity leading to cooperation, trust, confidence and collective action to achieve common goals has been side-lined or ignored comfortably. Creating these networks and associational power is building 'Social Capital' and it can be a very powerful strategy for empowerment of the persons, especially the poor and the marginalized and consequently to community development. *"The gaining of the power by the vulnerable is now often called empowerment. From work with the powerless or the socially excluded came the idea that what the destitute, the hungry or the homeless really need is the power to solve their own problems."* (3)

Education For Empowerment:

In this context we need to understand Education as a process and tool for Empowerment of persons. The understanding of World Bank on empowerment is that *" it is the process of increasing the capacity of individuals or groups to make choices and to transform those choices in to desired actions and outcomes. Central to this process are actions which both build individual and collective assets and improve the efficiency and fairness of the organizational and institutional context which govern the use of these assets."* (4)

Education is to be understood as a process of development in the purview of Empowerment and it is characterized by:

- A process of gaining control over the selves, ideology and the resources, which determine power.

- A process, which changes the systematic forces that marginalize the disadvantaged sections in a given context.

- A process, which liberates persons from their roles of oppressors and exploiters.

- A process, which begins in person's, mind, with the glimmers of a new consciousness, which questions existing power, relations and roles.

- A process where persons find a 'time and space' of their own.

- A process, which enables people to discover new possibilities, new options and a growing ability to make choices.

This demands an environment where basic needs of all are fulfilled, social well-being is ensured, and psychological as well as physical needs are met. The new set of parameters to measure this development would be people's participation in the programme planning, decision making, implementing and evaluating their activities, their organizing and federating capacity, the role of women and youth in these processes etc. The people will at the end of the process will feel - *"we have done it."* Education should help every person to achieve these results and essentially it the process of empowerment.

The words of Paul W. Speer and Joseph Hughey are quoted to define Empowerment:

"Empowerment can only be realized through organization ..... Empowerment outcomes at the individual level of analysis are products of cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes in individuals resulting from the exercise of social power. Individuals are empowered to the extent that they understand that their own access to social power exists through organization". (5)

Robert Chambers describes the concept in the following words: *"Empowerment, unless abused, serves equity and wellbeing. It is not a static – condition. It is a process; not a product. It is not something that is ever finished. There is no 'Empowerment Box' that can be ticked as complete. It entails enhanced capabilities and wide scope for choice and*

action. *Nor is it something that happens among lowers. It is interactive between lowers, peers and uppers. Especially it requires and implies changes in power relations and behaviour, which can be analysed in three heads - institutional, professional and personal".* (6)

Oxfam understands empowerment, as *"gaining strength, confidence and vision to work for positive changes in their lives, individually and together with others is the process of empowerment. Women and men become empowered by their own efforts, not by what others do for them. When development and relief programmes are not firmly based on people's own efforts to work for change their impact may be disempowering."* (7)

Jane Stein speaks of Empowerment as *"a social action process that promotes participation of people, organizations, and communities in gaining control over their lives in their community and larger society. With this perspective, empowerment is not characterized as achieving power to dominate others, but rather power to act with others to effect change."* (8)

Another important aspect of empowerment process conceptualized by Paulo Freire is *conscientization* or the development of the critical consciousness. It has been defined as *learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality.* (9)

Explaining the components of empowerment, Jane Stein speaks of two broad categories as components of Empowerment - Internal / Psychological at individual level and Situational / Social. *"The first group includes factors such as a sense of control, competence, coherence, confidence, self-esteem, entitlement, responsibility, participation, solidarity, and community. Other psychologically based factors are flexibility, initiative, and future orientation. Situational components can include control over resources; interpersonal, work and organizational skills; decision-making powers; self-sufficiency, mobility and 'savvy' or an ability 'to get around' in society, increased status, financial and social support, autonomy, information, income; improvement in living conditions such as child care, school attendance of children and housing improvements."* (10) All these factors are important at various levels from individuals to individuals and culture-to-culture.

Education With Professional And Life Skills:

Among the 17 Sustainable Development Goals 2030, the United Nations put Providing Quality Education as the fourth Goal. SDG4 in a nutshell means :

- Ensuring lifelong learning opportunities for all, from early childhood to adult education;

- Ensuring equity, inclusion and gender equality;

- Ensuring effective learning and the acquisition of relevant knowledge, skills and competencies;

- Ensuring the relevance of learning, in terms of vocational and technical skills for decent work as well as for global citizenship in a plural and interconnected world.

There are many such skills, but 10 core life skills laid down by WHO are:

- Self-awareness.

- Empathy.

- Critical thinking.

- Creative thinking.

- Decision making.

- Problem Solving.

- Effective communication.

- Interpersonal relationship.

- Management of Emotions

- Management of Stress.

Central Board of Secondary Education adopted and added these Life Skills to be taught in the Schools as part of the Curriculum. CBSE categorized these ten Skills in to three : The Thinking Skills, Social Skills and Emotional Skills. *(cfr: CBSE Manual on Life Skills Education and CCE)*. Acquiring these Skills is necessary for the quality of education and quality of life. These Skills are necessary for the integration of life – Body Mind, Heart and Soul. On the purpose of education and the importance of values and beliefs, MeenaKukreja narrates: " …..*Your education with physical development, your education with spiritual development, your education with 'life skills' (these teach mental and emotional development as well), your education with home skills (cooking cleaning sewing, repair, neatness, organization and child care), your education with skills of self-defense, your study with recreation, your recreations with friends, to your recreation with your family, your social skills with friends, to your social*

skills with your family, your, with your family life, your duty toward your work, with your duty toward your parents, siblings, spouse and children. All these are your values and beliefs." (11)

Integration of life with Body, Mind, Heart and Soul are fundamental to human fulfillment; without these, one feels empty and incomplete. Explaining the concept of integration, Stephen R. Covey puts: *"The essence of these needs is captured in the phrase 'to live, to love, to learn to leave a legacy'. The need to live is our physical need for such things like food, clothing, shelter, economic wellbeing, health. The need to love is our social need to relate to other people, to belong, to love, to be loved. The need to learn is our mental need to develop and to grow. And the need to leave a legacy is our spiritual need to have a sense of meaning, purpose , personal congruence, and contribution."* (12)

Education For Social Commitment And Social Transformation:

Stephen R. Covey and Companions further developed the concept of Life Integration and explained: *"Fulfilling the core needs in an integrated way is like combining elements in Chemistry. When we reach a 'critical mass' of integration, we experience spontaneous combustion - and explosion of inner synergy that ignites the fire within and gives vision, passion and a spirit of adventure to life. The key to the fire within is our spiritual need to leave a legacy. It transforms other needs, in to capacities for contribution. Food money, health, education, and love become resources to reach out and help fill the unmet needs of others. Think of the impact on the way we spend our time and the quality of our lives when we are able to effectively meet our needs and turn them into capacities for contribution. Abraham Maslow, one of the Fathers of modern Psychology developed a 'needs hierarchy' in which he identified 'self-actualization' as the highest human experience. But in his last years, he revised his earlier theory and acknowledged that this peak experience was not 'self-actualization' but 'self-transcendence' or living for a purpose higher than self."* (13)

Jesus Christ taught this lesson of self-transcendence by his own life. His Philosophy of life is :*"Truly, I tell you, unless the grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remains alone.; but if it dies, it produces much fruit."*(John 12:24) *"Those who go forth weeping, bearing seeds for the sowing, will come home with joyful shouts, bearing their harvested sheaves."* (Psalms 126:6) *(Reference taken from the "The New Community Bible,"* St. Paul's Publications)

The core value and purpose of life shall be the service of the humanity and contribution to the wellbeing of the whole universe. Then, we shall focus not only on the long-term goals of education but also our entire actions in this world. Stressing on this aspect of long-term goals and consequent actions Stephen R. Covey in his famous Book says: *"Being effective as individuals and organizations is no longer optional in today's world – it's the price of entry to the playing field. But surviving, thriving, innovating, excelling and leading in this new reality will require us to build on and reach beyond effectiveness. The call and need of a new era is for greatness. It's for fulfillment, passionate execution and significant contribution. These are on a different plane or dimension. They are different in kind - just as significance is different in kind, not in degree, from success. Tapping into the higher reaches of human genius and motivation - what we could call voice - requires a new mind-set, a new skill-set, a new tool-set….a new habit. The 8th Habit, then, is not about adding one more habit to the 7 - one that somehow got forgotten. It's about seeing and harnessing the power of a third dimension to the 7 Habits that meets the central challenge of the new Knowledge Worker Age. This 8th Habit is to Find Your Voice And Inspire Others To Find Theirs."* (14)

Be A Lighthouse: Goal Of Life And Education:

Education must help a person to acquire and exercise many leadership qualities and lead others as well as oneself to further heights of successful and happy life. MadanSaluja enumerates the outstanding leadership qualities one can find in the leaders, whom one admires and respects and who create an impression in the people: *"Positive self-image, commitment to group objectives, Vision and Mission, passion and will to excel, leading from the front, powerful and effective Communication authority of demonstrated ethical value, exercising authority with responsibility, accessibility and transparency, decision making abilities, human relations skills, fairness and sincerity, open-mindedness – willing to listen to new ideas, and ever willing to guide and support. The Lighthouse can be a role model for almost anybody on account of these qualities."* (15)

The Lighthouse is endowed with many physical and moral attributes, much to the resemblance of an individual with multi-faceted tasks, capabilities, skills and behavioral patterns. A Lighthouse has its body, roots, windows, face, head and red canopy, lightning conductor etc as the physical qualities. Impartiality, cool and balanced temperament, ability to withstand any climate etc are the moral attributes. Hence, the advice for everyone is: *"Now if these qualities are translated in life by a person, they*

are bound to make him/ her efficient, high performing achiever, a good team player, and a valuable asset to the society, his work place, his /her family and above all to oneself. You want to succeed and excel in life! You want to be accepted, loved and respected. You are interested in enjoying a dignified place in the world, and then leave behind a rich legacy. In your heart of hearts, you want to be remembered with love, respect and admiration by your loved ones, your friends and associates, colleagues and community. To have your wish of being remembered well fulfilled, you must also think and act right. You must be useful to the world around you in whatever way you can, to the best of your ability and capabilities. By your living, you must add value to the life of others, which of course, you certainly can, if only you will make a concerted effort to imbibe the qualities of the Lighthouse that we have discussed." (16)

Educational Institutions: Home Away From Home And Means For Social Empowerment:

The relevance of Educational Institutions stands prominent here due to their roles and importance to augment the formation of minds with character and competence. The interactions with Peers, Teachers and other Stakeholders in Education Sector will enhance one's ability to do their best actions. We have experienced that the period of Covid 19 Pandemic, when the Educational Institutions were under Lockdown and physical distance was strictly followed, the young minds were the most affected group as they lost their vigour and enthusiasm as well as their many abilities for a better performance both in academic and non-academic sphere. Though there were online classes, assignments and continuation of the academic exercises, the net results were not very encouraging. The most badly affected area and the greatest loss was the chance and atmosphere for character formation through the processes of socialization and interactions. We have learnt that physical presence and close accompaniment, instead of physical / social distancing and loneliness, and constant support of the Educational Institutions are vital for quality education with it long-term goals, social purposes and expected results. (For an elaborate reading and discussion on this point one can refer the Article *"Now is the time for Compassion towards Students"* written by Nivida Chandra, published by The Indian Express.

Conclusion

We have journeyed through the Programme of Education and the intended goals as well as the expected results for social transformation.

We all aspire to be successful and joyful in life. Our Education and the Educational Institutions must help us in our pursuit for success and happiness. All efforts shall be to look for the means and action points for the realization of these goals. We can sum up with the words of Gladeana McMahon in the Book: Learn To Be Your Own Life Coach: *"Now 23 years later,my life is so far removed from that insecure and unhappy young woman that it's sometimes hard to believe she was ever me. So, what made the difference? The simple truth is that I learnt how to identify my problems and replace my ineffective coping strategies with a new set of life skills. As a Therapist and Life / Business Coach, I work with many people who feel insecure, inferior, unlikeable and unhappy. I see clients who are convinced they cannot change because they have been born defective. All my clients are ordinary people who simply want to lead happier lives. They don't all want to be captains of industry but they do want to be able to get up in the morning and look forward to their day. ... Life Coaching Skills really do work."*

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QUALITY BUILDING IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: ANALYZING SOME FOR SAKEN GROUND REALITIES

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Abstract

NEP has once again brought to the fore the issues that have been haunting Indian higher education and has initiated a discussion on how to boost its quality. In this regard, this article intends looking into NEP's salient features and the issues concerning their practicability at the operational level. On a closer scrutiny, it is not hard to discover some hidden grey areas impacting its ability to materialize the highly idealized objectives on which it is based. The analysis brings out the sharp contrast between idealism and pragmatism in the design and implementation of projects. Reforms are conceived and programmes are designed on the basis of popular ideologies firmly rooted in the lofty notions of *egalitarianism* and *political correctness*, however, on implementation they fail to produce the desired outcomes owing to several unforeseen socio- political constraints.

Any well thought out reform initiative should take into consideration the existing social fabric, cultural ethos, societal value systems and above all, the tools of social engineering employed by the political parties/leaders who inevitably become educational policy makers and administrators. We can take ideas from the West, or from anywhere else, but there is a need to adapt programmes and policies to fit into our own socio-political culture and environment. Unfortunately this has not been given due consideration. The article tries to closely examine some of the professed salient features of the NEP and critically analyze their conceptual grandeur and the corresponding operational incongruity.

Keywords: Higher education, NEP, Quality, Autonomy, Multi-disciplinariness, Innovations, research, political correctness, idealism, self-regulation

Introduction

The Indian education system is said to have come a long way considering its vastness and the enormous output it has been producing for many decades. Though our education system has not been able to free itself

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fully from the colonial legacy that has been largely counterproductive to our social fabric and cultural ethos, reforms aimed at indigenization have been consistently made. Alongside came attempts to politicize education in accordance with the ideological whims of the ruling political parties from time to time. In addition, the Indian cultural attributes promoted memory based learning processes as core modes, true to the nature of a nation of convergent subjects following in the footsteps of the masterly leaders. To crown it all, scores obtained in memory tests become the sole performance indicator which helps commoditizing the educational outcome which sharply contradicts the modern market notions of efficiency and performance.

It is true that higher education in India has of late registered an enormous and expansive growth. At the same time, entry into the top level institutions has become a herculean task in that most of the students who have fared well in the qualifying examinations do not measure up to the standards set by the entrance tests. Besides, the aspirants coming from the rural or backward areas are pushed to the peripheries in the rat race for want of financial, infrastructural and coaching/training supports. The issue of unemployment too has now become a serious concern with the employers mentioning skill deficiency of the prospective candidates as one of the major reasons for unemployment.

The number of institutions too has of late grown, however, the growth is not proportionate to the expectations of quality. In our country, the idea of universalization of education did not confine itself to the elementary level and this has resulted in a quantitative surge at the cost of quality even in the higher educational arena. Many institutions produce substandard outcome much devoid of the desired quality. They also suffer from lack of qualified teachers and insufficient infrastructural support. All this has resulted in an increase in the number of degree holders whose credentials in terms of quality and employability appear dubious. In addition, the typical cultural attitudes concerning higher educational status and the concepts of its compatibility with the jobs available results in people shunning low profile profitable jobs and taking up high profile jobs even if underpaid.

When the score in tests became a highly precious commodity, the politicians discovered its potential populist value to be exploited for popularity and electoral gains. Then with the introduction of a formal system of education in which the school uniforms, assembly, strict disciplinary codes etc., rigidity and mechanization have crept into the

Indian system of education. All this might have been a need for the19th century education system where the aim of education was the creation of civil servants whose jobs needed little use of creative or divergent thinking. Besides, the influence of the contemporary notions of political correctness brought in the belief that failure breeds discontent that would essentially lead to demotivation and withdrawal. As a result, evaluation turned generous but modes of testing remained more or less the same. Consequently, there has been a surge in the quantity of the qualified hands whose real quality seems largely suspect. All these factors have turned detrimental to maintaining the quality of education in our country.

The New Education Policy has been projected to appear a panacea for all these maladies. But even at a cursory look we can see that most of the proposals in it are founded on pure idealism. It is true that we need to periodically look into and revise policies in accordance with the changing needs and trends. However, at the implementation stage of any new policy, pragmatic considerations should take precedence over idealism. Most of the developing nations have a tendency to imitate Western models molded in accordance with the Western political philosophy and culture just for the reason that they have been successful in the Western world. While transplanting these models of educational processes, these developing nations do not seem to fully take into account their own demographic particularities, political environment, social needs and cultural attributes. Such reforms will inevitably lead to stunted growth in terms of both the form and substance. The outcomes generated out of such reformed processes miserably fail to meet the expectations in terms of aims, objectives and functionality.

In this context, it is necessary to look into how the NEP should adapt itself to make its implementation meaningful in the Indian society. It necessitates looking into some of the salient features of the NEP that are directly related to quality, functionality and employability.

(i) EnhancementofEnrolment

All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) report 2018-19 indicates that the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in Higher education in India is just 26.3%, which is very low compared to the developed as well as other developing countries. Considering this, the NEP proposes to raise the GER in higher education to the level of at least 50%by 2035(NEP 2020).

The aim is stated to increase the Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education including vocational education from 26.3% (2018) to 50% by 2035. However, it is not clear what are the programmes or the levels of education they consider as higher education when they made this comparison with the higher education systems of developed nations. It seems a fallacy to assume that higher educational enrolments should be at par with the enrolment at the elementary/ school level. Higher education presupposed advanced specialized study in which the programmes have to be chosen on the basis of interest, aptitude and skills. In the developed countries, the enrolment for University education is not as high as it is claimed to be. The fact is that the opportunities for technical/vocational education have been provided and the pedantic mode of education is largely discouraged.

In a country like ours where holding college degrees/ certificates alone is considered as measure for educational status, low enrolment at the higher educational levels is considered a great deficiency. We also decry that higher educational opportunities are exclusive privileges of the urban metropolitan people. There still exists a disparity between rural and urban population in terms of opportunities but then it cannot be cited as a valid reason for the universalization of higher education because the preference in higher education should be on quality rather than quantity. If quality is the prime concern, the proportionate opportunity upgrading from lower to higher levels need not be the sole matter of preference.

ii   Fostering Multidisciplinariness

The policy of Holistic Multidisciplinary Education envisages a broad-based multi-disciplinary holistic education at the undergraduate level for integrated, rigorous exposure to science, arts, humanities, mathematics and professional fields having imaginative and flexible curricular structures, creative combinations of study, integration of vocational education and multiple entry/exit points. A holistic and multidisciplinary education will help develop well-rounded

individuals who possess critical 21st century capacities in fields across the arts, humanities, languages, sciences, social sciences, and professional, technical, and vocational fields; an ethic of social engagement; soft skills, such as communication, discussion and debate; and rigorous specialization in a chosen field or fields (NEP 2020).

True to the statement, this has a really solid ideological base, but at the same time, the concept of the importance of catering to individual

differences stands in contrast to the idea of universalizing or despecializing. As enunciated, the quest or dream of the 21st century is the creation of super-humans capable of multitasking at higher speeds at different levels. It is envisioned in the policy as an ideal but its compatibility with a modularized instructional system seems far from credible. The idea may have sprung from the belief that it is easier to create more jacks of all trades than singular masters. One would wonder if such endeavours would end up in mediocrity in our over-enthusiasm to churn out versatile allrounders at the entry level of higher education. The intention here is not to underestimate the need of the hour and the pulse of the time, but to point out how unrealistic our professed goals have turned out to be. The idea of non- specialization is good but it should not be in the form of the inclusion of every branch of knowledge haphazardly like a patchwork quilt; rather it could take the direction of incorporating associate disciplines in a need based manner considering their compatibility and complementariness. The seeds of inter-disciplinariness need to be sown in the minds of scholars by means of supplementary academic programmes and library work. It can only develop from interest and sense of need.

In another perspective, it echoes the much touted one-to-one theory of homogenization. The slogans like one nation one people, one nation one election, one nation one pension, one nation one ID card, one nation one civil code, etc. seem glorious until it reaches the ideas of one nation one language, one nation one culture, one nation one religion etc. Hence multi-disciplinariness has to be understood in a different perspective. Even at the school level, many students struggle to cope with the elementary level multi-disciplinarity and they resent going ahead with such diversity at the degree level. But even after the diversifications to selected specializations, many students do complain that associate inter-disciplinarity within disciplines too is a cause to worry. Instead of unfolding it like an attractive multi-coloured fancy umbrella, provisions for actual choice should be incorporated into it. The problem of practicability in granting of choice is evident in the functioning of our much acclaimed CBCS in which the students hardly get an opportunity to

choose what they want within a programme. Other than boosting the success rate or pass percentage, CBCS has done nothing to broaden choices or enhance the quality of the graduates. Here too we have seen a cherished ideal fail miserably for want of proper groundwork and meticulous attempts for adaptation.

iii   Multiple Exit Options and Certfication

Such a holistic education shall be, in the long term, the approach of all undergraduate programmes, including those in professional, technical, and vocational disciplines. The undergraduate degree will be of either 3 or 4-year duration, with multiple exit options within this period, with appropriate certifications- a certificate after completing 1 year in a discipline or field including vocational and professional areas, or a diploma after 2 years of study, or a Bachelor's degree after a 3-year programme. The 4-year multidisciplinary Bachelor's programme shall be the preferred option since it allows the opportunity to experience the full range of holistic and multidisciplinary education in addition to a focus on the chosen major and minors as per the choices of the student (NEP 2020)

The multiple exit option and the phased certification facility seem extremely enticing to the degree aspirants. At the same time, there is sufficient reason to doubt if such things lighten the gravity of studies and higher education as a whole. Such lightness could be seen as antithetical to quality enhancement efforts. It is also akin to the modern outsourcing mode of business enterprises and manufacturing firms that value piece work engagement and part payments which are also considered matters of convenience. It is true that it can reduce the sense of loss experienced by the drop-outs by granting them the value for money and hence accord a mitigating gesture in a business environment. But the question is how such things can substantially contribute to the quality building initiatives and what purpose it will serve to promote competence and employability in an environment where the problem of plenty rules the roost.

When earning degrees and certificates becomes child's play, potential devaluation of degrees and certificates is bound to happen. The same fate has descended on the marvellous grade A+ which has of late fallen from grace by multiplication. The recently introduced short term military training programme, Agnipath, too is arguably a devaluing mass production endeavour. This may

also result in lessening the quality of soldiering, and at the same time, may work as a tool for churning out more light hearted people merrily flaunting military skills and graduation certificates. These certificates will later be relegated to sheer rewards given to extract cooperation just as in the case of activities like dog training. In the end it serves no meaningful purpose as the abundance of degree holders is going to flood the job markets.

iv   Promotion of Research

National ResearchFoundation(NRF) will be set up to catalyze and expand research and innovation across the country. The overarching goal of the NRF will be to enable a culture of research to permeate through our universities, helping to develop a culture of research in the country through suitable incentives for and recognition of outstanding research, and by undertaking major initiatives to seed and grow research at State Universities and other public institutions where research capability is currently limited. The NRF will competitively fund research in all disciplines. Successful research will be recognized, and where relevant, implemented through close linkages with governmental agencies as well as with industry and private/philanthropic organizations (NEP2020).

Yet another mind boggling ideal that proposes to draw the young inquisitive minds to discovering the nuances of knowledge just as fish to water is the popularization of research activities. However, the UGC's policies on incentive-linked research counteracts with this high profile ideal. The proposed move to make doctorate the basic qualification for entry into college/university service is unlikely to promote genuine research. Such moves will end up downgrading or trivializing research as a research degree will be equated with any other commonplace university/ college degree. The news about this move has already resulted in a mad rush for PhDs and this is evident in the UGC report showing the recent steep rise in both the enrolment and completion rates in PhD programmes (UGC 2017).

The total number of doctorates is stated to have skyrocketed from 21544 in 2011-12 to a startling 34400 in 2017-18. This accounts for the mad rush for PhDs in our country which is currently one of the countries having the most doctorate degree holders. The reasons are many the foremost being the current trend of universalizing all degrees of which the doctorate being the most prestigious.

Consequently, the supply of PhDs in India has currently outnumbered its demand. Luring people into research and then leaving them in the lurch help boost quantity not quality. The job market for PhD holders in India is as threatening as it is in any other field and most PhD holders seek employment in knowledge industry including universities/ colleges. Just as too many cooks spoil the broth, the doctors have descended on educational institutions to spoil knowledge. As another adage points out, confession is good for the soul but bad for reputation, forced research may be good for the scholar's status but bad for the academics' reputation!

The problem of plenty need not always be something to be proud of. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that genuine research has to be encouraged and inputs from it should be effectively used in further development of knowledge, technology etc. The undesirable thing is the act of relegating research to the acquisition of any other university/college degree and making it compulsory for the jobs for which a doctorate is not essential.

Autonomy to all Higher Educational Institutions

The system of affiliation will be phased out over 15 years and a stage-wise mechanism for granting graded autonomy to colleges, through a transparent system of graded accreditation, will be established. Over a period of time, it is envisaged that every college would develop into either an Autonomous degree-granting College, or a constituent college of a university (NEP 2020).

This is yet another lofty ideal that can easily fall flat in the rucked up socio-political sphere of the typical Indian society. Autonomy presupposes two important things: self-sufficiency in terms of infrastructure and resources and integrity derived from social responsibility and sense of duty.

The rigor and enthusiasm with which the academic activities have to be carried out are of paramount importance in the quality attainment and maintenance. Many institutions in India are suffering from inability to meet the minimum requirements prescribed by the UGC with regard to the qualifications of teachers and other infrastructural facilities (UGC 2017). When education got privatized and commoditized, the notions of quality and outcome got redefined based on commercial parameters. The typical Indian standards of industry prefer mediocrity to excellence and education too is no different. For instance, the Indian buyers of motor cars are so obsessed with cheapness or value for money that they do not even mind compromising safety aspects. But in the West, this is not the way the worth of things is evaluated. In education too, the students are always on the lookout for easier and cheaper ways of acquiring degrees with higher scores. Coupled with the populist maneuvering of the political class, the attitude of the students to concentrate only on the external outcomes propagate mediocrity in higher education.

The gradual withdrawal of the government from education and healthcare is another challenge to the higher education system in India as the managements of private institutions have been preferring material

gains to the quality of academic outcomes. The public funded institutions are insufficient in number to accommodate all the aspiring students. Many private institutions suffer from poor physical facilities and infrastructure. In addition, the underpaid and under qualified teachers do not measure up to the expectations of the students and parents. To crown it all, there is no effective mechanism to ensure quality and accountability in the academic activities in such institutions.

Innovations and Quality Concerns

All institutions and faculty will have the autonomy to innovate on matters of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment within a broad framework of higher education qualifications that ensures consistency across institutions and programmes and across the ODL, online, and the traditional 'in-class' modes. HEIs shall move to a criterion-based grading system that assesses student achievement based on the learning goals for each programme, and also move away from high-stakes examinations towards more continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Universities and colleges will set up high-quality support centres and will be given adequate funds and academic resources to encourage and support students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds (NEP 2020).

Ensuring quality in higher education is of utmost importance and is currently the biggest challenge that we face. The higher educational administrators have to take measures not only to bring in quality but also to sustain it. Unfortunately, our political leadership is vested with such authority and power, and in their eagerness to be politically correct and enthusiasm to promote political ideologies, this responsibility is not exercised judiciously. Marks or/and pass percentage in examinations have become a political tool, just as the freebies given to the common people during elections, to be used for electoral gains. In addition, the socialist ideology has been more detrimental to maintaining quality in that it is seen as a way of eradicating inequality between the haves and have-nots. It is surprising that the adherers of such ideologies are not against the terminology, higher education, as it too presupposes hierarchy which is not in harmony with the socialist ideology. Consequently, the results are inflated every year and the score indices rise enormously. Even the Internal Assessment, which has to be ideally a qualitative formative evaluation emphasizing progressive cumulative assessment, has been relegated to a tool for marks inflation. It is not surprising considering the fact that marks have become a commodity and so much trading and bargaining are involved the process of awarding marks. There is also a ridiculous

practice of awarding academic marks to those students who excel in non-academic, extra- curricular activities.

All this has resulted in students viewing marks in academics as a tool for appreciation of other skills and compensation for deficiencies. It has also become a practice among the students to choose Universities or institutions based on their capacity and willingness to award more marks. Similarly the teachers who are more liberal with awarding marks in the Internal Assessment gain better rating in student feedbacks. Innovations presuppose autonomous, self-regulated and efficient functioning and such things cannot be fulfilled when the socio-political oddities encapsulate the entire educational processes.

Conclusion

Innovations essentially revitalize any socially useful system that helps develop societies and education is no exception. Higher education in our country is a major concern in this regard as dissemination and improvisation of knowledge are its main objectives. No one would undermine the importance of educational reforms. However, when we import the borrowed principles and practices for bringing about reforms, care must be taken to ensure that they are conducive to and compatible with our needs and aspirations. The implementation of educational reforms should accommodate the ground realities in terms of prevailing ideological, cultural and political conditions in order to produce desired outcomes.

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TRANSFORMATION TO CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE: CASE STUDY OF PUBLIC SCHOOLS IN MALAPPURAM DISTRICT

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Abstract

Making public schools as centres of excellence is a program initiated by the Kerala government under an umbrella initiative ―General Education Protection Mission, in 2017. It is an initiative to save government schools from the 'uneconomic' tag. The main aim of this program is the inclusive development of public schools. After the arrival of the New Education Policy 2020, which will replace the 10+2 curriculum structure with a 5+3+3+4 structure, it is considered that this programme implemented by Kerala Government will do wonders as it promotes value-based education. The study used a qualitative methodology in which six public schools from Malappuram District were chosen. Six key informants were selected from each school, including Principals, Teachers, Parents, Students, Local Self Government Members and Parent Teachers Association Members. In-depth Interviews were done using Semi Structured Interview Schedule, and Data were interpreted using Thematic Analysis. The study showed positive results in Educational System after the arrival of this program.

Keywords: : New Education Policy, Centres of Excellence, Transformation, Education, Public Schools, Initiative.

Introduction

"Centres' of Excellence" is a flagship program instigated by the Government of Kerala as part of the General Education Protection Mission launched in 2017. A robust public education system is indispensable for the overall growth of a person as well as the development of a country. The increase in students in public schools positively affects our social structure and its progressive nature. Schools are not just places for learning, but they are the places for socialisation that mould man as a social being. Children from different socio-economic backgrounds come to schools and grow as a community through social interactions. After the emergence of

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private schools on an extensive scale, student strength in public schools is declining. Since student strength is the main criterion determining the continuance of schools, each class must have a minimum of 15 students. The State Economic Review for 2016 identified 5,715 public schools that do not meet this requirement as "uneconomic" against 5,573 schools in 2015. In June 2021, the Department of Education decided to replace the term uneconomic in official records with "schools without sufficient student strength."

Students are missing out on public schools that provide free and universal education because most parents choose private schools for their children because of the declining quality of education in public schools and the lack of better infrastructures. The General Education Protection Mission's main aim was to overcome these hurdles, strengthen all public educational institutions in Kerala, and ensure that all children benefit from the public education system. General Education Protection Mission aims to make Kerala a fully digitalised state in the education sector. The state government would facilitate the physical, academic and digital content required for implementing this programme. The Panchayat - Constituency-District-State level mission teams would closely monitor and evaluate this programme.

Kerala is known for its accomplishments in universal education and enrolment. Through this mission, the Government proffer comprehensive educational reforms, including 1000 Government schools into international standards during the first phase. The idea is not only to improve the infrastructural facilities but also to reform the teaching and learning process to the present day by introducing ICT-enabled learning and providing smart classrooms. There will be a focus on creating educational programmes useful for differently abled students (District Administration, Ernakulam, 2018). It is also meant to reinforce the teaching-learning process by providing ample opportunities for students to construct knowledge using modern technology tools. The mission will redefine the existing classroom learning process, coordinate resource mobilisation efforts and develop "JanakeeyaVidyabhyasaMathruka". Special packages to support schools that have existed for over 100 years will also be attempted. The implementation will enlist the full involvement and partnership of the Parent Teacher Association (PTA).

Kerala was the first state in the country to attain 100 per cent literacy more than two and a half decades ago. Since then, the State has not rested on its laurels. It has moved forward in leaps and bounds, conquering

targets that no other State could achieve. Now the government of Kerala is taking off towards a new goal of comprehensive educational reforms. The government intends to focus on developing first to eighth standards in tune with the times by engaging the teachers, parents and alumni to recapture the relevance of public schools. English learning will be encouraged in schools. The idea is not only to improve the infrastructure facilities but also to reform the curriculum to the present-day needs. Keeping in view the differently-abled friendly approach of the government, there is a focus on creating educational program which is helpful for differently abled students. The idea is to address the infrastructural deficiencies being faced by such schools. There will be particular emphasis on ensuring internet connectivity to promote IT-friendly existence.

A task force and a full-time chief executive will be in charge of managing the day-to-day affairs of the Mission. The Secretary of the Public Education Department will serve as the Mission Secretary and the Chairperson of the Task Force. As the Task Force will stress teacher training and the use of information technology, experts in the field and Directors of SCERT, IT School, SSA and RMSA will also be a part of it. Develop a long-term visionary school development plan for all government and Aided Schools. The aim is to develop the school through a partnership of teachers, parents, alumni, socio-political and cultural volunteers, organisations and governmental and non-governmental agencies. The greatest strength of a public school is the people from that place. We must make them feel that the school is theirs and that public education is essential for the country. Without the proper participation of the public education system will never succeed. The parents, the children and the political representatives came together. They learned about the importance of public education, the relevance of public schools and the changes that need to be made to the school. The first thing to do was to ask for their views on the school's development activities and to make a master plan for the school. They envision a better school environment to enhance student's ability in extra-curricular activities and improve their intellectual level. The main objective of the Master Plan was to provide the necessary learning materials to schools to ensure international learning standards and to provide the essential physical, psychological and cultural facilities to enhance them. Evaluate the activities by directly understanding what kind of activities each school is doing for this and also aims to understand the change that has taken place in the public schools.

Public education has been vital in our society since the nation's early days. In addition to preparing young people for productive work

and fulfilling lives, public education has also been expected to accomplish specific collective missions to promote the common good. These include, among others, preparing youth to become responsible citizens, forging a familiar culture from a nation of Immigrants, and reducing inequalities in society. In recent years, however, some of these public-spirited missions of education have been neglected and are in danger of being abandoned. Most current efforts to reform public education have focused on increasing students 'academic achievement without a doubt. But the reasons why it's essential to improve achievement often stress individual or private economic benefits rather than public benefits.

The term public education means education that is publicly financed, tuition-free, accountable to public authorities, and accessible to all students. Universal public education is a solution to a host of social problems. Public schools were established to make education universally available to all children, free of charge. Public schools would transform children into moral, literate, and productive citizens; eliminate poverty and crime; quell class conflict, and unify a population that was becoming more ethnically diverse. Public investment in education would ultimately benefit everyone, they maintained, and would make schools accountable to the people. Although public schools have become more inclusive, equal access to high-quality education is not yet a reality. Vast differences exist among schools, districts, and states in per pupil funding, the availability of experienced and well-qualified teachers, the effectiveness of leadership and teaching, access to advanced courses, and other factors affecting quality. Public schools have been expected to fulfil specific public missions beyond the purely academic purposes of all public and private schools.

Public schools were established to make education universally available to all children, Free of charge. This mission remains as necessary today as it was two hundred years ago. Public schools educate the vast majority of students and will continue to do so for the foreseeable future. Public schools are accessible in all parts of the country, including areas where few or no private schools exist. Unlike private schools, which can be selective about whom to enroll, public school systems must serve all who live within their boundaries. By law, public schools must provide free education to students with disabilities, two groups with special needs that private schools may choose not to enroll or may not be equipped to serve. Public schools must also educate students whose academic or disciplinary records might keep them from being admitted to a private school. For years, public schools have been the leading institution in society responsible for transmitting culture to a diverse population. Public

schools have been the place where students share their life; it helps them to improve their humanity. Views have shifted over time about how best to promote unity while respecting diverse cultures. Building a common culture involves teaching students from different racial, ethnic, religious, and economic backgrounds to respect each other and get along. Early advocates of the common school believed that when children from diverse backgrounds shared in common education, class conflict would disappear, and people would interact with greater civility.

Materials and Methods

The study used qualitative methodology. Case studies of six schools were done by selecting and interviewing six key informants from each of the schools, including Principals, Teachers, Parents, Students, Local Self Government members and Parent Teacher Association Members. After implementing the programme, this was done to understand the functioning of schools deeply. And to understand in detail the stakeholders' perception of the public schools.

A purposive sampling method was used in the study. Public schools that had become centres of excellence after the programme implementation were selected for the study. Only the schools from the Malappuram district were included in the study since Malappuram is the most densely populated district in Kerala and is widely known as the education hub of Kerala. Key informants were selected only if they had a minimum of two-year experience in the particular designations of the respective school itself. Scheduled interviews were conducted with the key informants using a semi-structured interview guide; interviews were recorded by taking the informed consent from the participants and further transcribed, analysed and presented using thematic analysis in themes of Academic, Infrastructure, Extracurricular activities and Public Private participation.

Results and Discussion

Academic Excellence

The way in which the academic matters of the public schools are handled is very much different from the private schools after the implementation of this programme. Teachers, PTA members, parents, natives and elected members work hard to improve education quality. For academic improvement, every single unit of a school must work hard. Most of the public schools in Kerala had once gone through the uneconomic tag because of the large-scale division falls. The role of the public is

indispensable in improving the success rate of public schools from this 50-55% to 90-95% and was very much visible after the commencement of the programme. A 47-year-old Teacher says, "Condition of the school was very excellent during the early period, but later English medium schools emerged like mushrooms, at the same time our school was not much good in infrastructure and academic qualities. Parents choose private schools for their children, which makes a sudden division fall in the school" This was the primary reason for the rise in the number of uneconomic public schools. But introducing this programme changed the academic conditions, making more public school students. An elected representative of the panchayath says, "I started my political career in my early 20s, and at that time, this school was extraordinary. This was the only school in this region at that time. But later, the quality of school became low, the quality of education declined, and no updations were done in the school according to the time. Students started migrating to public schools" The situation is quite the same in all public schools. Every school has gone through harsh conditions and faced division fall, which gave them the uneconomic tag. The quality of education plays a vital role in the student strength of the pc schools.The General Education Protection Mission enabled the PTA members, Parents and Elected members to become part of the School Management Committee (SMCs). The PTA Members, Parents and SMC members together developed master plans to monitor the works. Panchayath members developed programs at the panchayath or municipality level to improve education quality. Gradually the situation changed, quality of education improved, as reflected in the annual results of the school. Slowly this revived the interest and confidence in public schools among parents, and the yearly admissions of students increased. Not only the academic condition of the school has developed, but the way of teaching has also changed. Earlier the academic sessions were not so student-friendly. Still, through this initiative, academic sessions turned out to be student-friendly, creating an atmosphere that helped the students grasp things more easily. Since academic performance was the primary aim of the programme, everyone worked hard to achieve it. As a result, the general education protection campaign helped public schools attract more students. In the end, the government campaign appears to have revived parents' interest and confidence in public schools. And helped the public schools to step out of ―the uneconomic tag.

Infrastructure Facilities

Infrastructure improvement was another aim of the campaign. The

education department set up 45,000 hi-tech classrooms with a digital projector, screen, laptops and internet connectivity in public schools all over the state. The state also set up libraries in 9,600 classrooms and 866 upper-primary schools and strengthened the existing libraries in 1,225 high schools. Infrastructure improvement plays a vital role in the quality of education. Modern education is only possible with the use of ICT, and good infrastructure is essential to maintain student ratios in schools. "A parent opinioned that If there were no timely intervention of the government, the school might be shut down due to the uneconomic reason." Because of the lack of timely government intervention, public schools faced huge infrastructure scarcity. The classrooms were not enough for the students, and the conditions of the existing ones were miserable. Lab facilities were inappropriate, and science labs lacked essential equipment; IT education was impossible due to the lack of computers. The unavailability of essential elements in public schools made parents choose private schools. A teacher with seven years of experience says, "I came to this school in 2014; at that time, the condition of this school was very pathetic; there were not enough classrooms. We made a classroom with a tarpaulin sheet to overcome the scarcity of classrooms. At that time, the school was the under the category ―of uneconomical we couldn't attain enough students. Even though we had enough students, we still couldn't accommodate them." The headmaster of the same school stated, "Government provided five crores for the school's infrastructure development and a team for developing a master plan. With the help of Parents and PTA Members, School developed a master plan for the 30 years. The school started to work on its infrastructure development, and the newly constructed buildings are all from that projects." The two statements clearly show that the program gave the Public Schools a new face and phase. Every school constructed buildings according to their needs and set up new and well-equipped science labs. The government also provided funds for digitalisation; every classroom has been digitalised, giving quality education to the students. Gradually the number of students improved, and parents started to use public schools as a primary option for their children because of the availability of free education with all modern technologies similar to private schools. In the previous academic years, admission of students started very early before school opened. And the change was most visible when parents began taking their children from private schools and taking admission to public schools.

Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities are as important as co-curricular activities. Activities like arts, sports, and crafts are essential for the overall development of children. Children exhibit enormous talents, so the school should have facilities to encourage and enrich those talents. Skills may differ from person to person, so the students need to get a space to show off their talents. The scarcity of resources can destroy the passion and dreams of many. A parent says, "Many students have artistic and athletic talents. Some students are state and national champions in sports and baseball. Our sports teacher is very talented and has a vision for the students. Many other students are talented in various arts." Before introducing the programme, most schools lacked permanent, full-time sports teachers. Without having a permanent full-time sports teacher, it's hard for the students to practice daily. The government's vision for the development of arts and sports is magnificent. They started promoting workshops for extracurricular activities; the schools are now initiating many cultural events and performing arts competitions under this program. PTA and Teachers arrange coaching facilities for those who are in need. Another teacher stated, "This school was excellent in all kinds of activities. In the previous year, we couldn't conduct a youth festival in school due to the pandemic, but we conducted an online youth festival for our students." The schools became excellent in all aspects by giving extra care to improving and maintaining facilities for extracurricular activities. By conducting competitions online, the schools provide students chances to perform and maintain their passion even during adverse situations.

Public Private Participation

To keep the schools alive, there came a need to increase the students' strength. A campaign aimed to increase the number of students in public schools with people's participation. In response, the native people gathered in the public schools in their respective localities and took a pledge to protect them. Public Private Participation has been the most significant change in the public education system in the past few decades. Through this campaign, the government decided to improve the condition of each public school with the help of adequate public participation. The success of a school depends on the people in that place; if the government wants to attain success through this programme, they have to satisfy academic, infrastructure, and other determinants with complete quality and efficiency for that timely and proper interventions, are needed from the public. Without adequate monitoring from the public side, the school

may again go back to older situations. A PTA Member says, "Success of a school is determined by the native people; if they feel like the school is an asset for them to protect and they are willing to stand with the school for all the activities, the school can become an excellent model to others very easily." This is what the government exactly meant by public-private participation, and in most cases of successful schools, it's true. They get enough public participation in all ways; from the beginning of construction works of the school, the school management formed a school development council, including the public. They inform every activity and need in that group by conducting periodical meetings. This developed a kind of we feeling among the native people, which gave them essential support. In most of school native people and socio-cultural organisations offer this support even for maintenance activities. And all these things ultimately lead to the overall development of a school.

Conclusion

A robust public education system is essential to the individual and collective well-being of our country and its people and the development of an informed and engaged citizenry, without which no democracy can exist and flourish. The student strength is the criterion that determines the continuance of schools. Each class is required to have a minimum of 15 students. The State Economic Review for 2016 identified 5,715 public schools which did not meet this requirement, as uneconomic, as against 5,573 in 2015. The mushrooming of English-medium private schools was a significant reason for the rise in uneconomic public schools. In June 2016, the department decided to replace the term uneconomic in official records with schools without sufficient student strength.

The department of education launched the general education protection campaign on January 27, 2017, as dwindling student numbers threatened the existence of many public schools. The campaign has helped public schools attract more students and appears to have revived interest and confidence in public schools among parents.

For the first time in 25 years, public schools in Kerala registered a year-on-year increase in student enrolment this year. It is a significant achievement given that 5,715 schools were functioning without adequate student strength till 2016.

Data released by the education department showed that over 1.8 lakh students joined public schools from Classes 1 to 9 in 2018-19, the academic year that began in June. This was an increase of 40,000

enrolments compared to the last academic year when around 1.4 lakh students joined public schools. According to the data, 70,644 students enrolled in government schools and 1, 15,327 in government-funded schools. We are reaping the benefits of the general education protection campaign.

The general education protection campaign, even though its lauded with success, has significant attributes that need to be addressed. This is not confined to an increase in enrolment ratios but includes the participation of ordinary citizen and enhancing the infra development of these schools. The idea of the campaign is not just to be confined or limited to increase the number of students in the public education system instead it should also focus on the holistic development of the children and school. The increased number of students is best for the public education system to boost the general public's confidence by reposing the trust in the system.

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STRATEGIES FOR IMPROVING RESEARCH CULTURE IN INDIAN HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

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Abstract

Universities are characterised by regional, socio-cultural, linguistic and institution-related structural diversities in our Higher Education System. From these diversities, t strengthening research culture in Indian higher education requires multi-multi-pronged activities beginning with a bottom-up rather than a top-down process. The "one-size-fits-all" approach to host a culture of research is anchored in robust classroom pedagogy and curricula designed to arouse intellectual curiosity and its appropriate channelization and imparting of research tools and techniques to ensure that it eventually leads to achievement. This would necessitate replacement of the acquisition of information through rote learning and the inadequate system of assessment by an open-ended, problem-driven learning process. The research activity in Indian University system is largely governed by the age-old disciplinary boundaries in which academic departments function. Disciplinary boundaries must break down to pave the way to interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary and even trans-disciplinary research. In the field of science, areas like modern biology have become increasingly interdisciplinary with major contributions from researchers formally trained in other disciplines like physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, engineering and medicine. Since Humanities and Social Sciences deal with the human subject, their disciplinary boundaries often converge without losing their identities but resulting into a deeper understanding of the human subject/social reality. The current paper critically discusses the concepts like Research quality and standards, the present condition of Research in Indian universities (crisis), Research quality and cultural innovations etc. In this era, there are many crises are faced by researchers from various sectors. Here the author doesn't attempt to explain all those problems; instead, mentions some specific recommendations as the solution to those crises with the importance of promoting a culture of research amongst our faculty, higher education authorities (administration) and students.

Keywords: Higher Education System, Intellectual Curiosity, Interdisciplinary, Multidisciplinary and Transdisciplinary research.

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Introduction

In any field of study, research is a continuing process of expanding the body of currently held knowledge by pursuing uncharted territories that provide difficulties in the pursuit of truth. When considering whether research in any field of knowledge significantly contributes to the ecosystem of knowledge, the quality of the study is critical. Throughout the world, academic, professional, and higher education policy discussions are now centered on the issue of research quality. The Indian University System operates in a diverse environment that includes social, linguistic, regional, economic, geographic (metropolitan, urban, mofussil, tribal), infrastructural (rich, moderate, poor), and aspirational (international, national, and regional) diversities that are present throughout the nation. The makeup of students and teachers, which has an impact on teaching and research activities at Indian universities, reflects these differences.

"In this complicated social environment, the issue of research quality in India must be considered. The problem of raising the quality of higher education in the context of modern transformational processes is a conceptual one, and is recognized as theoretically and practically ambiguous because of the widely discussed notion of education of a country undergoing reform."1 As T.A. Hagurov (2010) observes, "the question of the quality of education becomes extremely important and can be formulated in the following way: "Does the education which is being reformed fulfil all of its most important functions (i.e. social reproduction and ensuring strategic competitiveness of society) at a high level?"2 The efforts of various government-established accrediting organisations, international contests among schools for admissions, and institutional motivation in enhancing quality despite limitations all contribute to the global improvement of higher education's quality. Institutions of higher learning ought to aim to contribute to the production of new knowledge in addition to offering high-quality instruction focused on the needs of the students.

The issue of research quality in India has gained attention recently as a result of the rapid expansion of research, which is now primarily generated as a component of doctoral research (Ph.D.) in the university system during the past several decades. The increase in numbers and the ensuing concerns about the output quality of research call for a thorough assessment of the current situation and the recommendation of remedial actions to be done to enhance the status of research in India.

Research Quality

Lack of quality research work is one of the major challenges faced in the Indian higher education system. The first sign of a researcher's capacity to conduct high-caliber research is a PhD thesis. Understanding what quality is and what its dimensions are is necessary for quality considerations in research. Generally, research of high quality generally refers to a procedure that covers all facets of the subject under investigation by posing important questions and arriving at trustworthy conclusions that greatly expand the body of existing knowledge and generate new information. An essential part of higher education is research in the fields of science, engineering, technology, social science, business, law, and management. The standards of research quality are premised on,

A The foundational ideas of science.

B The philosophical foundations and theory of science.

C The opinion of the academic community.

In light of this, the following serves as the universal indicators of high-quality research across all fields of knowledge:

i. Important issues that can be researched both philosophically and experimentally.

ii. A transparent, impartial, impartial, and independent approach to the research topic.

iii. Applying the right approach to solve the research challenge.

iv. Proper conceptualisation of the research problem and reliable measurement of variables.3

v. Engagement with internal and international intellectual networks and learned societies.4

The Present States of Research in Indian Universities

A distinct academic system must unavoidably include research universities as a minor but essential component. The academic system in India, which now has the second-largest student population in the world, is extremely complicated yet poorly stated. There is general agreement that, with a few notable exceptions, the quality of research conducted at the university and college level in India is insufficient. In fact, the calibre of research is disturbingly low in many institutes. These frequently do not meet international standards and do not significantly advance the academic

or practical elements of a particular field. It is possible to attribute this situation to the following factors:

1   Increasing Number of Admissions: The number of admissions to Ph.D. and M.Phil. programmes has nearly quadrupled during the past three decades from 2017 to 2020. The leading cause of this increase is the inclusion of a Ph.D. as a requirement for admittance into university academic posts as well as for career development.

2   Inadequate funding and Poor Infrastructure: For research guidance, there is a dearth of trained people resources, weak physical facilities, and insufficient financing.

3   Absence of Academic Mentorship: the lack of academic mentoring offered by senior faculty members in juggling teaching commitments and research demands.5

4   Lack of Inter, Multi and Trans-disciplinary culture: Universities don't have an inter, multi, or transdisciplinary culture.

5   Rigid Admission Rules: limits on changing disciplines, institutionally enforced age restrictions, and a lack of freedom to use academic judgement in legitimate situations that do not follow admissions requirements but are nonetheless capable of generating high-quality research.

6   The Quality of Researcher: The majority of students acquire doctoral degrees to enter the teaching profession and improve in their careers. For various unrelated reasons, they frequently float into academia and out of it or remain there because they have no other options. Many students who apply to PhD programmes do so with an overall deficit in discipline knowledge and research methods. They frequently also lack communication skills and linguistic proficiency.

7   Publication Ethics and Peer Review Culture: lack of proper knowledge about research publication ethics and peer review culture.

Recognising the significance of having research universities at the top of that system while also realising that there are only a few numbers of them overall makes it crucial to select which universities will prioritise their research efforts carefully. In the foreseeable future, the NEP recommends that around 100 institutions be designated research universities. Along with providing excellent undergraduate and graduate education, these

universities will place a significant emphasis on research and doctorate programmes. The remainder of the more than 900 universities will be teaching institutions with a focus on providing top-notch instruction. These institutions must also conduct minimal research and provide limited PhD programmes. Without explicitly clarifying this difference, institutions will attempt to do both research and education without having the resources or staff required to conduct high-quality research, leading to average results in both areas.

Innovation Culture and Social Connection in Research Quality

Regional, socio-cultural, linguistic, and institution-related structural diversity characterises the higher education system within which the Indian University System functions. Given these differences, strengthening research culture in Indian higher education requires a multi-pronged approach that begins with a bottom-up, "one-size-fits-all" approach to introducing a culture of research that is anchored in robust classroom pedagogy and curricula designed to arouse intellectual curiosity and its appropriate channelisation and imparting of research tools and techniques to ensure that it eventually reaches fruition. This would involve replacing rote learning and an ineffective evaluation system with an open-ended, problem-driven learning approach.

In the Indian University system, research activity is still primarily regulated by the age-old disciplinary boundaries within which academic departments work. Discipline barriers must be broken down to allow for interdisciplinary, multi-disciplinary, and even trans-disciplinary study. Modern biology, for example, has grown increasingly multidisciplinary, with significant contributions from academics officially trained in other fields such as physics, chemistry, mathematics, computer science, engineering, and medicine. Because Humanities and Social Sciences deal with human subjects, their disciplinary borders frequently intersect, leading to a greater knowledge of human subjects/social reality. Social connection in research quality is critical to sensitize the community of researchers from all significant fields of knowledge, as well as numerous academic and regulatory agencies, including funding bodies, to the fact that the social, ethical, and legal elements of their research activities are increasing problems across the world. To sensitize the relevant communities, social scientists, ethicists, and legal thinkers must be included at any step of marketization, monetisation, patenting, or simply deciding what sort of research to conduct in any trans-disciplinary convergence domains of modern science and technology.

**Specific Recommendations for Promoting
a Research Culture in India**

Based on its comprehensive discussions and meetings with representatives of the academic community, the committee proposes the following suggestions for encouraging and increasing the quality of research in Indian universities and colleges. The proposed actions must be implemented immediately, while curriculum and teaching techniques in undergraduate and postgraduate education must be revamped over time. The recommendations listed below are divided into two categories: Specific and General.

Specific recommendations

A specific recommendation discussed four important suggestions for promoting research culture in India. They are as follows;

1 Capacity building to improve research culture.

2 Fostering a research culture among teachers and students.

3 Specific ways to encourage high-quality research.

4 Academic governance should be reformed to encourage research.

1. Capacity building to improve research culture.

i Classroom pedagogy, curricula, and assessment system: Introducing robust curricula and classroom pedagogy to generate intellectual curiosity and its proper channelisation beginning at the graduate level would be the first step toward a bottom-up capacity-building strategy. A corollary will replace the insufficient evaluation system with an open-ended, problem-driven learning process.

ii Developing Writing Skills, Research Aptitude, and Awareness of Peer Review Culture: To address a high number of students lack of research-writing skills, writing skill training programmes should be created, and theme-based writing should be incorporated into regular assignments. Peer evaluation of class work will introduce students to the peer review culture early on.

iii Promoting academic integrity: It is critical to guarantee that academic misconduct, especially plagiarism in academic writing, is prevented among students, instructors, researchers, and staff. Conducting research responsibly and protecting ethics and academic integrity in scientific research is critical.

iv   ARE Reference List: Any publications in predatory journals or presentations at predatory conferences should not be regarded for academic credit for selection, confirmation, promotion, performance evaluation, scholarship, or academic degrees or recognition in any manner. For all academic reasons, only research articles from journals indexed in the CARE Reference List of Quality Journals should be utilised.

v   Remedial Teaching: The first semester of college and university should be primarily focused on remedial teaching and the development of generic and discipline-specific skills and knowledge required for academic advancement. Teachers should be taught (through HRDCs, TLCs, etc.) to assist such a teaching-learning process in a situation-specific way.

vi   Promoting Vernacular Languages: Given the substantial and increasing vernacularisation of social science education, arousing intellectual curiosity and imparting research tools and techniques can only be accomplished by producing high-quality literature in various Indian languages, including books (mainly textbooks, discipline-specific dictionaries and encyclopaedias) and journals. This necessitates the use of a powerful translation tool.

vii   Exposure to centres of excellence in Science, Social Science, and Humanities to experience the milieu of severe research involvement and contact with researchers.

viii   Short-term workshops to share ideas on specific themes, challenges, or problems to pique students' interest and encourage them to engage in research-related inquiry.

ix   Utilization of Technology and Media Platforms: New technologies and media platforms must be fully and creatively employed to reach out to knowledge seekers inside and outside the official academic framework. Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) that are well-designed and executed might be crucial.

x   Policy Internship: As part of capacity building, students will learn how research impacts policy making through a three-month internship with policy organisations from diverse sectors. Similarly, internships in research institutes and advanced learning centres will expose students to many elements of research in operation.

2. Fostering a research culture among teachers and students.

i   Faculty Recruitment: The UGC must reconsider current processes in faculty recruitment, which make the brightest applicants trained in multidisciplinary fields unsuitable for employment at most universities/colleges. Reviewing the phrasing of university/college adverts for faculty recruitment is critical to ensure that individuals with multidisciplinary backgrounds are not disqualified.

ii   Seed Grant for New Faculties: The UGC may launch a new scheme that would award seed grants for newly recruited faculty in universities/colleges on a competitive basis based on past research experience and the quality of the proposed research project. This system should stand apart from the current minor and significant research programmes.

iii   Sabbatical Leave: The UGC should encourage and support state universities and affiliated colleges in implementing a rigorous but generous programme that provides sabbatical leave to mid-career teachers for research and writing books/monographs that consolidate accumulated actual research knowledge. Mid-career national level sabbatical funding for a year on a competitive basis may be implemented, allowing 50-100 faculty members to conduct research and providing faculty with a chance to build collaborative ties with critical national/international institutions. Such possibilities should be made mandatory in both public and private organisations.

iv   Postdoctoral Fellowships in Social Sciences and Humanities: The committee strongly proposes that at least 100 postdoctoral fellowships in social sciences and humanities be established each year (under Dr.S. Radhakrishnan's fellowship program). This Fellowship programme might be overseen by reputable specialists and independently organised by two or three excellent academics (similar to D. S. Kothari's postdoctoral fellowship programme in sciences). On the basis of thorough peer- review, applications may be received and evaluated online. Fellowships may be given for a term of two years, with the option of being extended for another year, subject to a thorough evaluation. A programme like this will allow for the development of a pool of future social science faculty members.

v   Go Grants for Faculty and Students: Increase the number of grants available for Ph.D. scholars/faculty members to travel to prestigious

international conferences to showcase their research work. This might help to foster a research culture at the institution level (currently, overseas travel grants for sciences/humanities/social sciences are quite scarce). Grant applications should be processed using an efficient online system. To avoid financing for travel to low-quality and predatory conferences, extreme caution should be used.

vi   Annual Faculty/Student Conclave in the Social Sciences and Humanities: The UGC may launch a new initiative to promote an annual conference/conclave for Ph.D. research scholars/Postdoctoral Fellows/Teachers from various disciplines to meet and exchange ideas. Such gatherings should be organised in conjunction with prominent academics who may act as informal mentors in various areas. This is especially crucial in the Social Sciences and Humanities, since, unlike in the Sciences, there are no active professional groups that encourage student engagement.

vii   Fellowships for Ph.D. Scholars for Self-financed/Minimum Financial Assistance on a Competitive Basis: Currently, a small number of students across the country qualify for financial support through the CSIR/UGC-JRF NET test and other and institutional sources. A high majority of Ph.D. students are either underfunded or self-funded. The UGC should consider developing a new programme in which students who have already completed 1 to 2 years of research would be evaluated on a competitive basis for fellowship assistance for 2 to 3 additional years.

viii Teaching Assistantship as Part of the Doctoral Program: „Research researchers who have passed the qualifying test may be invited to engage in the teaching programme for up to 3-4 class hours per week (classes, assisting in laboratory, tutorials and make-up classes)"6.

3.   Specific ways to encourage high-quality research.

i   Establishment of a Social Sciences/Humanities Research Board: The Ministry of Science and Technology provides significant funding for research in the physical and natural sciences in India. In contrast, the government does not sponsor organised research in the social sciences/humanities. The committee suggests that the UGC take the lead in establishing a Social Sciences/Humanities Research Board that would operate autonomously under the umbrella of the UGC and receive a particular financial allocation for this purpose.

Senior professors, national winners, and academics with a track record of high-quality publications in the discipline must serve on this board. Regional representation will be advantageous.

ii   Performance-Based Strengthening of CAS, DSA, and UPE: The committee suggests that the UGC Centre for Advanced Studies (CAS) programme focus on supporting subject-specific groups, whilst the Department of Special Assistance (DSA) can be more broad-based. Historically, these programmes have shown to be quite beneficial in terms of improving the quality of research at a number of universities. Another successful programme of the UGC is Universities with Potential for Excellence (UPE). These initiatives must be maintained and expanded. More cash for hiring high-quality workers may be made available through these programmes. Performance-based improvement of CAS/DSA/UPE programmes will be crucial in improving research quality in previously successful university departments.

iii   Inter-Institutional Collaboration: The committee proposes that the UGC establish a new programme to support important research projects in all fields that entail collaboration efforts between state and central universities/national institutions on the one hand and colleges on the other. Each of these initiatives should be supervised by a mentor. The UGC may form an Empowered Committee to develop rules and carry out a rigorous selection procedure for proposed projects.

4.   Academic governance should be reformed to encourage research.

i   Dean of Research and Development at Universities/Institutions: Every university or institution must select a Dean of Research and Development, who is responsible for overseeing the smooth operation of all externally financed research grants/projects in the institution. The Dean of Research should have the financial power to guarantee that faculty research funding is fully used. Long delays in financial procedures, as well as the appointment of Vice Chancellors, now result in the non-utilization of sanctioned money. It must also be assured that monies collected under research programmes as well as CAS/DSA/UPE programmes are available to researchers and are not used for other university and college costs. The Dean of Research and Development should be a senior member of the faculty with extensive research expertise.

Some general recommendations

1 Academic Leadership and Vice-Chancellor Appointment: The UGC/ MHRD, as well as state governments, must thoroughly evaluate the procedure for appointing Vice Chancellors. Good academic leadership is critical for strengthening the research culture, as well as the quality of Ph.D./M.Phil. degrees. It is also critical to guarantee that prominent academics serve on university governing bodies [syndicate/executive council, for example].

2 Filling University Vacancies: It must be assured that no more than 10% of authorised teaching jobs at publicly financed universities/ colleges stay empty for more than one year.

3 Regional Research Consortiums: The UGC should establish regional research consortiums to assist the following activities:

a Forming research consortiums to ensure contact with colleges, universities, and national institutions.

b Pool resources, equipment, and laboratory space.

c Distribute library materials.

d Faculty exchange between these schools. This might be coordinated by UGC regional centres.

4 Connecting Departments and Colleges to Universities and National Institutions of Importance: „Colleges and departments with research potential must be connected to universities, advanced research institutes, or national institutions".7 Rather of signing MoUs with no specific joint research activity, it is crucial to promote in-house research and improve work quality. Within a few weeks of receiving such an application, a mechanism should be in place to provide merit-based assistance.

5 Launch of a Four-Year Undergraduate Program: Increase the number of institutions offering a four-year undergraduate programme (NEP-2019) with a significant research component to establish a pipeline of high-quality candidates for PhD programmes. In addition, the existing two-year M.A./M.Sc. programmes shall include a research project with a credit requirement of 6-10 credits. Undergraduate programmes that are restricted in scope (for example, in specialist disciplines like Biotechnology or Bioinformatics, etc.) should be discontinued since they give instruction solely in specific subjects. All full-time undergrad programmes must be comprehensive in

scope. Professional/vocational courses that help people find work should be offered separately as Diploma courses.

Conclusion

Quality in research is consistently increasing around the world as a result of the efforts of numerous accrediting organisations established by governments, international rivalry among universities for admissions, and institutional motivation in enhancing quality in the face of limits. Higher education institutions should strive to create new knowledge in addition to offering student-centred quality education. Quality research may be achieved by creating a robust infrastructure for teaching and learning, constructing an industry-oriented student-centric skill-focused curriculum, and using creative and effective pedagogy in training to generate innovators. Students are helped to grasp topics by employing new and effective pedagogy in training, which improves their analytical abilities and creativity, transforming them into innovators. Aside from the aforementioned aspects, involving students in research activities at higher educational institutions by designing research- oriented curriculum, pedagogy, and evaluation policies in the course so that both students and faculty members will be involved in new knowledge creation and their publications, which will automatically increase the institution's research productivity.

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THE NEW NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY (NEP) AS A NEW HURDLE FOR WOMEN IN EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA- A CALL FOR GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN POLICY MAKING

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Abstract

This article reviews the new National Education Policy in India through the lens of gender mainstreaming. The policy raises invisible, divergent impediments in women's higher education. Gender mainstreaming is a process which internationally embraced as a strategy for realising gender equality. It is a policy-making approach which takes into account both men and women. In this research paper, the author attempts to identify the underlying hurdles raised by the new policy in higher education. This study concludes by suggesting that, by establishing a gender mainstreaming approach in higher education, we could combat gender disparities and thereby promote the development of higher education.

Keywords: : National Education Policy, Higher education, Women's education, Gender mainstreaming, Gender inequality.

Introduction

India has changed its 34-year-old national policy on education framed in 1986 with a new NATIONAL EDUCATION POLICY or NEP (2020). Indian Government had appointed 12 member group including K Kasturirangan, as the Chairman, to construct a national educational policy and aid NEP 2020. According to this committee, they framed the New National Education Policy on July 29, 2020, after 34 years. Despite claiming that the new NEP aims to increase the quality of education in different areas of education, new policy still abandons some areas of disparities in India. The Indian government has different policies and campaigns promoting girl child education and development. The effectiveness of such policies and campaigns are below average. In most of the cases, half of the funds were used least. New NEP claims that this policy maintains the quality of education and uplifts it to the level of international education. The challenges raised by the education policy affect the development of women's education. For example, foreign

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universities and foreign direct investment enter the realm of higher education allowed by the new NEP. India already has numerous private universities, colleges, and institutions. This growing privatization affects the accessibility of students from different backgrounds, including rural, BPL, and also minorities and women candidates.

NEP and the minorities and rural people of the country

In recent years India has achieved a remarkable population of more women than men. But India scored particularly low in the category of gender specific education for all. When we consider the new NEP, despite some progressive provisions in the policy, such as Gender Inclusion Fund, there are certain negative implications on educational development. According to the new NEP, the public and private sector partnership will uplift and many higher education institutions become privatized. Hence the education will no longer free and accessible to all. Especially women and girl child from rural areas, and from lower economical background will not afford higher fees of the institution and which may affect girl student's enrolment and the quality of education more. The problem of long travel distance and reluctance of their family to spend money on their girl child education is an example of gender barrier. The new NEP is based on an invisible exclusion and inequality. The examination of new policy and its implications shows a warning sign for tackle gender disparities in women's higher education.

NEP and policy of privatization

Private universities takes lands in cities or nearby such places. Govt. provides farm lands to them. For example in Haryana, RGEC provided farm lands to private educational institution which is actually worth 1 crore but provided only 12 lakhs to the farmers. Foreign institution or companies had done all the supports for this selling. Now this property belongs to some expensive private universities. It is clear from this example that foreign universities are the beneficiaries. Many of us have a blind belief that foreign universities and privatization of educations are the solution for all the problems in education. Foreign universities provides education in developing countries. All these well-known universities in developed countries provides quality of education. Such universities have institutional centres in India but they does not providing equivalent quality in developing countries as well. Does privatization affects women? Indeed it affects the scholarships, enrolment and provisions provided by public educational institutions.

NEP and Reservations

The reservation system provides quota system for historically disadvantaged group's representation in educational institutions and employment sectors. For example, Dalits, minorities, women's quotas, disabled person etc. Public institutions provides reservations and scholarships to different minorities and selected castes and girl students. But privatization stops these kinds of support provided by public institutions. Foreign institutions also lack this chance of minorities. By privatization and increasing the number of foreign institutions in India, India is rejecting the students and citizens from access to these aids for their educational and economic development. The new NEP does not even mentions about 'constitutional reservation'. It is not possible in the foreign institutions on the admission of students and teachers under the law of social justice. So the hope of disabled persons and minorities and women have been rejected. Hence the government let the public institutions to death.

NEP and Digitalization of Education

Higher education should be based on the context of people and nation, its economic, social and cultural background. But new National Education Policy develops the policy for higher education based on the interest of corporate capitalism. It is known for all that majority of Indian population belongs to farmers. Students in rural areas and from lower economic background can't meet the needs of digital learning. For many children higher education is expensive and they dropping out for this reason. Digital learning requires digital gadgets, electricity, internet access and a place to sit. For a developing country, like India it is not easily possible to provide access to all the students all over India. When we have that facility for all? So it is necessary to consider the years of students, their challenges for this changing policy.

The revolution of digitalization is not applicable and access to all students. And these digitalization policies affects the students mind and enslave them to the corporate capitalist system. This leads to the blind belief towards foreign educational institutions. Dalits, Woman, Backward and Minority communities have already been marginalised from education. These changing policies does not change their situation and instead worsen it more.

NEP Through the lens of Gender

Gender mainstreaming is an approach to policy making that considers both men's and women's interests. "Promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective". It helps to ensure the higher quality of policy making and legislation work of policies. It helps to make policies more effective on both men and women, both their needs. Gender mainstreaming works in three levels including, strategies level or policy making level. Gender mainstreaming helps to consider both men and women. Most of our policies are created and designed by men for all genders. It is necessary to implement gender mainstreaming in our policy making to reduce gender disparities. Policies implemented by government should be favourable to both genders. Most of our policies does not designed for different genders.

When we examine the new NEP, it is evident that women and her education is still at risk. There are, of course some progressive provisions and concerns about girl education. But there are certain invisible reactions that leads to exclusion of certain categories of people (girl child, students from minority communities etc.). According to the new policy, many schools become privatized and it will be expensive to all. Low income families might become difficult to meet the education fees of their children. Especially it affects more on girl child. Indian social and cultural structures has been changing. But still girl child finds it difficult to access education. Privatization badly affects lower income and rural people in India. Comparing to a boy child, a girl child experience more issues. National Education Policy maintains girl child education at risk. Even the digitalisation makes no changes in gender barriers of education.

Conclusion

New changed education policy has raised some barriers to girl child. It is hard for family to let their children to study in such a situation. Most of the private educational institutions settled in the locality of cities. So girl from rural areas faces transportation hindrance and high cost of living. Even if the new NEP has an increasing concern in girl education, it still excludes girl education because education is making digitalised and many institutions become privatized. To increase the quality of higher education policy and decrease the gender disparities in educational sector, gender mainstreaming is a necessary strategy to implement in higher education policy making. Gender mainstreaming helps to consider both the genders, its needs and its skills. Hence the policy improves its effectiveness and can

be more supportive to all. Higher educational sector can contribute to the economy and development more if Indian policies ensures the quality and accessibility of education.

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TTRIBAL EXPERIENCES OF POLICY SHIFT IN EDUCATION; CASE STUDIES FROM ATTAPPADY, KERALA

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Abstract

The present paper critically evaluates various policy level shifts and efforts of the successive governments at state and central for higher educational attainment of tribal population. An attempt has been deployed to understand the experiences of the dropped out tribal students in the light of previously mentioned policies and actions for tribal education. The primary data was collected through conducting in-depth interviews with five tribal students who were drop out during their higher studies (college education). "NEP 2020 states that while several programmatic interventions to uplift children from tribal communities are currently in place, special mechanisms need to be made to ensure that children belonging to tribal communities receive the benefits of these interventions." ("Benefits to Tribals Under National Education Policy, 2020") Further, under the aegis of the Ministry of Defense, State Governments may encourage opening NCC wings in their secondary and higher secondary schools, including those found in tribal dominated areas. However, drop out of tribal students from higher education institutions continues with a considerable proportion. Nevertheless, being applauded for the model of development, Kerala is also not doing any substantial work for the educational betterment of tribal students. Using these case studies, we illustrate the mechanism and schemes to address the stigmas, sensitization of teachers and society, access to quality higher education, a national policy on tribal higher education, etc.

Keywords: Tribe, Dropout, Kerala, Education.

Introduction

According to the Oxford Dictionary "A tribe is a group of people in a primitive stage of development acknowledging the authority of a chief and usually regarding themselves as having a common ancestor. Ralph Linton (1955) stated that the tribe is a group that occupies a contiguous territory and having feeling of unity, cultural similarities, we feelings, constant contacts and common community interest. The Indian Constitution

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supplies recognition to the Scheduled Tribes and gives special provisions in political representation, economic and social welfare and development in all aspects. The Scheduled Tribes in India are generally considered as Adivasis, a term which means indigenous people or original inhabitants of the country. While analyzing the socioeconomic and political status of tribes in India, we find that it is low and poor and they are isolated from the mainstream of society. The Scheduled Tribes often experience passive indifference that may take the form of exclusion from social participation, educational opportunities, political empowerment, economic opportunities and access to their own land. All tribal communities are not alike. The tribal communities are different in historical and social conditions.

The Policy Shift in Education

In Kerala, tribes are considered the most marginalized category. Their economic and educational status is quite different from the general population in Kerala. According to the census 2011, Kerala's general literacy rate was 94% while the scheduled tribe's literacy rate was only 75.8% and their dropout rate was significantly high (Census, 2011). Personal factors such as aptitude and state of health, interpersonal factors such as social isolation, rejection by peers; family factors such as parental attitudes; institutional factors such as the atmosphere at school, educational practices, and environmental factors are the reason for the backwardness in the educational status of the tribes. Socio-cultural aspects are the family relationship, community living, celebrations, village conditions, educational background of the parents, economic status, the food habits, agricultural changes, herbal system, building and construction, and all the elements that are connected to Adivasis and children

The first education commission in the post-independence was Radhakrishnan Commission which was commissioned in 1948. It was commissioned under Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan. This commission is also known as University Education Commission which was set up to inquire into the requirements of higher education in India and to address the issues faced by the colleges and universities in the country. This commission suggested the integration of secondary education and higher education by setting up UGC (University Grants Commission). The major recommendations of the commission are the reorganization of university education in the light of the requirements of the country and its tradition.

In 1964 the National Education Commission was set up by the Government of India to examine all aspects of the educational sector in India, to evolve a general pattern of education, and to advise guidelines and

policies for the development of education in India. The chairmanship of the commission was handled by MR. Daulat Singh Kothari, then chairman of the University Grants Commission. So, the commission was popularly known as Kothari Commission. The Kothari commission's report focused on education and national development. The tenancy of the commission was from 1964 to 1966, and the report was submitted by the commission on 29th June 1966. The major recommendations of the commission were to formulate the general principles and guidelines for the development of education from the primary level to the highest and advise the government on a standardized national pattern of education in India and medical and legal studies were excluded from the purview of the commission.

The Kothari Commission (1964-66) examined various aspects of education at all levels and gave a very comprehensive report with full of insight and wisdom. This report became the basis of the National Policy on Education, 1968. With this, a common structure of education (10+2+3) was introduced and implemented by most States over a period of time. In the school curricula, in addition to laying down a common scheme of studies for boys and girls, science and mathematics were incorporated as compulsory subjects, and work experience was assigned a place of importance. A beginning was also made in restructuring courses at the undergraduate level. Centres of advanced studies were set up for post-graduate education and research. Detailed estimates were made to meet the requirements of educated manpower in the country (Pawan Agarwal, 2006).

After the Kothari Commission, Acharya Narendra Deva Committee was set up b the government of India. This committee is concerned with education and its organization in relation to political and constitutional conditions and potentialities of progress. The committee actually surveyed the educational policy of the government, studied the salient facts of the present system of education, examined the cognate problems and the effect of political reforms on the educational progress of the country, pointed out the defects and weakness of the system and made recommendations for its improvement. The report of the committee is submitted to the Majesty's Government in 1929.

The Secondary Education Commission known as Mudaliar Commission was appointed by the government of India. The commission set up for to bring changes in the present education system and make it better for the nation. In 1986, a new National Policy on Education (NEP) was introduced for the special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity, especially for Indian women, ST, and

SC communities. Also, this policy introduced an open university system in order to expand the opportunity of access to higher education with the Indira Gandhi National Open University which had been created in 1985. The major milestones of the National Policy on Education where it is child centered approach in primary education and launched operation blackboard to improve primary schools nationwide.

The first National Education Policy adopted in 1968 has emphasized the need for radical reconstruction of the education policies, improvement of quality of education at all levels, inculcation of scientific temper and focus on moral values. The National Policy of Education formulated in the year 1986 had stipulated revision of policy in every five years. The latest in the series of education policies include revised National Education Policy and Programme of Action in 1992. As a matter of fact, it is to be noted that the Union Human Resource Ministry has formulated 'Draft National Education Policy, 2019' to keep pace with various development in all stages of education.

The Significance of Tribal Concerns in Education Policy Shift

According to the Census 2011, the scheduled tribe population in Kerala constitutes 1.45 % of the total population which is 4,84,839. In the state of Kerala, there are 36 communities listed as scheduled tribes and spread over all the fourteen districts of the State. The district of Palakkad stays the third largest tribal concentrated district of Kerala as 10.1% of the tribes are found here. Scheduled Tribe population of the Palakkad district is 48,972 in which 24,314 are males and 24,658 are females. The Scheduled

Tribes of the district constitute only 1.74 percent to the total population of the district (Census 2011). Government of India implemented various policies and programmes for tribal education even though the socio-economic profile of the tribals is low. The main constituting factor of the socio-economic profile is education and occupation, but they are unable to access the higher education due to distinct reasons. Our system is not giving dominant attention to the higher education of tribals, and they were focusing on the higher secondary and high school level education. For a professional career and for the growth of socio-economic profile of the tribals, the higher education has a pivotal role. The current study focuses on the leading causes of dropouts among the tribals considering new policies and programmes implemented.

NEP 2020 states that several programmatic interventions to uplift children from tribal communities are currently in place, special

mechanisms need to be made to ensure that children belonging to tribal communities receive the benefits of these interventions. However, dropout of tribal students from higher education institutions continues with a considerable proportion. Nevertheless, being applauded for the model of development, Kerala is also not doing any substantial work for the educational betterment of tribal students. Using these case studies, the researcher illustrate the mechanisms and schemes to address the stigmas, sensitization of teachers and society, access to quality higher education, a national policy on tribal higher education, etc. This paper investigates on the causes behind the dropouts among tribal students with a qualitative research approach.

Review of Literature

Bapat (1994) studied tribal education and a well-planned system of education for tribal was suggested to remove the ignorance prevalent among tribes. Education of tribes is seen as one of the most emerging policy issues of contemporary India. The study gave emphasis on the unique set of challenges that the teachers of tribal students face due to the cultural mismatch, which appear primarily from the unique cultural patterns of tribals. The author found progress in tribal education and less drop out among tribal children. Moreover, he suggested type of education for children and adult of tribes. The educational system for them should be based on the current cultural history of the tribes. In the end, a few suggestions are put forward for the improvement of 33 tribal education by the author by focusing mainly on tribal culture. Authorities should focus mainly on their culture. The study found that the issues of tribal students in education is due to their inability to adapt the non-tribal school conditions. The study also reveals that there is a gap between school culture and family culture of children, creating a situation of cultural mismatch, resulting into creating discipline problems, management problems and poor responsiveness of tribal children towards academic activities.

Zacharias (2003) states that a very low cognitive level is the basic handicap of the Kadars in Kerala. Education is the key to human development, as it leads to the creation of awareness of rights, which works as a force against all sorts of exploitation. Despite all governmental efforts, the education level among the Kadars is significantly deficient. It is, therefore, necessary to make available the services of interested and dedicated teachers to impart practical and nature-oriented classes, which suit the occupation and lifestyle of the Kadars. More incentives may be provided to them. Most of the tribal welfare programmes are implemented without proper understanding of the Kadar culture, habits and needs.

The failure of the programmes of agricultural schemes, well for drinking water, electrification with solar lamps, latrine facilities etc. are examples. Cultural habits cannot be changed at once by some schemes. Awareness programmes and suitable training shall change the cultural habits of Kadars that are hindrances to their development gradually. The Government can entrust this duty to genuinely interested voluntary organizations. After the implementation of a welfare programme, the authorities should do the required follow-ups for maintaining its benefits. What we need is, not suggesting new schemes but the effective implementation of the existing schemes.

Abdul Raheem (2011) Studied that education was an essential parameter for inclusive growth in an economy. He suggested that tribal policy had to focus on inclusive rather than divisive growth strategies. The study involves that investing in education plays a key role in meeting the World Bank's social development goals, which support inclusive growth, social cohesion, and accountability in development. For promotion of educational and economic interests of the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes and other weaker sections, the state shall promote with particular care and give importance to the economic interests of the weaker sections of the society which promotes social justice and protect them from all forms of exploitation.

Dipankar Oraw and Daly Toppo (2012) found that the literacy rate of tribe was 8.53% in 1961 and steadily increased to 47.1% in 2001. There has been an overall increase in the enrolment of children belonging to STs. At the primary stage, against an overall increase of 15%, ST enrolment increased by 25%, while that of ST girls increased by 36% against overall increases of 23% from 2000 to 2004. The dropout rate among tribal school children was alarming. Various steps were taken by State Governments to check the number of dropouts, including free distribution of books, scholarships, reimbursement of examination fees; mid-day meals, etc. have had an impact but still fall short. The authors highlighted main causes for this scenario as poverty, contents of the education, inadequate educational institutions and supporting services in tribal areas, absenteeism, medium of instruction and education policy. The tendency was increasing with the increasing involvement of male in socio-economic activities, expansion of education, the emergence of nuclear families. However, in the family, there was huge discrimination among the male and female child about education. The authors suggested that to upgrade the level as well as the standard of education the Government needs to build educational institutions and libraries for rural development

and raises the standard of education. Still in 21st century, Tribal women in West Bengal are marginalized in all spheres including socially, economically, educationally and politically. Despite of various progress and advancement, most of them are completely dependent on cultivation, forest product and haunting etc. Continuous exploitation and domination of mainstream people restrict the tribal women to mix with mainstream society. Low literacy rates among tribal women in this state and in India, continue to show a need for more holistic support for the delivery of high-quality education among these disadvantaged community. Education as a powerful catalyst or change agent can help tribal women to find the right way to their development as well as the development of the nation.

The National Education Policy, 2020 (NEP) is founded on the five guiding pillars of Access, Equity, Quality, Affordability and Accountability. It is prepared for our youth to meet the diverse national and global challenges of the present and the future. One of the fundamental principles of NEP includes, every person is capable of learning regardless of the circumstances of birth or background. But still the scheduled tribes in India are unable to access education at higher secondary level and college level. One of the main causes of college dropout is language and NEP 2020 targets the promotion of Indian Languages, arts and culture. It ensures the preservation, growth, and vibrancy of all Indian languages. Major tasks includes, develop guidelines, textbooks and other material to aid the promotion of Indian languages in the light of multilingualism of India, Children will be encouraged to undertake excursion/ online or e-tourism, have pen pals in link states, learn the language of the link states, etc. under EBSB to have exposure to the diversity, natural resources and rich heritage of India and finally the online repositories of the rich language, arts, music, indigenous textiles/food/sports, culture and ethos, etc. shall be created.

Methods and Materials

An in-depth qualitative study was conducted by the researcher with the objective of studying the policy shift and its impact on the higher education of tribals in Attappdy, Palakkad and understand the major causes and reasons behind the college dropout among tribals in the area. A qualitative study is preferred to uncover the details individually and analyse them with a deeper understanding. The Researcher used interviewing as the technique for data collection and domain analysis method for analysing it.

Results and Discussion

Social Constraints

Three out of five respondents revealed that, one of the primary reasons for dropout was lack of accessibility or distance from college to their residential area and they are not interested to stay in hostels provided by the government for them. Followed by family responsibility, financial problem, lack of interest in studies, lack of college near to their residential area, ignorance of the parents and early marriage. All these reasons are the root cause of the alienation of tribal in education and the dropout. In the case of education status, it is seen that the parents of most respondents are illiterate and unaware of the importance of education. But their children have got at least secondary level education, however, haven't completed graduation after getting admission.

The educational institutions are extremely limited in number and the existing ones are far away from their residential area, so that their children must depend on hostel facilities. The Government is providing them with tuition fee, text book charges and uniform charges including food and accommodation, but majority of the students are not taking higher education very seriously due to a lack of interest in staying in hostels. Another primary reason they told on the discontinuation of their studies is the lack of acceptance from the peer group.

For them, cattle-breeding is the major source of income. Wild resources like honey, firewood, fruits and nuts, vegetables, fish medicinal plants, resins, essences and a range of barks and Fibers are collected and sale in the local market. Only minor number is engaged in government job. Majority of the houses are electrified and constructed by the AHADS (Attappadi Hill Area Development Society) with the aid of Japan. For electricity purpose, they are using battery and solar lamps. Most of the dwelling units are mere huts, some houses built in brick walls and thatched roof with sheets and bamboo. Only a minor number is living in houses with concrete roof. Another major socio-economic problem found is that most of the hamlets lack basic facilities for keeping sanitation and environmental hygiene.

Economic and Livelihood Issues

There is a strong correlation between economic development and the spread of education especially higher education (Holmes, 2008; Fergany, 2000). Education could aid a move from deprivation to development, from dependency to liberation. The education system has acted as a major

channel of individual mobility and social change (Barik, 1997). Barnett (1988) stated financial issue is one of the important problems of the tribals with the inability to access educational services. Five out of five respondents responded about the economic issues they were facing. There is stipend for the tribal students for their studies but for them the travelling expenses are unable to meet. Family responsibility and early marriage is also an important determinant factor to hinder the higher studies. Due to the family responsibility, the tribal students were compelled to go for any jobs available for them to meet the basic need of their family. Each family consist of more than 5 children, so after completing 10th class or 12th grade, they were forced to do jobs like loading materials and other manual wage labour.

Cultural Factors

Srivastava (1981) revealed that the unproductive and traditional type of educational system for the tribals was the cause of the distant attitude of tribal parents towards their children's education. Besides, the lack of necessary facilities and equipment for teaching, and lack of motivation among tribal parents for the education of their children resulted in a high dropout rate. All the respondents were first-generation learners in their families. They were unaware of the job reservation in the government sector for them. Another major issue they revealed about was the early marriage among their community. Two out of five respondents were women, who were dropout of the higher education is due to marital issue. And their parents were having distant attitude towards the higher education of women. Two respondents stated that they got admission in government colleges far away from their residential area. So, their family refused to go to college after going two or three weeks of classes. Along with that the tribal students faced issues of unacceptance among the peer group members, it also affected to dropout. Three respondents said that the institutional behaviour towards them from the college authorities and teachers was satisfied for them but the family responsibility of having a job is the pull factor for them to dropout the higher education. Two respondents joined in the college near to their residential area, however, they couldn't continue due to the frequent absence in class which affected their studies.

Suggestions

◆   Identify developmental gaps in the policies implemented for tribal education and formulate action plans for fostering tribal education.

◆ Increase the number of colleges and higher education institutions near the Attappady area which can improve the accessibility of tribal students.

◆ The government agencies focus were more on high school and higher secondary education of tribals, however, were not much concerned about college-level education. The study suggests to have an emphasis on the severe dropout rate among trial college students.

Conclusion

Still in 21st century the tribal population in Attappady facing educational disparity and significant accessibility issues due to various social constrains and lack of advance change in policy shift. Indian government implemented various policies and welfare programmes for the enhancement of tribal education, but the tribal policy development is not merely based on the needs of tribals. Education as powerful catalyst or change agent can help tribal women to find the right way to their development as well as the development of a nation. Therefore, it is important to think seriously about educational empowerment and inclusive growth of tribal population by ensuring the real needs of tribals. For that, it is important to trial being part of policy development committee and community people especially the educated tribals themselves in the formulation and implementation of programme and policies towards spreading of social equity and education among tribal people.

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