

Flattening Diversity: Educational Planning in India



29-30 May, 2008

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The seminar on diversity and inclusion saw many individuals help in its conceptualisation, planning and execution. We owe a deep debt of gratitude to all of them.

As a part of the organising committee, we would like to thank all those people who took meticulous care to ensure that the things were in order during the seminar. It is surprising to re-learn, every time we undertake a task like this, how many small details have to be taken care of; but the team of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study indeed did a wonderful job.

We also wish to thank the persons who travelled long distances and made time to participate in this seminar. The presence of all of them made the discussions richer and more meaningful. We cannot thank sufficiently the many distinguished persons from all over India, who came to the seminar which was a kind of sangam between those working in education and researchers and policy makers who think about and implement frameworks and issues related to marginalisation.

We must also thank those who helped in transcription of the proceedings of the seminar and those who worked on these transcriptions and brought them into a form which could be put together as a document. Apart from the enthusiastic workers of the Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre, the transcripts were worked on by the contributors as well. Our special thanks are due to Prashant Soni, Jaya Rathore and Rajesh Sen for designing the cover of this volume.

It was a very encouraging experience for the organisations and individuals involved in making the seminar possible. This publication is a joint effort of the Vidya Bhawan Society, Udaipur and Azim Premji University, Bangalore.

We must also thank the IAS as an institution and Dr. Peter D'Souza as a person for planning, organising and hosting the seminar and involving us on this idea right from the beginning. Our thanks are also to Debarishi, Joseph Bara and all the rest of the IAS team who made everything so pleasant for all of us. We are sure there are many more people we have not thanked. We seek their indulgence and thank them for their contribution to the seminar.

**Vimla Ramchandaran
Hriday Kant Dewan**

About Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS), Shimla

The Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS) is a prestigious research institute based in Shimla, India. It was set up by the Ministry of Education, Government of India in 1964 and started functioning on October 20, 1965. In the words of the first Director of the Institute, Professor Niharranjan Ray, the Institute aimed at "providing opportunities for such meeting of minds and commerce of ideas as are likely to extend our horizons of knowledge and wisdom and add new dimensions to our life and thought."

The building that houses the Institute was originally built as a home for Lord Dufferin, Viceroy of India from 1884-1888 and housed all the subsequent Viceroys and Governors Generals of India. After India gained independence, the building was renamed as Rashtrapati Niwas, meant to be used as a summer retreat for the President of India. However, Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, the then President of India, decided to turn it into a centre of higher learning. He believed that it was a waste of public resources to have an estate and a building, which would be used only for 20 days in a year, and so the institution was gifted to the nation.

The 'founding moment' recognized the need to encourage a conversation between explorations in science and technology and exploration in the humanities. The idea was to enable people to come and reflect on the human condition-and this is the beauty of IIAS, Shimla. It is a place where people come not only to explore the empirical world or write policies for the government but also to reflect on the human condition.

Research in humanities, social sciences, natural and life sciences are conducted by the fellows of the institute. From time to time, the Institute also undertakes interdisciplinary research projects on which scholars from different disciplines work as a team.

The Institute also organizes several national level seminars every year on themes of pressing contemporary relevance as well as of fundamental theoretical significance. Frequently, distinguished scholars from abroad are also invited to these seminars. The academic activities of the Institute are backed by interesting cultural and extra curricular activities and celebrations of national events and festivals in befitting manner.

Foreword

India as a country and we as a people of this democratic country have committed ourselves to equity and to providing equitable opportunities for all in our constitution and all policy documents. This implies ensuring that children from all social and economic groups have access to the same facilities and opportunity. The mechanisms to reach to all children have included attempts to set up schools in different locations and ensure some opportunity and motivation through reservations to those considered to be at a disadvantage. There have been also other schemes proposed and implemented to help overcome inequity and 'neutralize distortions of the past'. Yet, social exclusion remains a big issue in education and also in other developmental sectors. This is particularly worrisome when it comes to the health, education and nutrition of children.

It is difficult to talk about equity when we are confronted with a hierarchy of educational institutions - where the more privileged access better facilities. Those coming from relatively privileged families and communities are able to access schools that are better endowed. On the other hand children from extremely deprived communities and families are left to deal with poorly endowed schools. Even though physical distance to school has decreased, the real social distance to good schooling has only increased over the last few decades. The attitudes towards the poor, as well as the weaker castes, have also become more negative. The reasons for these are many and we need to explore them and understand the underpinning assumptions.

In the last decade, the leaning towards liberalization and globalization has further affected policy level commitment towards equitable education. The government appears to be keen to reduce its responsibility and invite greater participation of the market or of the social philanthropic sector. The cost of expenditure per child considered to be acceptable by the government is further squeezed as the hidden subsidy provided to the children who come from relatively better backgrounds increases. Attempts are being made to look for cheaper solutions for the poor. The malfunctioning of the educational system and the inability of the government to invest at the level of ideas as well as finances have led to a situation where there is an increasing feeling that this cannot be corrected. What is worse is that inequalities in the education system seem to reinforce as well as perpetuate social and economic inequality.

The seminar considered the question of diversity in this context. The consultation explored the diversity as it exists in the Indian contexts, along with its levels and textures. The extent of diversity, the consequent needs, expectations and aspirations would have to be articulated and addressed appropriately. The responses to diversity have to be sensitive and nuanced. They cannot be uniform at all sites. Diversity has to be flattened by making appropriately constructed resources available and including the specificity of the human context. It cannot be interpreted as providing same sized, same textured experience to all.

The respect for plurality and diversity, enshrined in the Constitution of India, can only be made possible by resisting and fighting the imposition and hegemony of just one world view.

Opening Remarks

On behalf of the Indian Institute of Advanced Study (IIAS) and the Vidya Bhawan Education Resource Centre (VBERC) of the Vidya Bhawan Society (VBS), Udaipur, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on this wonderful summer morning to Shimla.

This seminar is the last in the series of seminars that we have been involved with, in the last few months. The idea behind organising these seminars was to place the Indian Institute of Advanced Study in the intellectual landscape of India. This is a special institution, an institution which is distinct from universities and other research institutions but at the same time, is deeply connected with what we would technically call 'epistemic communities'.

Owing to such a connection, the Institute must be the pinnacle of aspiration for these communities, a place where people find refuge from the daily exertions of obligations at work; and of the institutions in which people are located. This is what the Institute of Advanced Study was meant to be, from its founding moment. It was established in the year 1965 for free and creative enquiry into the fundamental themes and problems of life and thought.

It is inspiring to imagine that in 1965, when India was facing turbulent times -- what Sally Harrison calls 'dangerous times' -- (the country was recovering from a devastating war, it was facing food insecurity because of uncertainty in the area of agriculture, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru had passed away and national integration was the prime concern), there was a group of people - Shri M.C. Chagla, Dr. Zakir Hussain, Niharranjan Ray and Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan - who could persuade the Government of India, to cede one of the most beautiful and prized historic locations to the intellectual community, to reflect upon the human state.

We felt the need to re-imagine the institution, not because the imagination at the founding moment and during the following four decades was deficient in any way. It is because there is an urgent need to reflect on the complex problems that the changing times have brought; reflection on what a journal calls the 'hard questions of political and social life'.

We have taken a small step towards this goal this year by trying to locate for the institute a particular niche in the intellectual landscape. We attempted to do this by connecting with different epistemic communities and initiating dialogue on a capacious concept which was identified as being one from the public domain, something that is of concern to intellectual workers in India and across the world, is under-theorized, and has sufficient scope for new empirical illustrations and new analytical explorations. 'Diversity' is one such concept that is readily available for this grand exercise. It is a contemporary anxiety that challenges, confronts and undermines all that we have achieved.

Where does this diversity come from and what does it represent? The series of seminars that have been organized so far is an attempt to explore diversity; to inhabit it through thick empirical descriptions and explorations, and fine analytical distinctions, not just by telling stories about diversity in its different forms, but also by exploring ways to improve the concept analytically.

We feel privileged that we have been able to connect with various knowledge communities, a group of scholars, who have been working on this concept individually, and together. The seminar conveners responded to our requests with great generosity making it possible for us to put together eight seminars on 'Diversity' in a short period of four months. To get a bird's eye view on diversity, we have looked at it along three axes: region, domain, and theme.

The first axis of region included two seminars on diversity focusing on the Himalayan region and the Northeast region of India. Various aspects of diversity in these regions such as, cultures, customs, traditions, history and geo-politics were taken up. The seminar on diversity in the North East region of India particularly attempted to explore whether diversity provided a fertile ground for armed insurgencies in the region or whether other reasons such as, lack of access to basic services, disparities within the region, seclusion, poor infrastructure and governance, remoteness, led to use of diversity for the expression of conflict or competition or contestation. The seminar gave us deep insights into how policies and practices of the colonial State produced identities and how these identities are retained by the post-colonial State which became platforms for contestations and competitions.

Diversity was also explored along the axis of domain. A combination of four domains namely, diversity in health practices, celebrating food, the Indian diaspora and the electoral system were covered through four seminars.

The seminar on health practices brought home the point that no one system, either the modern health system or traditional, can actually provide comprehensive health care. Locating the patient in the ecological system can actually help in understanding and providing need-based, appropriate, health services. Presentations were made on Tibetan medicine, Siddha, Ayurveda, Folk medicine, Unani, etc. Through these presentations we discovered the interdependence of these health systems in bringing good health and well being.

The seminar on celebrating food brought out the relationship between food and traditions and the interdependency between food and communities. For example, kabab is a perfect embodiment of diversity in terms of a food product. The dish was invented by medieval Persian soldiers who used their swords to grill meat over open-field fires. It was later on adopted by the Middle East, Turkey and Asia, and is now found worldwide. Kababs in India have their distinct taste which can be credited to the spices native to the sub-continent.

The seminar on Indian diaspora helped us understand how people from different Indian communities left the native land 150 years ago to live in Mauritius, Fiji and West Indies for employment, business and other purposes.

The seminar on diversity and the electoral system showed the role diversity plays in the electoral system from the stage of planning to the outcomes of the elections. We felt that for India, the question of creating a political system which is inclusive and in a sense meets the conditions of diversity is an important one. Hence a seminar was held on the theme of politics and political representation.

After these fruitful and enlightening seminars we hope that the present seminar on diversity in educational planning will go a step further in enhancing our understanding on the topic.

I am particularly grateful to Dr. Vimala Ramachandran and Dr. Hriday Kant Dewan for making this seminar possible. Till now, all the seminars have been, in a sense, anthropocentric. We had envisaged that these eight seminars will tell us about the great human story: how people live, eat, interact, worship what they aim for, etc. The concept may not, perhaps, be used in the same way anymore after these seminars are over.

An eminent Botanist, Prof. Mohan Ram disproves certain assumptions and through a series of lectures suggests that one cannot talk about diversity anthropocentrically any more. It is deeply embedded in nature, our food system. For example, according to him, humans need to understand the secret of a seed - its ability to survive under harsh conditions and its potency to produce an enormous return over a period of time. That is the basis of agriculture.

Hopefully, these seminars will give opportunities for deeper empirical studies and fine analytical distinctions to the larger scholarly community.

Peter D'Souza

Diversity and Equity in Education

Vimala Ramachandran

In the context of education, if we look at the past 60-65 years, it is evident that diversity and equity emerge as two running issues in the debate on education at all levels. This is true both when we talk of primary and middle schools, and when we talk of university or higher education. It is also important to note that in the 1950s, education was, in a way, positioned as a central tool for the realization of the constitutional obligation of equal opportunity and non-discrimination. In fact, if we look at the way education was positioned in the Constitution of India, we find that it was conceived to be a tool that could help overcome some negative aspects that inequality brings; inequality that stems from different kinds of people, living in different kinds of locations. So inequality and diversity are really two sides of the same coin and education itself was positioned as a tool that would enable people to be able to negotiate this world from an equal platform.

It was also hoped that education will enable communities that face the brunt of social discrimination in terms of exclusion or rejection, whether it was based on caste, gender, religion, or even location, to be able to come out of that situation, and enter the 'mainstream' of society. Thus, both the hope and aspirations of India as a new nation, actually hinged on education.

Interestingly, the decade of 1960s was a turning point in the field of education in India. Even though the number of primary schools went up, a very small section of the population had access to schooling: Meaning that democratization of education did not take place actually. People belonging to certain specific social groups, people from extremely poor economic backgrounds, people in remote areas and tribal habitations, people living in the deserts of Rajasthan, did not have access to education.

The expansion of education in real terms happened only after the mid-sixties and with the expansion, the whole issue of quality and the kind of education that people should have, emerged.

As education expanded, different kinds of institutions mushroomed. There were a large number of government schools; but in the late sixties and early seventies the number of private institutions also started increasing. A look at the enrollment pattern indicates that people with a relatively better social and economic status started moving out of the government school system. They started sending their children to private aided schools or to unaided private schools. So, by the seventies, a kind of diversification took place in education when the regular government schools slowly started becoming the preserve of the socially and economically underprivileged within the society.

The sixties were also the period when the great vernacular debate happened. In South India, anti-Hindi agitation and efforts towards reassertion of the local language became quite significant. Slowly, politics of the time got introduced in the government school system and rightly so.

At the same time, the elite, within various communities across the country, abandoned government schools and started preferring private schools because they did not want their children to be educated in their vernacular mother tongue. Thus, the sixties and the early seventies was really a period of churning when it comes to Indian education system.

The impact of this change was that the education system became highly diversified, and unequal. Different layers emerged and the hopes and aspirations that our Constitution or the people who made the Constitution or some of the early thinkers laid on education remained defeated in the process. The school that was supposed to be a

place with a shared experience, where a child could actually meet with people from other communities, castes, religions and speaking other languages, did not remain so. The possibility for children from diverse backgrounds to come together and have a shared educational experience leading to widened horizons was never realized.

Today, if one looks into the state of education system in the rural areas, one finds that by and large, government schools are the preserve of the poor and socially marginalised and most of the so called, forward caste and well off children have actually moved out of government schools. For instance, in many states, it is essentially the Dalit and the tribal communities which are overwhelmingly represented in the government schools.

How has this affected our view and compelled us to look at education? Within this context, how did Government of India, which in 1977 made education a subject under the Concurrent List, act?

You may be aware that till 1977, education was not included in the Concurrent Subject List or the List-III of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India. How did the Government of India go about planning for education once it was included in the Concurrent Subject list?

One finds that in the eighties and nineties, efforts were harnessed towards having a common school system all over the nation so as to ensure social cohesion. There is an attempt to follow a template all through the nation whether it is Chhattisgarh, Jaisalmer, Kargil or the Nicobar Islands: In terms of the school facilities, teacher-student ratios, the kind of support extended to teachers, the curriculum, the expenditure per student, etc. There is no difference at all, even though it is well known that the reality of a child working and living in Kargil is extremely different from the one living in the Nicobar Islands or in Chhattisgarh or one who belongs to a group of new migrants in slums.

For instance, if you take a Delhi slum, the children residing there may be speaking ten different languages but you may find that they are attending the same school. Can we have schools for all the children speaking similar languages in our country?

It is clear that with centralised planning in education, while we paid lip service to diversity and to the richness of the diversity in the country, we disregarded this very concept in our educational planning. It was acknowledged that everybody should get the same kind of education or should be able to go to the same kind of schools, but no analysis was done in terms of the actual requirements for this to happen.

What do we have on the ground today as a result of this inadequate planning exercise? We have different types of schools, catering to different categories of people, both within the Government system and in the private and the aided sector.

The education system is thus reinforcing, even exacerbating inequalities prevalent in the society. So children speaking a language at home which is different from the language or the medium of instruction at school are at a real disadvantage.

The child may go through two years of non-comprehension especially if s/he belongs to a non-literate family with nobody in the house to help her/him negotiate the world between home language and the language being taught in school.

Secondly, we have a linear system of education which is divided into different levels starting from pre-primary, primary, elementary, and secondary education, to undergraduate and postgraduate level studies. There are very few rivulets which branch out from this system. There are the vocational streams such as the Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) but they are really an apology. They were not designed for being real choices from the go.

Let us look at the most glaring example of West Bengal. For every seven primary schools, there is one upper primary school. This means, by design, over 50% of children who go through primary have

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no upper primary school to go to. There are just no schools! Children, who complete class VIII and drop out, have no opportunity to pursue education in another stream anywhere in the country.

Children who finish class X and do not want to study classes XI and XII have no educational opportunities except, may be, if you want to get into something like Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANM) Training course or Anganwadi Worker Training Course, etc. There are very few choices. We are all well aware of the situation faced by those who pass class XII in terms of further opportunities.

So, we have an education system with an inbuilt mechanism for pushing out people at different stages. Let us think about who are the people that are getting pushed out: People who went to schools where they did not learn, people who come from first generation literate families, people who come from communities where they do not speak the language which is dominant in that given area. These are the kinds of young people who are pushed out of the education system. We do not have multiple exit points nor do we have multiple entry points. What happens, if a child drops out in class VIII and works somewhere and wants to come back and continue her education at the age of twenty? There is no way in which she can re-enter the mainstream education system for any kind of education at all. So, that is the second aspect of education: A very rigid, linear model of the Indian Education System.

And the third very important issue that frames the entire education debate is of language. Sadly, whether it is at the national level or at the village level, everybody wants English today. It is shocking that Jammu and Kashmir has made English the medium of instruction in all its schools. This is when there are not enough teachers to teach English and the teachers themselves do not know the language well.

In Kerala, I am told that every year almost 10-12 per cent of children are abandoning the

government school system and entering the private unaided sector, only because they want to gain access to English medium education. On the other hand, we have the whole politics of language in this country which is pushing a particular kind of trajectory of education. We need to consider what happens when the child who needs to be taught in her own mother tongue, in the beginning, so that she is able to learn and understand to develop those early concepts, is put into a classroom, where she does not even understand the language used. So, language is one of the most important arenas of debate now in the education scenario.

I can go on and list different textures of diversity and how they create or reinforce certain kinds of inequalities. But, we are well aware of the textures of inequality that prevail and we are also quite aware of how planning for education is done.

We have different types of schools, catering to different categories of people, both within the Government system and in the private and the aided sector. The Education System is thus reinforcing, even exacerbating, inequalities prevalent in the society.

I would like to highlight two issues. During the several field visits that I have conducted across the country in the course of my work, various people have asked me uncomfortable questions about equity. In fact, most

recently in Karnataka, there was a group of young Dalit boys who brought up this issue. They said, if none of us can even pass VIII standard with any degree of competence, what is this whole reservation debate about? Don't you think this entire reservation debate is misplaced? First and foremost, we need to be given good quality education at the school level. Only then can we even hope to use any kind of reservations that lie ahead.

At one level, there is this politics of reservations taking over while at a very fundamental level people are not provided equal opportunity for quality education. What is the point of a tribal child getting 'X' percentage reservation in an IIM, when a very miniscule percentage of tribal children are even able to think of attempting the entrance examination? This is an area that we need to address.

When we talk in terms of equality and inequality in diversity, there has to be some basic minimum commonly acceptable quality of education that must be available to all. That does not mean we have the same kind of schools. Obviously the kind of investments that you will require to run a school or a complex of schools providing good quality education in a tribal area, with small habitations would be very high. These investments would be very different from the investments in, say Delhi. This is another area that can be debated. Here too, there are some different textures.

For instance, in Tamil Nadu, the children who attend the Adi Dravida Welfare Board Schools do not even have the basic support system which regular government school systems have. The teachers do not get adequate training; they do not have the same kind of infrastructure. So, special schools have been initiated for Adi Dravidas but these schools are nowhere close to even the regular government

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schools in terms of quality. On the other hand, there have been a lot of discussions about how much percentage should be reserved for Adi Dravidas at different levels in the educational hierarchy.

Yet another area concerns the teachers. Is it just a uniform group called teachers? If a person is required to teach in a very difficult terrain, in an area with multiple spoken languages, then the kind of training and support that s/he requires is enormous. We need different kinds of teacher preparation programmes. But what we have is one uniform model of teacher preparation in this

country. The people who actually get trained and become teachers in educational institutions, have no understanding of all this background. There has been no planning as to what kind of teachers is needed at what level and in what areas. What is it that they should be sensitive

towards? These are the two areas that have occupied my mind, primarily because of my work.

Role and Purpose of Education in Society

H.K. Dewan

I feel that there are several issues that are centered around the language (English) itself that we are using at the moment. One of the basic issues that we need to talk about is, why is it important to think about diversity? What are the cogent ways to articulate the purpose of education for a society as diverse as the Indian society? I don't think we have examined this issue in sufficient detail.

What kind of education

One alternative that we had was Gandhi's basic education. Gandhi ji's educational vision encompassed being democratic and

accommodative of diversity. He believed in improving children's self through working with hands on different skills, also keeping in view their language, their background, their experience, upbringing and aspirations. Though many individuals and institutions fermenting for independence had thought about it, the dimensions of this idea were not explored to the extent that it should have been. This is one area we need to think about.

The other area is the idea of mainstreaming in the context of education. Mainstreaming inherently includes the idea of flattening, because it implies

putting everybody or everything into one basket. So, in a sense, we can compare it with a rivulet which is compelled to lose its own characteristics and qualities to become a part of the main stream. It is important to understand the extent to which one can go when one talks of mainstreaming. It is also very important to consider the implications of bringing children into the mainstream education.

The Kothari Commission (1964) advocated establishment of a Common School System for all children irrespective of their class, caste, religious or linguistic background so as to build a pluralistic Indian society. The school, it was felt, should embody a space where children from different backgrounds are able to share their experiences with each other, learn from these experiences and appreciate the same. Thus, a coherent culture and world view would develop. It will also preserve diversity and make individuals conscious and sensitive towards the needs and concerns of others. The hope was the emergence of a society which was aware of itself and which represented a mixture of the various plural dimensions that existed in it.

However, this did not happen, partly because one of the major ends that education served, unfortunately, was that of being a sieve. It has functioned to identify those who will occupy positions of power, economically, socially and now politically. In such a context, we need to ask ourselves how the question of purpose of education should be addressed considering that an economic disparity exists between individuals who can and cannot hope to get a white-collared job.

The gap between the person who can get a white collared job and the person who cannot is a frightening one. One makes all possible efforts to be picked up and selected in the race for survival and in the process pushes others out consciously or sub-consciously. We also know that very few eventually succeed in this race.

The entire issue of reservation also needs to be placed in the context of our education system. The functionaries in the system work with an assumption that there is virtually no purpose of educating a child who is unable to come up to a

level where s/he can take higher education or become a scientist or a doctor or an engineer or occupy some white-collared job.

There is a lack of understanding at all levels that a society should comprise a variety of people and professions. Universal education does not imply that everyone will be able to secure a white collar job. So if the system works with an understanding that the only end of education is to procure such jobs, it acts proactively to push out the majority. This majority could have stayed on to learn and become independent learners, but the system does not support such people. This issue needs to be addressed in a serious way.

Curricular Choices

We also need to consider the ways, in which curricular choices can reflect the diversity that the country has. This is probably an area in which we have not done much work. At best, we have discussed and adopted ways of teaching children mathematics or language differently, but have not really addressed the questions: Can education for different categories of children be imparted differently? Is it possible to respect each of these different categories of children and the children taking different types of education equally?

Unless we are able to do this, the domination of middle class in education will continue. For example, parents having a transferrable job have always been worried whether their child would get exactly the same kind of school and would be able to study the same kind of content in the new city/state they move to.

In an effort to solve this problem, the Human Resource Ministry and the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has introduced a common syllabus all over India and this has forced all States to adopt the pattern put forth. The Central Schools ensure a unified syllabus and educational calendar throughout the country. So, this pressure of movement which should have ideally encouraged diversity, is leading to a situation where cultural and educational diversity is threatened.

We must remember that even in the 1940s, there was a debate between people who thought that modern education - which is education for

rationality - came with the baggage of undermining the knowledge systems of the villages and those who disagreed with this idea.

If you read some of the papers of Marjorie Sykes and her colleagues from the Hindustani Talim Sangh and other groups, you will find that they talked about Nai Talim - which involved a good deal of unlearning. They believed that a villager is extremely knowledgeable, much more than an average city dweller. There were the others who felt that villagers, being illiterate and uneducated, are backward and superstitious; and they needed to be exposed to values, ethics, so that they could get rid of the prejudice and superstition.

So, there were, and still are, these two positions: That the villagers need to be educated and the other that the villagers are very knowledgeable and it is the city dwellers that need modern education. There has however been no dialogue between people holding these two positions. The absence of dialogue meant that the education system lost an opportunity to learn from what the villagers knew and it has been unable to incorporate that knowledge into some kind of a discipline which could be taught in schools. The education system lost an opportunity to respect the villager - the major client of the school system - and lost its purpose for them to become embroiled in sustaining itself and thus deprived the underprivileged.

Schools: Negotiating a difficult terrain

Another important issue is that of organization in the schools. The school is structured in a manner that is unfriendly to those who are powerless, who are ranked low in terms of culture, social status or the economy. Some discriminatory messages are conveyed very subtly and unconsciously to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe (SC/ST) children. Let me share an example. In most of the teacher training colleges, one finds idols of Saraswati (the goddess of education) in the assembly hall and generally every teacher training session begins with a Saraswati Vandana (prayer). Have we ever thought about or tried to understand how much of flattening of diversity present in the country is represented by that one symbol and that one song? In most schools when a teacher says: Clean the

room with this broomstick, s/he invariably points to one particular child or category of children. It does not even occur to the teacher that the child she has chosen belongs to a caste or category, the members of which even according to the society in general are good only for scavenging and cleaning. That child will never be asked to bring water for others because people generally do not consume what is served by their hands. If you visit any school or college, it is always the girls who will make and serve tea. I think there is a deplorable insensitivity in our school system towards what we expect our children to do. Many people justify the status-quo in the name of diversity saying every one is doing her/his duty and this sustains diversity. They would say that diversity would be lost if all children are assigned the same tasks to do. This is not respecting diversity. This is preserving inequality and encouraging discrimination. If we really wish to preserve diversity, we need to think seriously about the practices that are valuable and the ones which we need to be careful about. This particular example is perhaps stark and obvious but others can be far more subtle and may require careful thought and analysis. I don't think we have thought about it seriously. Neither about school organization nor about any other related issue. This is yet another challenge before us.

In every educational discourse there is a need for negotiation and for that, it is important to understand the underlying assumptions. For example, nature encourages diversity; it helps in preserving and promoting diversity and ensures continuity. Therefore, for any society to preserve itself, diversity is necessary. However, the diversity in nature also implies dominance of the superior and exclusion of the inferior and natural selection; but in education we do not want to encourage too much of that. So how do we negotiate?

The difficulty in negotiation is compounded because of the inadequate analysis of the role of education and its purpose in the society, and the systemic issues in the school itself. Let us take the example of 'belief'. What does it mean to be secular? Sometimes it is understood to be without God: I am an atheist; I don't need a God. But secularism can also be defined as having faith in God. Secularism need not be seen in terms of the absence

of a God or Gods. It is not adequate to reflect on what a principle is. It is important to consider diverse interpretations which can survive together and can benefit the institution in terms of learning from each other.

One of the things we can fight for is the removal of the symbols which promote flattening of diversities. But again, it is an extremely difficult task to remove the symbols of compelling ideas or ideals of the powerful. The most dominant symbol for education in this country seems to be the Saraswati idol and the morning prayer, which is essentially a Hindu ritual. We have organised many teacher training programmes and on different occasions, we have found that participants express their astonishment that we do not have a prayer at the beginning of the day. They say, "What kind of people you are? You start the training without a prayer." They have problems with other issues also but they don't say anything about them. We need to think how we can assimilate diverse cultural patterns into our school system, rather than replacing them by one prayer. There is a need for people to be together, share with each other and feel each other's presence. You will notice that all government ceremonial programmes start with garlanding, prayers and breaking a coconut. I am not sure how many cultures of India actually have that practice. But still, this has become an accepted norm for any function which is of importance. They make very important contributions to how a person who is frail in the system will be looked upon. For all of us, the aspiration is to move up and in some cultures, to move up is to perform a Saraswati Pooja or break a dehusked coconut. But if to move up is to dance like Daler Mehndi (a popular musician who contributed to mainstreaming of Bhangra in the popular Indian musical space), then the cultural forms of rural areas also start looking at Daler Mehndi as an icon of culture. Thus, the diversity that we are talking about in education gets inputs from culture, social forms, etc.

Economics of resources

The last but important issue is that of economics. The Shri Ram Foundation (SRF) School charges Rs. 80,000/- per child as fees and it is not a

boarding school; it is a day school. They do not make a profit. According to the Government of India, the cost of sending a child to school - say a child living in Kotra area of Udaipur district, Rajasthan is about Rs. 1500/-.

The question we need to ask ourselves is how can Rs. 1500/-, that the Government of India deems appropriate, be compared with Rs. 80,000/- that SRF charges? What about the expenditure that is made at home in terms of support or at a Non Formal Education Centre?

We therefore need to understand the issue of equity that is involved here. The policy of demarcating Rs.1500/- per child in an alternate school and a State Government one in comparison gives the impression that we run expensive schools. Expensive because, the annual expenditure per child is Rs.12,000/- or more. This implies that since we spend more, we need to reduce the expenditure ratio and therefore, the need to increase the number of children in a classroom to 70. The school is formally provided an additional class section and teacher when more than 70 children get enrolled. This, then, implies that no child gets to actually talk to the teacher.

Thus children from different cultures, coming to the school, are treated as a box and the same module is being implemented across the country regardless of children's backgrounds, their needs and their unique personalities. It is also not acknowledged that material and human resources are available for thinking, discussing, reviewing and defining practices which can change the school culture to cater to diversity.

The question of resources also needs to be considered with an understanding of the disparity in opportunity. We are talking about reducing some disparity, which is economic and celebrating some diversity, which refers to fostering the development of more inclusive ways of working and having respect for each other.

Conclusion

The school needs to be able to engage with the knowledge that the child brings in. It should be able to talk about what the child knows. But sadly, the school only talks about what an urban child knows. As a result of this, a child who comes in

from Kotra village instead of being helped to gain, is at a huge disadvantage. So, the three axes that we need to think about are therefore as follows: One is the issue of what is worth knowing, what is the curriculum and how is it going to be decided? Can it include some things that bring in the cultural and specific requirements and experiences of the child coming to the school?

The second is the issue of organization: How is the school formed and organized; how are the relationships in school organized; how is the work distributed among children in school, etc. The concept of Basic Education showed a direction where everyone was supposed to be involved in doing something about what they needed for

themselves. That, in a way, showed a direction of both form as well as what children need to learn. The attitude of the people who manage the education system at the lower as well as the higher level and their understanding of the purpose of education are also crucial and need to be examined.

The third part is the economics. How should the cost of education per child be calculated keeping in view the fact that there are children from diverse backgrounds with diverse experiences. More human and material resources may be required to cater to this diversity. The question is how do we incorporate all these issues so that they guide educational planning?

Summing up

Harsh Sethi: There are, no doubt, larger questions about diversity, inequality, etc. Much has been said about how nature promotes and respects diversity and also the notion of hierarchy. We need to decide whether the worry is about the existence of hierarchy or about the fact that hierarchy gets stabilized in a certain way.

There is a general question which seems to have emerged and that is: What is the acceptable level of diversity that any system can accommodate? Can we imagine things which are constructed differently but respected equally? I think that is a challenging, philosophical and ethical demand on any one - to function within the same system more pragmatically. When you have an extremely diverse population and you want to address its educational specificities, can those people (who have the experience of designing educational systems) design a different system for different sections of the society? When you design different things, do you design them within the same apparatus or a different one? Should there be separate schools for tribal children or should they be part of the same general school? Each of them has been tried with varying levels of activity and has had very different kinds of implications for society.

Finally, there is the consistent debate which continues in the field of education for the past 30-

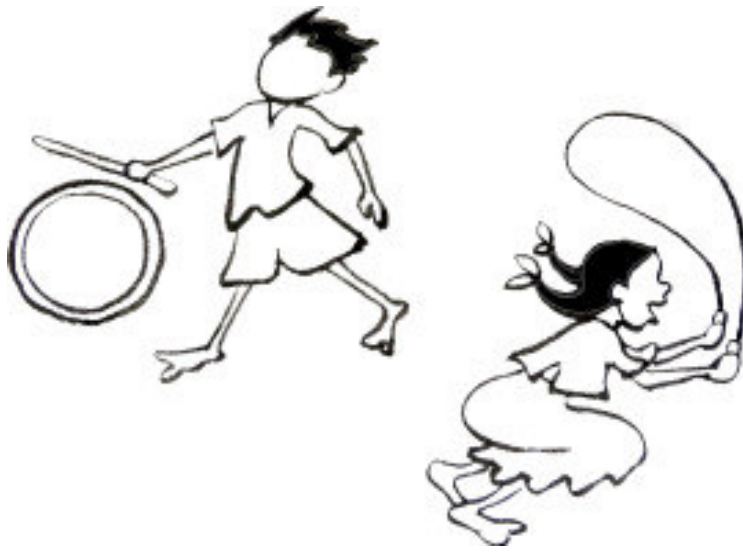
35 years - that related to the pressure of the market and the educational pedagogies. The people seem to be foot voting. They say, you want us to learn in our mother tongue, but we don't; you want us to retain a set of skills, but we don't; you want us to be different in a way which you think is exotic, but that is unacceptable to us. We want to be like you. You are telling us, we should not be competitive, but that is exactly the way we can acquire power.

The word 'diversity' that we talk about encapsulates not just positive virtues that we all seem to be foregrounding as desirable, but also a range of negative attributes which we would like to avoid. I say this because, along with the word diversity, we have constantly used words like discrimination, exclusion, differentiation, etc.

Language, social background are one of the several kinds of educational enterprises through which the business of education-teaching and learning is being transacted. But a world examination system, certification, etc., builds a huge pressure towards flattening out and having commonly recognized codes through which people could be ranked in an order. One of the pressures which come from reducing the kind of diversity both in the transaction of education and in the evaluation of outcomes is related very specifically to the kind of evaluation systems that we have.

Finally, we have the issue concerning norms/ laws. A particular educational enterprise maybe constrained not just by Constitutional obligations but by the constant fear that it may be taken to court because it is not following a given norm which has been upheld in the conventional understanding of law. This is particularly true of universities, where, for instance, we keep on talking about the need for having interviews with candidates. These are however seen as keeping too many avenues open to the management of the educational enterprise.

These issues are related to the planning of education and are of central concern to many people here who have been working to improve the situation. It is clear that whatever outcomes we are getting out of different kinds of educational enterprises are not precisely the kind of outcomes that we had imagined or have been working towards.



Why We Need Schools

Ganesh Devy

In my understanding, school is not the agency, either to maintain, perpetuate, flatten or reduce diversity at any time in history, anywhere in the world. As I understand, diversity is a product of a long historical legacy. The longer the legacy in a given society, the greater is the diversity because it is a product of longer histories of confrontations, collaborations, negotiations, understandings and compromises between communities, life styles, economies and so on.

To take a common sense view, one can ask if there was diversity in India before a nation-wide formal education system, as we understand now, came into existence. The answer is - yes. However, if we ask whether there is diversity in India today and during the intervening period of, say, Macaulay till today, whether the diversity has softened, reduced, amalgamated then the answer is clearly - no.

Therefore, I personally feel that formal schooling and diversity do not have a 100 per cent direct correspondence. There may be tangential links and it will be interesting to read those links, because they will matter to a great extent when the question of diversity is being considered. Much to the displeasure of some, I would like to state that no other species of animals undergo formal education. I do not see any other animal sending its young ones to others for getting tutored on how to reproduce, gather food, distribute it, build shelters, etc. This, to my mind is faulty analysis and going by this logic, education is a useless system. However, its presence cannot be denied and one cannot wish it away. It exists, according to my understanding, because a child agrees to cooperate with the parents in allowing them to carry out their economic activities in such a way that the job of providing affection and care

to the child could be outsourced to teachers. If you observe, this is precisely why the schooling hours in cities tally with the working hours of the parents.

If we go back to the Chartism Movement (British working-class movement for parliamentary reform 1838-48), we find that in response to the upsurge in the proletarian struggle, the parliament was compelled to pass a bill establishing a ten-hour workday. So in the history of schools in Britain you have ten hours schooling, except on May Day when it was eight hours. The same legacy continues in our villages even today although parents do not want to outsource the job of giving

affection to the children to anyone. The tribal children I work with are actually given only three or four hours of schooling and it is quite adequate for them.

The nature of the livelihood pattern of the parents will reflect in the schooling hours and the schooling needs of the child.

What I am trying to say is, school is an expression of the economy and the economic labor of a given society and planning for schooling independent of diversity in livelihoods will not work anywhere. The nature of the livelihood pattern of the parents will reflect in the schooling hours and the schooling needs of the child. So even if it is, as mentioned earlier, an unnecessary system, education becomes necessary because a human-being is an economic being and the hours of schooling will have to be commensurate with the working hours of the parents. School is a child's cooperation in the economic activities of the parents and nothing more. Even after school, that function takes a full-fledged form. Therefore, the syllabus and the curriculum that we teach in schools need to be constructed accordingly.

I conducted an experiment with 60 children. I thought that I would allow the parents to look after the children and reduce teaching and with it

the importance of script completely, because scripts are not necessary for knowledge in my opinion. I am more concerned about knowledge and not scripts. Schools claim to teach languages to children. Two or three years are spent on forcing the child to recognise the characters in a script. However, it is well known that a child acquires the complexities of language even before entering school and does not necessarily need to attend a school to learn a language. Thus, the issue of language teaching, besides that of the medium of instruction, is one which needs to be discussed.

I would like to conclude by saying that in the first 50 years of the 20th century, various social reformers in India thought about the 'why' of education whereas after Independence, we focused more on the 'how' and

'what' of education. In a place like the Indian Institute of Advanced Study, even if it may prove non-productive, there is no harm in returning to the 'why' of education, because it has been claimed by some that knowledge produced, used and consumed in this country is alien; it is the historical residue of Western knowledge. It is no wonder that the university systems have more or less failed in contributing significantly to the society and schools are at the base of the pyramid of education. Therefore, we will have to look at what we are doing with knowledge in schools and why we are educating children at all. We castigate the illiterates as non-knowledgeable persons in this country. The challenge before our country is how to spread literacy together with knowledge rather than literacy together with hollow education.

Comments

Amit Kaushik: I would like to make three observations; it is important when we consider diversity and education, to go back to the question of what the purpose of education is. What is it that we as a country expect? Answering this question will perhaps give us some pointers to the manner in which some of these issues could be addressed. For example, I recently attended a Conference on Literacy which covered 30 countries in Europe including the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries. The entire discussion during this conference focused on the people who are not ready for the Knowledge Society. So, their definition of who is literate and who is not is related more to the individual's ability to engage with the Knowledge Society that they want Europe to be, as opposed to the kind of basic issues that we, in other countries, have to deal with, in terms of whether a person is ready to read and write.

The question about knowledge vis-à-vis or versus education is one which perhaps needs to be thought about. I do not hold brief for the private sector, even though I work for the private sector at the moment, but I think it would be appropriate to enter a caveat here when we talk about the growth of private schools. There are something like one million schools in this country, of which about 60,000 are private schools. About 20,000 of these

are the high end private schools that I represent. So when we talk about what the private sector can do to address diversity in the school, it is important to remember the numbers. It seems that it will be necessary to look at the government school system, in terms of what they can or cannot do to address the issues of diversity.

Finally, at the risk of being politically incorrect, we should try to answer the question: Do those whom we consider under-privileged want the diversity to be preserved? We seem to be approaching the issue with the assumption that diversity should be preserved and that we need to address it in all its forms. However, those who we consider underprivileged are not actually looking at this as something that they want to keep. They want to move, for want of a better world, up; they want to move away from where they are. If that is the case, how far are we correct in saying that we should be looking at the preservation of diversity. Kancha Ilaiah, who is a Dalit rights campaigner and writer, is someone who has said on record that a pre-requisite for the removal of reservations for Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe or Dalit people is that everybody must receive English language education of the same standard as the middle-class in India; that is, English must be the medium of instruction.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) is engaging with the Government of India (GOI) and look at the possibility of public-private partnerships for running secondary schools. We were thinking in terms of what kind of a model school could be created. The question that arose was that if the model school begins from Class IX and we want it to be a high quality school, then it is clear that not only would English be required to be taught as a language but it would have to be the medium of instruction. This was necessary because eventually the product of these so-called model schools should be able to engage with the wide world. The CII is approaching it from a marketability point of view so that the product of the model school is marketable, meaning that s/he should be of value in the job market. And it turns out that in order for that to happen, English is an essential pre-requisite.

School does perpetuate discrimination, but school is also the only place where, probably, processes of social change can be initiated at a small level.

But then, there is disconnect here. If you start a school which is English medium at the level of Class IX, then a child, who has not studied in English medium but in some other language till the elementary stage, will have great trouble adjusting. We then looked at whether we could start English in school from Class V or Class VI instead of Class IX and the same issue came up, because if a child goes through primary school up to Class V in the vernacular language or in the mother tongue, then adjustment or switching over to an English medium school at the class VI level is again difficult. Then it was felt important to look at ways in which that can be supported. So, this whole business of how to go about "addressing diversity" needs to be looked at from some of these perspectives as well.

Rama Kant Agnihotri: I would like to put on record one thing: We need not and should not look at diversity or variability or heterogeneity of any kind, as an object of wonder. We keep doing this all the time. We behave as if homogeneity, monolinguality were the norm. The truth is absolutely to the contrary. History and the world is a witness to that, not just India.

To me, diversity of any kind, whether linguistic, cultural or geographical or any other is constitutive of being human. It is not an additional cosmetic sort of thing that we can put on. I quite agree that we do not need schools to sustain diversity but we need schools for a variety of other things and all those other things will not take place in a vacuum. They will take place in a social space, which is full of diversity.

We need to keep this in view and continue to fight against any form of exploitation and discrimination. The school does perpetuate hierarchy. School does perpetuate discrimination, but school is also the only place, where probably processes of social change can be initiated at a small level. There may not be significant changes, but there is evidence in history that social and political movements have started from places of education and this can

happen if we know how to respect diversity and multilinguality. We do need the education system to promote and transmit different kinds of knowledge systems.

I would particularly like to focus on two issues. One issue is about the teachers and the other about the local systems of knowledge. Both are very central in the domain of education and both these issues are located in multilinguality in a very significant way.

I very strongly disagree with this whole business of treating everything in education and language and in knowledge systems as a marketable product and evaluating it, in that kind of paradigm. Even to look at English from that kind of perspective is to completely forget what happened to Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, Persian and Arabic. If one does not understand that, then one cannot understand what is likely to happen to English. This is not to say that there is no need for English education, but I completely disagree that everything, the total education system, all our languages, cultures and diversities should be evaluated in the matrix of English. We have inbuilt mechanisms in our system that perpetuate discrimination and we need to fight those out. I think those are the central issues.

Defining Diversity

Peter D'Souza

We often start with very valid reflections on the issue of education but the positions that we take are again the same positions that we have taken for a very long time. And, there has been no change in those positions. That is a point of worry for me. Why aren't our positions changing? I feel that Kancha Illiah should speak for himself, rather than for the Dalits. So, it is really a question of moral responsibility as to who can speak for whom, the representation question, and on what ground.

One can claim that a certain pattern of education is good for a certain community or gender, etc. But we need to think about what is valid normatively and what is valid on the ground. Before we even start the discourse, we need to ask this moral question. Another question is related to achieving some degree of precision in the concepts we are using. Can you really use the terms diversity, discrimination, exclusion, and differentiation, in the same way, or is there a nuanced difference between them?

For example, diversity and differentiation could be same or they could be different. If you take the historical trajectory or the trajectory of development, the concept of diversity is actually changing. I could also say diversity is traditional and therefore, it should be preserved. Do you want differentiation in education so as to achieve utility and development of the society? Are we talking about a diversity that is inbuilt into differentiation, which is then feeding into the development of a society? Are we talking about it as a very pragmatic utility diversity, leading to development? So, one has to be skeptical; we already have enough language of 'unity in diversity' which is ultimately building a notion of having a developed nation.

One has to be very careful while laying down the map of the concept under consideration. The nuance of the concept is very important or else one would start, in a very a historical sense, with celebrating diversity which has been handed down to us for centuries together. It appears

therefore, that the given diversity is one which is different from the achieved or assigned, acquired or ascribed diversity. Now, if you go with the given, then you have a very bright chance of lapsing into this biocentric egalitarianism of the ecologist. Eventually then, there is no difference between a human being and a plant. So, one has to assign equal respect to every organic thing that exists in ecology and environmental system. Is that what you want to achieve? If so then there is no purpose of philosophy and thinking, because philosophy and thinking is the conscious attempt to differentiate oneself from nature to culture. You have already travelled quite a distance in the journey from nature to culture.

If you have achieved that kind of differentiation in the realm of culture, do you want to go back and achieve this biocentric diversity? That is a point. I am different from an animal here. Why not? I respect animals but I am different from them, for the simple reason that I have a reflective capacity, a sense of aesthetics to arrange things.

It is crucial to check the meaning of the concept of diversity, even in education. Just as we tend to commit the serious mistake of considering English as a marketable language, we also need to think, what happens to the parents of the Dalit or tribal children who have sent their wards to English schools. Those people, who are suggesting this kind of a Macaulian celebration of 150 years, should ask this question to themselves: On what ground are you celebrating Macaulay?

The moral question of why you are suggesting that particular model to some community needs to be answered. Diversity should be discussed only in terms of the possible equality, not the absolute equality. If we talk in terms of absolute equality we will end up with an anthropological revolution. The Hungarian Philosopher Agnes Heller has asked, "Is it possible to achieve that anthropological revolution, in which everything is flattened?" I think it is impossible, because in terms of size, color and body, everything is different, diverse.

Thus, empirical diversity and the normative diversities are two important things. And then there is a debate about tradition and modernity. I respect the position of really asking those people, the tribals for example, about their aspirations; do they want to remain in that particular kind of idyllic conditions or do they want to move away from there? If you ask them this question, the answers will positively be radically different. Let us take the example of Bhima Shankar, a tribal place in Tasgaon block, Pune. Primarily the

Mahadev Koli tribe (a superior tribe) resides there but the Kolis, Thakurs and some others want to come up from the valley to Bhima Shankar, a modern place, and want to be seen and heard. They want to become visible. So, why should they be treated differently? This is a valid question, but modernity should not be uniform modernity. Therefore, I will caution seriously, before I go ahead and suggest English and the market as the only solution to the problem.

Comments

Ashish Saxena: Firstly, I would like to suggest that we see the school as an institution where the secondary level formal socialization process of a child takes place and appreciate the efforts that schools make to help accommodate children in society so that they become responsible citizens of the nation. Secondly, to me, the issue of flattening is a little coercive in a sense. We can see things in a different way - say, in terms of accommodation.

Thirdly, we need to be clear about the term 'education'. Are we talking about education in terms of instrumental education with a certain purpose? Or are we trying to talk about education in terms of moral and other issues? Another thing is how do we treat the idea of diversity? What type of diversity are we talking about? Sometimes we say we have diversity within diversity. For example, we talk about the differences among the SCs or STs. In terms of regions, we have sub-regions. If we look at linguistic diversity we have

various dialects, etc. So, where does the project of celebrating diversity end? There needs to be some kind of a checkpoint.

Regarding the issue of education as an instrument, whereby we are trying to make a person accommodative with regard to the wider world, we do need to have some commonality on the basis of which we can put all the people on a common platform. As for reservation in education, we need to look at the class, caste and community dimensions. Another issue is the decline in the enrollment in the government schools. We need to know why the private schools are doing better. Various reforms in the curricula of the public schools can be brought about keeping in view factors such as, a competitive spirit with the private schools, respect for the child and his/her context, accommodation of different local languages, etc. These, I feel, are the primary issues.

Issues in Diversity Management in Schools

Priyanka Singh

I am associated with Sewa Mandir which is working with the community for the last 40 years. In the last 10 years, I have worked largely to see how we can ensure need based, quality education

for children and disadvantaged poor communities (with a monthly expenditure of only about Rs. 450) in very remote areas. I would like to flag some issues based on this experience.

When we talk of inclusion and inequity, the focus is often on bringing about policy changes or changes in terms of people's rights, something that you can discuss and decide at the macro levels. Experience shows that if you want to talk about inequity and inclusion, just policy level changes are not enough. We need to think about the institutional spaces which will negotiate these policy changes. This requires much more work and that is where I would like to bring in my experience of running some 200 schools. It is not as if they are great just because we were running them. I would like to present supporting data. The rate of absenteeism among government sub-centres that we studied was 44%. In our own schools the absenteeism rate was 36%. This tells you a great deal about the kind of trusteeship that we are talking about in a teacher.

I feel we need to worry about how practices can be changed to make the system more inclusive at the same time ensure quality. So, there needs to be some discussion on the kind of institutional spaces required to work out the practice part whether it is in terms of construction of particular kind of a school, or knowledge system. The second point I mentioned was regarding trusteeship. How do you instill a kind of trusteeship that would make the teacher feel responsible for her/his students? If the school is shut even for a day, there is somebody who is getting affected and some loss is happening somewhere and that to me, is not just a matter of doing good science teaching or mathematics teaching - it is a matter of the difference between a body and a soul. You have

the body and you also talk about the soul.

The third point is that, by and large, the poor and disadvantaged communities we are considering are characterized by a spirit of spectatorship. The ability to find the will to fight dereliction is not common. I argue that may not be diversity, but what we have done with these communities has somehow changed their perception of their own being. They consider themselves as people who are ignorant, useless, who cannot do anything better. Both these problems coupled together have somehow brought in a sense of incapability. Their spectatorship has become more complicated, because they have no self confidence, they have been abandoned by the government, public system and their own collective. The poor themselves are abandoning each other.

In the light of education I see the need to discuss what kinds of efforts are required to fight this or to change their perception about themselves and also to get them to fight this dereliction? How do you get people to fight the kind of dereliction that characterizes the education system? These issues often get left out. And lastly, I also agree, and it is again evident from our own efforts, that there is some merit in making a distinction, between absolute equity and universal access for all. May be that is asking for a lot, but asking for good quality primary education for all, may not be too much. I think there is some merit in phrasing that question right - what do we want to strive for, or what can we strive for?

Comments

Narendra Gupta: We often find the phrase 'Unity in Diversity' written everywhere and take pride in it. But these diversities are kind of inequalities which are perceived differently by different people. Somehow, we are hoping that if somehow the diversity in education is removed then perhaps, there may be a possibility of a social change.

But, I would like to put forward this issue: Can education become an instrument of social change by itself without getting affected by anything happening in the outside world? If the phrase 'politics of education' is used how can we keep it outside the purview of diversity? The whole

system of politics perpetuates the present system of education and this is a reflection of the broader social system, in which all of it exists. We have also worked in the area of education and have observed that the attitude of teachers is derived from the social structure and social segmentation under which they all have grown up. The flattening of diversity can happen when people's intellectual abilities and capacities are developed. As a doctor, I know that one's cognitive abilities develop in the pre-school age (from six months to five years). That is the time when one should get full nutrition so that maximum physical and

mental development takes place. We should not expect all the children to perform similarly even if the opportunities are similar. I feel the idea of flattening of diversity should be considered in areas other than education also.

Somebody had raised the point whether the socially deprived and excluded people think in terms of maintaining diversity by remaining the way they are. Perhaps, they may not. But one thing is clear that the school system is very elitist, including the government primary schools. The

teachers assume that the children do not know anything, and that they are there to fill their mind with knowledge. I am not a sociologist but I am aware that there is a whole discourse on the subaltern system of looking at things. Is there any possibility of working further into these issues from an alternative perspective? Is there any system by which we can think of alternative discourses of providing education and building an educational discourse?

Promoting Diversity in Schools

Minati Panda

I find that some of the fears, skepticisms still prevail, especially when we discuss about maintaining diversity or promoting diversity in the context of school education. We are also trying to see the other side of it - that it may perpetuate the disadvantaged group. But, we never explore why that fear persists. Diversity should have been a resource; it should have strengthened us. Instead, we have a fear that probably it will perpetuate the hierarchy, it will perpetuate the disadvantaged. We have encountered these fears in almost all the conferences where we deal with multicultural education, multilingual or diversity issues.

One of the reasons is that, probably, we do not have many good examples where cultural resources are used to the advantage of the children and truly empower the children. The second reason could be that all these 'mantras' are for government schools. This is how it is perceived by the public. Let us be very clear, when it comes to good public schools, the maximum 'flattening' is happening there. This is explicitly and implicitly a pursued goal. They all speak one language, English, and one kind of English. I can give you the name of 30 to 50 schools in Delhi where people will be speaking in the same language, same style, same intonation, and have almost comparable world view. But then we never critique or criticize

or talk about these supposedly good public schools, in any significant way.

Therefore, whenever we talk about the positive side of diversity, it appears as if we are only addressing or talking about the government schools and therefore, certain section of children. That is a second reason why this fear crops up again and again.

Before I talk about the third point, I must say that whenever we talk about cultural resources, it gets inevitably linked to language issue. The moment language comes in, the identity is there as well. The issue gets entwined with the economic side of the language. The third point is that English gets certain benefit while other languages do not get benefits. Therefore, that also reinforces this fear. So, we first have to demystify some of these issues and also address some of the fears which crop up time and again.

The Saura experience

Lastly, I had started work with Prof. Agnihotri on a book which was developed for the Saura children. Popularly, it was understood that it is a bilingual book or a book in Saura language, meant for Saura children. But it was founded on multilingual philosophy and principles. We did not succeed to a great extent so far as the use of the

book was concerned. Not even so far as making a point in the state that such a book can make a difference to the learning in Saura children. The reason was that the books were not fully used in Saura schools for political reasons. These books were used for first 15 days so that the Saura children felt a little better, little at home and in the school. But after 15 days, they were made to read the usual, unchanging government school books. We somehow could not take this project very far.

After 4-5 years, I worked in two schools in the Saura area. In one school, we had Saura, Oriya and also Telugu children, because the school was on the border of Andhra Pradesh. We used play as a cross-cultural space for teaching where no hierarchy was celebrated. Therefore, some of the Saura stories or games were used or discussed, almost as Oriya stories or games were used; but

the selection was very critical. We did not select Oriya stories which were based on mythologies or are regarded as profound or grand, so that those who know those automatically have a higher status. We selected other stories and created a space where that hierarchy could not come into the classroom. It was not easy and it is not possible to put this into practice in all schools. We could do it, perhaps because we were working in two small schools.

When we talk about promoting or preserving diversity or using diversity as a resource, unless we attend to this issue of hierarchy and are careful with the associated nuances, there is a problem. There are subtle aspects of that, but unless we attend to this issue, this will again be a source of fear than strength to us.

Working with the Government School System

Janaki Rajan

It is clear that the government school system, which is the largest, needs a lot of change and transformation. There have been many presentations which show insensitivity in schools but I would like to draw attention to the fact that this is a kind of tremendous resource. It is a structure which is readily available. Can we think of working with this structure in some way?

Over the last 10-12 years, we have seen something very strange happening within the government schools. In 2000, the pass percentage in the government schools of Delhi was 39%, today it is 86% in Class XII; the government schools have done better than the private schools that are charging very high fees. Of course, I know there are a lot of other issues we need to address but government schools have shown that they can absolutely come at par with the private schools. In fact the students who have scored the highest number of marks this year are SC students, who have studied in government schools. Now, this did not happen by chance; it happened because

there was a certain concerted effort that was put together. We need to consider what made this possible. One of the key reasons behind this change was public pressure. The public pressure, for a variety of reasons in Delhi, became a sort of across-the-class pressure. It happened in a strange way thanks to the biased reporting in the media. In 2000, the media kept insisting that the reputation of the private schools in Delhi was taking a plunge because of the poor performance of the government schools and therefore, the government school students should not be allowed to give the CBSE exam and there should be a lower test standard for government school students. This was the kind of dialogue that began at that time, and there were strong reactions opposing this view both from parents and teachers. They asserted that there was no need to discriminate against the government school students in favor of private schools. This resulted in a large number of policy changes which the government made voluntarily, though several Public Interest Litigations were filed.

To ensure accountability within the government, teachers and everyone else within the school system were required to be in place and were to be judged by the performance of the children. The effectiveness of the school was judged by how well the children performed. This is not normally part of education discourse.

This is not just the case with Delhi; there are many other states where the government schools are showing a lot of activity and a desire to change. The greatest advantage is that when these things happen, they happen for a very large number of children.

Of course, there was tremendous pressure on the existing government institutions, including the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) regarding the capability of the teachers and equipping them to teach. Hence, teacher training programmes were initiated in a major way. In the year 2000, 300 teachers were trained in Delhi; in 2004, 50,000 teachers were trained. I am not suggesting that these were high quality teacher trainings, but the very fact of getting together to discuss children's learning is itself something that was absent in the government school system earlier. Then intra-stage linkages between the primary, middle and secondary schools began to happen as the performance in primary and middle classes affected that in class X. At this time the NCERT textbooks were found to be inadequate because children did not learn anything with the help of those textbooks.

As a result, in 2003, a fresh set of elementary education textbooks were prepared. Over 300 people who worked with children on pedagogies for decades came together just to prepare the Delhi SCERT textbooks. When these books were introduced, it was assumed by many that they would not help the children as they were too simple. These were the kind of books we have been talking about, being careful about hierarchy and ensuring that everybody is represented...the books were seen as too easy to enable the children to handle the CBSE exam.

In spite of the reactions, the books were implemented in 2004 in the elementary schools and in 2007 it enabled us to assess how the students performed after they studied through these books. The results showed that there was a 30% increase in the pass percentage as compared to the previous years. So, these were the sort of empirical responses to the hidden fears that are inherent in any kind of reform process.

Though at the moment the situation is fairly bad, it need not always be static and bad. Existing research indicates a need for teacher orientation and higher education has a huge role in generating more research findings on pedagogies for special communities. These findings can help improve the teacher education programmes. At the moment, researchers from higher education conduct research on school education which helps to improve the quality of the teacher training. But I think we need to do more than that.

Concerns

H. K. Dewan: In a large part of North India, for example, in Uttar Pradesh, government run educational institutions starting from primary level up to the degree level have almost collapsed. They are no more the centres of enlightenment, social or political movements and critical changes, but factories of frustration, unemployment and anxiety.

Secondly, the so-called or the really successful institutions are those promoted either by the minorities, like the Christian or Jain institutions,

or from the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). We disagree with them, but they have a missionary zeal. Some corporate and commercial institutions also have the zeal. But why have the so-called progressive and radical organizations in India not established a network of their educational institutions?

I do not think the issue is either that of celebrating diversity or need for perfect equality, either of opportunity or of outcome. I think various statements are made which say that we have a

huge diversity even within the educational domain. It is not just types of schools, students, or teaching, but also types of outcomes, boards, certification, etc. Now, does this cause a problem? Can we live with it? Can we improve it? How? These are some of the questions.

The issue of language is of central concern to many other issues. Since so much has been quoted in terms of history, let us also understand that when you have diversity in society, in different language groupings, many of them also live fairly discreet lives. It is only in the last 100 odd years, when we have had much more migration, that we see different kinds of language groupings living in proximity. I think there is both a philosophical and an ethical question and there is also a practical policy question, in terms of how much linguistic diversity we want to accommodate within a single institution.

For instance, if we are in Belgaum and we are operating with groups which speak two or three kinds of languages. Then within the school system, can we deal with Marathi, Kannada and Konkani simultaneously? Will it work well or not? Can we demarcate these languages or not? So, whether we are talking linguistically or in terms of social groupings what can be done? We have had policies enunciated and implemented using both kinds of things. I think there is enough experience around the table for us to talk about questions of this kind and we can do that if we focus specifically on education.

There is a striking point that if we talk of the school as a site, where people from diverse backgrounds are able to meet in a somewhat more engaging way, then we can expect that in addition to formal education and formal skill learning, we also learn how to understand, appreciate, negotiate, people from different kinds of backgrounds. This is one of the expectations that we can have from the schools.

How do we handle a situation, in which you may have different kinds of schools running under the same authority? The point about Tamil Nadu and the fact that the Adi Dravida schools are run by one particular kind of entity, and the other government schools are run by another kind of entity, has very serious policy implications. In this

regard, practical questions such as, how much investment you make, what kind of buildings you put up, what kind of teachers you hire, what the qualifications of the teachers should be etc. acquire a different kind of political edge in the current context. The new Right to Education Bill will define what is a school, what should the role of a teacher be, what kind of capacity building is required for teachers, etc. Should we consider a school to be a school, if it does not have five rooms; if it does not have certain number of teachers, if it does not have a particular teacher-student ratio? These issues are actually being debated with respect to the kind of laws that we want to bring.

One issue that we need to discuss clearly is the role of school in addressing the issue of diversity. Does it have a role at all? We have to consider the statement that it has no role in addressing diversity, and the statement saying school is an institution which has a certain role. We need to think about and come to a new understanding of what we are talking about.

The second issue is knowledge. What is knowledge and how is it recognized? What is our sense of looking at knowledge as a system: Western or Eastern or tribal/non-tribal? We need to consider what is the whole issue of knowledge within which we are playing; what knowledge a child has, or his/her community has; what are the ways of producing knowledge in her society, etc. On the other axis, recognizing that each child has a knowledge base, we need to think how s/he can find a place in the class-room. Thirdly, with regards to language, one can include it in this realm of issues or look at it separately. But this is certainly an area which we need to look at in detail.

The fourth issue is that of teachers; not in the sense of who a teacher is, or what qualification does s/he have, but more imbued with the question - what is the teacher's motivation, in engaging with the children that we are talking about? What is the teacher's notion of engaging with a role that we think the school has? These are questions that we need to address. Therefore, the discussion should go into teacher preparation and what is the kind of newest understanding of teacher because very often in policy formulation, the issue of the notion of teachers also gets flattened.

Lastly, we need to talk a little about the economics of education. What kind of costs need to be incurred for educating a child? The attitude towards education of poor children needs to be reversed. So, we can have two components: The educational response of the system and the response of the system to education of poor children and the entire notion of what is the purpose of education they have in their minds.

I am not opening the whole debate of what the purpose of education is or should be. But, we do need to ponder upon in the limited sense of the attitudinal question of what the system looks at as the notion of education for these children and where does it include and impinge on diversity and quality.

Summing up

Vimala Ramachandran: The schools have a role in the arena of diversity, in terms of addressing diversity, and respecting it, and also in terms of giving children from diverse environments, a shared experience so that they will learn to understand and respect each other and be upwardly mobile.

This is linked to the fact that we may come from diverse backgrounds, experiences, and communities, but a school need not necessarily become the instrument for either homogenization or fragmentation. It could be one process through which they learn to appreciate each other and move ahead.

In that context, there are three things that we need to consider as subsets: The preparation of teachers, not only of their skills, but also of their attitude and practices, and this requires a tremendous amount of sensitivity. Another important point is that of the kind of investments that would be required. Going back to the instance of Belgaum, is it possible to have a school where you have all three languages being taught with good quality; a level where the children are actually able to build on and gain from coming from a particular mother tongue, and also be able to get education in a different language. If we talk about this possibility, then we are talking about investments that are very different.

And the next implication would be to consider how we can actually look at the knowledge that people come with. This means that the school or any kind of space that fulfills that role should be able to respect the different knowledge. Some of the issues such as, why is it that our schools have not been able to address diversity, should be discussed.

The fundamental question for us is: What role does the school have in addressing, respecting and providing diversity?

Harsh Sethi: I would like to share an example. When I was doing research on pre-1857 Education, I told some of my friends that there were no schools in India for scheduled castes in the 1857 era. A friend who is Director in Education suggested a book by Pandit Sunder Lal who was a famous writer in Hindi. In his book, there was an example about a school in the house of a Brahmin. I asked my friend whether the concept of having a school in the house of a Brahmin is to be considered a school.

The school is related to the concept of social justice. A Gandhian school, I say, is for preserving status-quo. There is too much difference between Ambedkar and Gandhi. While Gandhi in his concept of education speaks about this tradition and traditional values in schools, Ambedkar in his concept of education, focuses on and repeatedly talks about social justice.

Lastly, because there are so many persons, so many castes, my suggestion would be that we should start good schools. When I visited Satara, there was Bhavrao Patil, who started a school 100 years ago and now there are more than 300 schools and colleges in Satara, Pune and nearby areas. These schools help reaching education to the excluded. Let us make an honest attempt for social justice.

Let me now highlight some points which have been made by the group. First is regarding the language of instruction and the politics of schooling in India. Well, it is a fact of history that

schooling and politics have always been linked. Even in 19th century Europe, when a lot of nations were coming into being, with exceptions of countries which were aspiring to become nations, one language was sought to be introduced as a medium of instruction in schools, to create a sense of national identity. One medium of instruction was the norm at least in Europe, because the spread of schooling was linked to the creation of a national identity. So politics of language and schooling is more or less a world phenomenon.

Secondly, it is a rather provocative statement that cognitive abilities are developed in pre-school time. There may be some truth in it. But I am reminded of an article by Amartya Sen in the Times,

Higher Education Supplement, where he said that polishing in good schools made a lot of difference to the students' ability to present themselves.

I would also like to point out that in the state run schools, at least in Uttar Pradesh, there is this concept of judging the student by an examination and the deficiency of the examination system is a moot point. But, what is being done now is that since the performance of the teachers is appraised directly by the ratio of pass and fail, the government perhaps has given an unwritten instruction that no student should be failed till Class V. In a way it seems to have a horrendous impact and particularly in the rural schools, since written instruction becomes axiomatic.



Diversity: From the School's Perspective

H.K. Dewan

The question whether a school has a role to play in addressing diversity can be looked at in two ways: One view is that diversity is bigger than all soft or super-structural processes and it is a part of a certain system. The other view is that the school pro-actively affects diversity and it can help in using and building on whatever exists in our society.

If the school is a place where we are bringing up citizens of society, then we need to see implications on a school. Any society needs to have some kind of a basis through which its members look at each other, with some kind of an understanding. They need to respect and appreciate each other. That is one way of going about it, which means that you can have schools and a school system which talks about bringing together children from different backgrounds and giving them a space inside and outside the classroom to express themselves, interact with different cultures and learn from each other. This, in its very basis, requires respect for different cultures and backgrounds as well as for the knowledge which that culture, and the individual child, comes with. Thus, the question of schools having a role in diversity is also linked to the question of diversity having a role in the school.

Firstly, diversity certainly has a role in school and the school needs to understand the fact that there are children from diverse backgrounds. The second dimension of this argument is the fact that if school is a place where children come to become citizens of a society and the society has certain norms, principles, and ways of organising itself, then the responsibility of the school is to share those with children. So, in that sense, inherently, the school has a role to try and develop a common minimum understanding of working together as a part of the society and therefore, also making a

comment on the diverse backgrounds that children come from.

So, we have the school being a part of a State which has a certain understanding of how a society should be, and also therefore, has a view on some of the things that communities and children are doing in their respective homes. Thus, whether you are aware of it or not, in very clearly articulated ways, school does make a statement about diversity and cultures of children. Whether that impacts on the extent of diversity is not very clear, but it certainly affects the nature of diversity that exists. It certainly chooses some forms of practices to be avoided and some aspects of diversity not reflected upon.

School does perpetuate discrimination, but school is also the only place where, probably, processes of social change can be initiated at a small level.

If we are saying that education needs to be universal and all children need to go to the school then it means that we want all children to go through a certain set of norms, or certain ways of

looking at the world. That also points to the fact that we are making a choice of what kind of citizens we want. Through this we are also deciding in which direction we want the society to move.

The kind of statements the school makes and the kind of value the school places on different things have an impact on the society and particularly on the child because the power structure is also loaded in favor of those who are educated. Therefore, it would be presumptuous to say that the school does not have an effect on diversity.

We, therefore, need to identify what suggestions we can make about sharpening the perspective of the schools on diversity. This needs to be done both in terms of students coming into schools and in terms of, how the school is able to translate the norms and values that are shared by the community with the children.

The 'Erai-Erai Book' Experience

Minati Panda

I will describe briefly about some work that we have done in the past and also talk about a series of interventions that we have been involved with; focusing on play as a cross-cultural world and some experiments in Mathematics. In these, we have brought in Saura Mathematics to the classroom along with the modern universal Mathematics system. The Saura book, on which three of us - Prof. Rama Kant Agnihotri, myself and Dr. Mahendra Misra from Orissa, along with 40 teachers - worked on in 1998-2000. The idea was to develop a primer and not supplementary material; a book which could replace the Oriya textbook and could be used for teaching Saura children in the classroom. The move from Saura to Oriya had to be gradual. So the objective was to teach them not only in Oriya, a language which they could speak, but also in their mother tongue Saura, for as long as possible. We had three visioning workshops over a period of seven days with the 40 teachers who were selected carefully. Most of them did not have Bachelors or Masters Degree in Education (B.Ed. or M.Ed.) and thus did not have a background or formal training in educational psychology or theories of learning per se, but they had enough experience of teaching children in the primary classes. We discussed with them about the ways to teach Saura children in Saura language.

When we started these discussions there was a kind of turmoil among the teachers and parents, who suspected that we had links with naxalites. The reason for such a reaction was most probably due to the fact that while Oriya had the status of a language, Saura was taken to be just a dialect spoken only in the home domain. They found it hard to accept the fact that the children could be taught in Saura. Within two or three years of working together on the book these teachers were not only supporting our effort, but also contributing activities that could be included in the textbook. The teachers themselves developed

lessons where they used not only the Saura language, but also unwittingly brought in many Oriya words and expressions. There were also few English and Hindi words which are spoken in day-to-day life. Towards the end of this project, the teachers were convinced that teaching could be done in the children's own language and that language does not have to be just Saura. When we say language, it is not only Saura or only Oriya, it could be Saura with many Oriya words which they spoke or it could be Oriya with many Saura, Hindi or English words which they were familiar with through mediums like the television. I would like to mention here that when the primers were ready, the 40 teachers we worked with continuously for two to three years were asked to train other teachers teaching in Saura areas. Subsequently, we learnt that these 40 teachers almost became resource persons in the State, for regular teacher training programmes. They were able to discuss confidently very fundamental issues about what is language, how children learn, what is a child's language, what is a medium of instruction or how anything can be taught effectively to children, etc.

Though the majority of the 40 teachers were from the Saura community, we also had Oriya teachers as well as some with experiences of Telugu culture. Thus the lessons and activities for the textbook that were developed were sourced from the local culture which comprised three different cultures. The contact point between the practices of these different cultures was these teachers who were already familiar with them and used them as resources. There were, of course, many disagreements among the teachers on the appropriateness of the texts to be included. But consensus was reached. We also addressed, rather inadvertently, the issue of identity.

For example, there is a tree called the Salab tree which plays an important part in the social,

religious and cultural aspects of the community. They documented that it had 40 different uses. So, it was decided that references to the Salab tree would appear in every third or fourth lesson where there were illustrations depicting the day-to-day life of the people of the community.

Secondly, poems of the community were also included in the textbook. One particular poem is a rhyme, *Erai Erai O Baang* (come, come, let us play), which every child in any Saura village, is familiar with. And that is also how we got the name of the textbook - *Erai Erai Book*. So, the first lesson would have four lines, two lines in the beginning and two lines at the bottom with lot of illustrations in the middle.

The illustrations were also used for teaching mathematical exercises such as counting, identifying things or grouping things together, etc. Thus different things were taught through just one rhyme, but different illustrations and activities. This rhyme appears almost at regular intervals four or five times, in the entire textbook. However, the lessons were different from one another as they served to teach different subjects. In this way, we attempted to embed and reflect the Saura identity in the textbook.

The Saura children found the book to be interesting and engaging not only because it had

poems or illustrations depicting their community life, but also because they could identify with the content and feel that the book was meant for them. So, we realized at the end that even though it was not planned, we addressed the identity issue as well.

The initial plan was to try out the books in 20 or 30 schools and then use them in Saura schools before developing textbooks for classes II, III and IV. The decision to include about 50 per cent of Oriya words as against the Saura words was random. It was decided that these Oriya words or

sentences would be woven into the text gradually without any mathematical formulae, keeping in view children's own knowledge of language and their vocabulary.

While Oriya had the status of a language, Saura was taken to be just a dialect spoken only in the home domain. They found it hard to accept the fact that the children could be taught in Saura.

So far as the experiment is concerned, we could not scale it up. The methods we employed were seen as challenging the whole notion of language and then venturing into developing materials which showed that teaching can be done differently and children's own linguistic, cultural, social resources can be used. We developed the text such that it would appear natural to a Saura child and s/he could identify with that language and the style of expression. This textbook could not be tried out in schools though it was used at the beginning of the year for 15 days, for teaching children or getting the children adjusted to the school, then they switched over to Oriya textbooks.

Diversity by Design

Gopal Guru

To begin with, what roles schools play in terms of upholding the project of diversity is a very important one, for everybody to be associated with, at least in India. Without any hesitation I would say that schools have a very important role

to play in terms of really sharing this project and being a part of this project, and not leave it to the intuition of people. There has to be the consciousness of full, perhaps, provocative, intervention into the question of diversity. I would

like to use a phrase about Secularism: Secularism by design, and secularism by accident. I would say secularism and diversity by design already invite the critical responses of people to build up both imagination and school system. Since it is design, it is a conscious effort, and therefore the school and teacher, whosoever is associated with it, have to play a leading role in terms of really producing and holding on to this good called 'diversity'.

So, it is designed and not an accident. Accident is in a sense natural, it has come down to you historically and you cannot do anything about it. Thus, it can be called a deliberate design. Diversity is an ethical issue. How does a student conduct himself or herself with another student, how does a student conduct with a teacher, how does a teacher conduct himself or herself with one another or with students, are all ethical issues. These are reciprocal relationships and take place in face-to-face and intimate situations. In government schools, particularly, one finds a very potent side for promoting diversity, because prima-facie, you do not like the faces in the class and the face-to-face situation is a very important ethical challenge.

Therefore, we need to have students stay together for eight hours so that they interact. This situation will also be helpful in bringing about a balance with the situation at home where parents might play a negative role in de-constructing students. The other point in favor of schooling is that in other schools or corporate schools so to say, you see unity of minds. That is to say, what you grasp is knowledge straight from the textbooks. So equality at the level of the abstract and the textbooks is achieved. However, the question of unity of experience remains. The unity of experience is possible only through the schools of mixed character, particularly government schools. So, how does one really open up people to face-to-face interaction?

Teacher is one important medium to open up the minds of children. The teacher can confuse them in a way and deconstruct the assumptions and stereotypes that parents, peer groups, and the society in general have given them as truth. This would prepare the ground for a kind of sharing. One effective tool in this effort can be writing

narratives in any language that a student is comfortable with. Students come from different regions and this method also prevents the listing out of diversities in language, region, culture, etc. They can have face-to-face situations through teachers, intervention narratives of telling stories, documentaries, etc. A documentary film 'Children as Historians' made by Deepa Dharamraj from Bangalore documents gender, caste, and other issues and looks at history through the perspectives of children. This kind of sharing through documentaries and films is absolutely important and can also take place through this formal institutional structure called 'school'.

Relating to the visionary agenda of the seminar I would like to briefly discuss the notion of a 'student'. Student is an abstract category. You can have a diverse range of students: A girl student, a Dalit student, a tribal student; but at that level, how does one really give diversity a universal meaning? One way is by defining the word 'student' through a summary. A student is a summary of diverse experiences and those experiences have to be shared and make, for example, the Dalit student, a student. And that happens only in the school and not outside the school. The school is playing not only a pedagogical role but also a paradigmatic role because it is promoting new thinking about how to really handle human relationships, the face-to-face, the intimate.

There is a symbiotic relationship between the school and diversity. They do not grow at the cost of each other, they go together. However, diversity is at the minimum because schools can be mediating sides and ironing out the extremes of diversities and that is very leveling. It is important to do this leveling and still not get rid of the diversities that exist, keeping them within the normative limit. Therefore, you really require schools. We can raise the question of multiple ways of producing knowledge. It is not only the urban metropolitan rationality that decides the benchmark for producing knowledge, but the local communities and local school students are equally competent to produce knowledge and can challenge concepts. It is important that the teacher should not feel threatened by the contrary concept coming from the students.

One has to only accommodate respect for that kind of epistemological intervention by the students. Therefore, the diverse sense of knowledge comes

into the class. You are already over-burdened by the concept of which you cannot make any sense; it is a mechanical reception, anyway.

Discussion

D.D.Nampoothiri: The scaling of schools should not necessarily be on rural-urban basis, but on the basis of the globalised neo-liberal space that is emerging today in India, where schooling has in the end to catch up with multiple challenges. One thing which strikes me is the kind of schools which cater to specifically the under-privileged in rural, tribal, India.

For example, in Kerala, we have a very interesting school that was started some time back by a theatre expert in the Wayanad district. This school did not have anything to do with whatever was happening outside, in that sense that the Adivasi children were brought there and given education,

mostly about their tradition and history without any syllabus, totally cut off from the mainstream educational system. However, in the long run, there was a decline in the functioning of

the school. It was a very good opportunity in certain respects, empowering the Adivasi children and developing a sense of self-respect among them. The downside was that they did not relate it to the schooling outside, so that after 10 years they were not allowed to appear for the matriculation exams. There is one school in Cuddalore which preserves the traditions of various tribal communities along with the main courses. The medium of instruction is both Tamil and English. It also has links to the mainstream educational system in Tamil Nadu. This seems to be a more successful endeavor because, for instance, the Paniyas are found both in Kerala and Tamil Nadu but the largest number live in Kerala. For the first time an NGO collected the Paniya songs and they were in the Tamil script. I would also like to bring your attention a recent instance near Palghat where a Non Resident Indian (NRI), who is originally from Trichur,

Kerala, came and started a school exclusively for the most deprived children of that village. He selected two panchayats and hired a manager to identify the poorest and most deprived. He invested a lot of money into the school. The curriculum can be considered to be one of the best in India. According to the management a secular ethos is cultivated in the system and a large number of SC/ST children study in the school. The children and their parents are provided nutritious and hygienic food at the school and it is doing quite well.

So, there are efforts to give good education to the

under-privileged and the deprived and show that they can be as good as anybody else in the metro cities. It is important to locate the kind of scenarios that can emerge and the multiple issues that come out of this situation. It is very

difficult to bring any diversity, at a plain level, without scaling the schools and the challenges involved, and confronting the kind of dualism that is emerging in the form of an increasing shift of the very nature of informational economy. This is leading to marginalization of large sections of people, especially the Adivasis and Dalits, belonging to remote areas. This issue should be addressed, because in the long run this social dualism has to be addressed and that also will be important in addressing the challenges of diversity ably.

Ganesh Devy: When I make the rather categorical statement that schools have nothing to do with diversity, I am trying to say that diversities are created in the world due to histories of migration, of control of funding, from freedom, explorations, discoveries and creativity. For example, we have 20 different types of diverse styles of dance and

expression of creativity. So, in a country that has a very long history of such diversity, whether we have schools or no schools, diversity will remain. No amount of government control or dictatorial regime can destroy diversity in a country like ours. It can damage or temporarily cast a shadow, but can never wipe out the diversity because history cannot be wiped out. This is not to say that all is right with history. Many wrongs have been committed in history and this is not to suggest that such wrong doings should be continued.

Another issue is that of stereotypes. For instance, in Gujarat, children have been taught in schools to develop a negative attitude towards Muslims; or in the case of England, such attitudes are developed towards people of different race and color. School education must take care that such inhuman and uncivilized stereotyping does not happen and tackle them accordingly through the curriculum, as well as through the way knowledge is delivered in the learning practice in the classroom. I do not want to belittle the school system. All of us have gone through a school system and have benefitted in various ways. However, school is not a place which either creates or can destroy diversity.

School can help in demolishing stereotypes. But at the same time, there is also the danger of schools inculcating the same. So, I am looking at diversity in terms of a positive heritage of race, nations, communities, continents and so on. This was my contention.

Regarding the Saura experiment, such experiments have been attempted elsewhere and tribal societies are definitely more sensitive to the mainstream society rather than the contrary. But, whether we like it or not, this is something we have to do. We need to fight. Our entire education system is geared today, towards a very rapid and alarming unidirectional westernization, which sounds too outdated and inadequate now. It is geared towards creating a certain kind of human life style and thought that will deny increasingly

the space for the Saura language, space for Adivasi languages, or even for other Indian languages. And it is a fact of our life today that in Mumbai, children do not read Marathi literature, in Kolkata children no longer read Bangla literature. Bengali and Marathi are now read in the villages. So, together we have to think about a kind of knowledge system which will disabuse our ends of schooling. Therefore, if diversity is to be preserved in this country, the kind of school which we will have to create will have to think of what knowledge we deliver: Whether knowledge is useful to the society or not, and whether the school is sensitive to knowledge that exists in the society, among those who are not literate or those who are literate.

To my mind, there is only one solution with the 63% literacy that census figures show: To issue certificates of schooling to those who do not visit the institutions of school but work in the fields, learn from their parents or their local guides. If a carpenter is teaching some apprentice carpentry, he deserves to get a Matriculation certificate. We have no provision for that. So celebration of

The school is playing not only a pedagogical role but also a paradigmatic role because it is promoting new thinking about how to really handle human relationships - the face-to-face, the intimate.

work, *Shram* or celebration of labor, should be one of the primary functions of the school. Celebration of skills should be the next primary function of schools and celebration of ability to have parrot-knowledge could be, perhaps, an additional function of schools.

Vimala Ramachandran: The process of schooling in India also witnesses children from very diverse backgrounds being humiliated and experiencing exclusion, often destroying their self-esteem and self-confidence. It is in this context that a lot of discussions take place on why so many first generation children from Dalit communities or from tribal communities actually leave the school even before they can make use of it. It has to do with what happens in that schooling experience and these schools can be broadly categorised into those which are for the really rich and those for others.

We are a diverse country, we are a diverse society. So, we are talking about diversity in schooling in the context of what happens to the notion of the different cultures, identities, languages, and strengths that we all come from. School creates another community. We have a whole generation of people who not only have completely forgotten their own language but also have a very poor command over English. This is the kind of new crop of students that we are getting, who are not rooted in their own language or culture. So, we are not deliberating the fact that a Dalit has to remain a Dalit as his or her identity for the rest of her/his life.

We are approaching the diversity debate from a different point of view. We are saying that for people with diverse experiences, the school should be providing a shared experience. But in practice only the government schools have children from SC, ST and other economically weaker sections of the society. Also most teachers are from the forward caste or from an urban background which does not help either. The result is that negative attitudes are reinforced and certain kinds of inequalities are perpetuated within the school. Thus, whether we like it or not there is a kind of segregation that is taking place in the Indian school system today.

Children from different kinds of communities and economic background are going to different kinds of schools so the schooling that provided a shared experience and the shared community that was talked about once is not available to children today. There may be exceptions in some specific cases like the Kendriya Vidyalayas (Central Schools), where you do not have an option because parents get transferred all over the country. So, there at least, a wider band is put into the same space. This is the context in which we are actually looking at diversity and schooling. We want to see how a school can actually provide an opportunity where children from different experiences can come, have a common experience and go back with mutual respect.

Narendra Gupta: There is a difference between *shivirs* (camps) and schools. We are not talking about school education process. Diversity is not a new issue at all; it has been as old as charity. Every school has to bring in and accommodate children from diverse cultures and stratum of society. We must address the issue of policy, because school is a social institution and we are talking about the relationship between school and society. Then, what can be the policy for schools? How can discrimination be stopped in school and what can be the educational processes which promote interactions in the school? I don't think that the situation in schools has changed much in the last 50 years.

R.K. Agnihotri: I would like to add a note of caution here. I think we are using highly loaded words, which are creating some confusion.

Diversities are created in the world due to histories of migration, of control of funding, from freedom, explorations, discoveries and creativity. For example, we have 20 different types of diverse styles of dance and expression of creativity. So, in a country that has a very long history of such diversity, whether we have schools or no schools, diversity will remain.

On the one hand, we are talking about diversity, variability and differentiation. These words do not evoke very powerful emotions. But we are also using words like exclusion, discrimination, stereotypes, marginalisation etc. Now, these are very powerful words; they evoke very strong emotions and we are using them interchangeably.

Let me clarify that at least to me, there does not seem to be any disagreement between the need to sustain diversity where negative stereotypes are consciously fought against, by design I and commonality which subsumes diversity in the positive sense and school education which fights stereotypes.

Peter D'Souza: When we are foregrounding what the idea of diversity is, we must first see it as an ethical idea. If it is an ethical idea, then we have to go beyond diversity as given to diversity as achieved. Therefore, the question is, what is it that we want to achieve. One has to go within diversity to begin to examine the attributes of that diversity that we want to be achieved. This is where, I think, this word 'commonality' comes in.

It is possible that while commonality seems to be in a sense in contrast to diversity, one could actually make an argument that the commonality of experience in a school is one which actually begins to celebrate the different ways in which we are the same. I recall visiting a friend of mine in the U.K. during my student days when he told me that he was a Dutch student married to an English lady and they lived in Bould. He proudly told me that their son came home that day from school and they were able to celebrate Ganesh Chaturthi together.

So, obviously there is something about the school system there which is continuously responding to the mixed populations that are now entering the school. Perhaps, the question of commonality is how one can continuously change curricula, change the furniture of the school in a way that no one community or group begins to dominate the other communities, thereby producing exclusion for the others.

So, by commonality, one is actually introducing an idea which is opposed to discrimination and exclusion, but which recognises and celebrates difference, and which gives it a separate but equal kind of recognition. That is where the ethical question of diversity by achievement or diversity by design begins to appear.

I would like to make the point that we must make a distinction between blaming the institution and blaming the practices of that institution. Blaming the administration and blaming the policies are not the same. A question came up in the morning as to why some schools are so effective while others are not. The administration aspect of the school is important. But here, we are talking about an imagined school; what would a good imagined school be like. So the distinction between the Government aided and the private, in terms of the administration of the institution, becomes quite important and if we do not address this question, then somehow the imagined schools do not have their feet on the ground.

Narendra Gupta: I have been working with tribals for almost 28 years, and during the early years when I had just begun working, I found that tribals generally do not go to mixed school. A tribal

school would have only tribal children as students. So, they are not exposed enough to the heterogeneous mixed system. They have not gone to school, where experiences are different and children come from diverse backgrounds. Thus, the way these children grow up is very different from non-tribal children, in terms of their self-esteem, learning abilities and their interaction with teachers and among themselves. In contrast, in schools where there are children from scheduled castes, other backward communities, forward caste, upper caste, dominant caste, etc., the situation is different. Children always imbibe values about their social position from their families. They practice the same in school too.

We can put forth the argument that children should be made to spend more time in schools as parents at home can be a factor in development of certain negative attitudes in children. However, it should be remembered that teachers also have families and many of them are also parents. They are also very likely to bring in values and attitude which would most probably reflect their social positions, customs, beliefs and behavior. So, in that case, how would it help if children are in school, for more time?

For instance, during one of the Lok Jumbish teacher training programmes in Rajasthan, the teachers blamed the organizers that the kind of agenda or curriculum, or pedagogy that they were being trained on was inherently Western and not Indian and thus it was something which was not a part of them. They found it unacceptable that there was no mention of Saraswati Pooja and 'Arti'. Thus, the question is much bigger than simply placing it and locating it into the school system. Somehow we have to bring in the issue of cultural change. That cultural change will also bring in the issue of commonality, which opens channels for diversity and vice versa. This cultural change has to happen not only in one segment, but in all the segments. So, that is something very essential particularly in the case of tribals. What happens when these tribal children go to school? Their wisdom is continuously depleting in the name of education, mainstreaming and homogenization. So, there are different values placed on different kind of social systems and till that hierarchy of values remain, it is difficult to see how the issue of diversity could be addressed.

Harsh Sethi: The issue of recognising diversity and therefore learning how best to negotiate it, is one thing. The issue of celebrating diversity is something quite different and the implications for how you contract your teaching-learning engagements or how do you design policy or then talk of what you call the worlds of different knowledge, become very different depending on which one of these two broad streams, you are locating yourself in. In many of the statements, we use the word recognize and celebrate in the same sentence and this is confusing.

I do not know whether you would like to celebrate. Celebration may or may not be 'freezing', but you cannot automatically move from one state to the other. Many of the negative problems that we have described around the table are those that we have tried to put into motion a set of practices, set of rules and procedures, design institutions as if we do not have to deal with any issue of diversity; that we are assuming even a *tabula rasa* thesis or we are assuming that every one is about the same and therefore everybody can be treated the same way; and designing policy. This has led to fairly disastrous implications which all of us keep on sharing.

So, to be able to recognise and to be able to say, that because I am dealing with different kind of worlds, I am no longer dealing with only five children of the same kind and therefore, am going to do certain kind of things where everyone is involved in one thing. It is not equal to saying that I will celebrate the difference. This statement is a huge jump and I am not sure what the implications are. I think it will become much sharper when you talk about: Do I have respect for the kind of knowledge with which you come in? Now what knowledge are you talking about? What is the new kind of knowledge that you actually want to transact within your formal education process? I think the levels become very different.

Ashish Saxena : My feeling is that we have to see the school setting, with regard to the space, as such. There is a problem between the rural vs the urban, in that sense. We should not see school as a constant, rather we should locate how a school tried to produce or reproduce the things in the rural and then, how it is going to act in the urban.

And in that context, some times we see that in the rural it is a sacred diversity which has been reflected. But in the case of the urban it is more a secular diversity which is being reflected. So, if you move to the urban, there is more celebration of the diversity. On the other hand, in the case of the rural, it is continuing with the practices, of the diversities as such.

Minati Panda: Probably, we want to say that diversity has to be recognised and to be used as a resource. We do not have any other way. The latest theory in cognitive psychology suggests that the school gives us some scientific concepts. Scientific concepts are built on every day concepts. So then it suggests that every day concepts have to be brought into the classrooms, to teach what we propose to teach in the school. Now, everyday concepts are rooted in certain cultural practices; they are not context free. So when everyday concepts are brought to the classroom, the cultural resources are automatically brought in to the classroom. Many times, we only pay lip service to this idea but do not actually bring these concepts to the classroom. If we really want to teach children, we have to do this irrespective of whether we want to recognise diverse resources or not.

Second, we have all agreed on the fact that there is merit in recognising the diversity, because if you do not recognise my cultural background, you do not recognise me. I have no place in the whole system. Celebration of diversity may happen automatically. But I do not think that, we should make it an agenda. Sometimes, it may lead to arrogance. Let it be a by-product and not an agenda.

H.K. Dewan: This word 'celebration' can be interpreted in many ways. The way I interpret it implies that there is something about variety which is important and which by its very existence, makes our life rich. So, we also realize that while there needs to be some amount of commonality, there is also this need to recognize that there can be different points of view on many things and they have to be so. Till we have a space for negotiated discussion and sharing, we need to try and see what the common aspects of our lives as different people are. But there is also a need to have a space, where we say that there is

variety and a blue flower is as good as a yellow flower.

In that sense there is a little bit more than respect that I am talking about. But certainly, I am not talking about celebration in the way of freezing, or saying that whatever existed and whatever is, is valuable. What I am saying is that being able to appreciate that there can be a variety and there can be a plurality of thinking, just the fact that you are able to celebrate your relationship to God in different ways and are able to appreciate that in somebody else, is a way as well. Even if I do not believe in God, I should be able to appreciate the fact that there can be somebody who does. It is very difficult and I see the danger in using the word celebration in an uninhibited manner.

If someone asks me what if the blue is under a threat, is it then an ethical responsibility to protect it and particularly promote the beauty of the blue?

That is a difficult question to answer. As a scientist, to me, this is like an issue of endangered species and what we are doing to save it. Is the blue under threat because it is out of touch with times or is the blue under threat because of a particular opposition arising out of some other reason?

Therefore, it becomes a very difficult choice to make. Some blues will need to be protected and some blues will fade away. For example, if new knowledge is to be created in the school then a school should be a place where new knowledge

is created by bringing in the knowledge which exists in the books, in the minds of the teacher and the children. In that way, if new knowledge is being created, it will certainly make some blues disappear. So, we have to decide whether the disappearance of that blue is valid disappearance or we need to do something about it. That is the more difficult question to resolve.

Ganesh Devy: We should be skeptical about using the word 'celebration' and skeptical only in one dominant sense that when it is used in a very masculine, militaristic way- I have arrived, I have conquered, I have achieved, a decisive victory against the enemy and that is why our celebrations. We are not using it in that way. How we are using celebration is a sheer joy of my ignorance. I have really discovered that I was ignorant about somebody's experience.

R.K. Agnihotri: This difference between recognizing diversity, using it as a resource, respecting or celebrating it, is a nuanced situation. I would, for example, like to raise two issues while agreeing with you in principle. One, are we going to have any epistemological or ethical matrix, by which we are going to evaluate different kinds of diversities? Two, are not there systems of knowledge, for example, Euclid in Geometry, or the phonological systems of some languages which are structures that are the same in all diversities? So, one has to take note of that also, in a variety of systems.

Planning for Teacher Preparation

Janaki Rajan

If we want to actually create a school or a school system that can address diversity effectively, then what should the role of teachers be and what kind of planning would be required in this regard? To begin with, the first thing is to look at teacher preparation and so far, we have two categories: Pre-service teacher preparation, that is, preparation before a person becomes a teacher; and continuous professional development of teacher, once they have already become a teacher. If we take into consideration the number of teachers who need to be trained, at a conservative estimate about 93% of the teacher force in the country, are people who have already been trained and who are working in schools.

What numbers are we dealing with

The attrition rate is 3% and if we assume that new schools are coming up at the same rate as our birth-rate, even then it is just 7% of the teachers with whom we have space to work, to prepare them better for diversity, through pre-service teacher training. The difficult task is to prepare teachers who are already in the system, who do not have much idea of what we are talking about here. We will have to work with them. Our experience tells us that even if we have a very good teacher training programme, it is a difficult task. The B.El.Ed. programme at the Delhi University is a really good programme of four years, and the faculty work very hard to prepare teachers. But given the disparity in percentages, the 2-3% or 7% of people, when they go into the system, are very quickly subsumed by the culture of the teachers who are already present in the system. So, I think the first priority is to have a programme for in-service teacher training and to help refresh teachers who are already in the system. The numbers are large, but everything in India is large. So, we are used to numbers. It is difficult to give the number of teachers offhand, but if we accept one million government schools

and even if we say 10 teachers to a school, including in the middle schools where they have more teachers than in the primary schools, then we are looking at something like 10 million teachers. We want to roll out diversity as key pedagogic instrument. We have to address 10 million teachers as quickly as possible, may be over two to five years. Policy provisions exist at the moment and there is a pragmatic provision as well.

This has come through the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* where there is budgetary and monetary provision for each teacher to engage in some kind of professional development for 20 days in a year, every year. So if we can begin to plan what we can do with teachers, it is not necessary that we work with them 20 days at a stretch. We can think of working with them throughout the year. That may be a useful point of entry for us to firstly engage with teachers.

After the trainings

We have heard a lot of comments about teachers and how they think and feel. But we need to have a larger systematic study of what happens inside the school and what teachers think. More importantly, we need to document the teacher-child transaction; we have very little research and information on what is happening inside the classroom. Following that, what is it that we can do? Some broad elements are already in place and there are teacher training programmes, which have worked on this. Key to everything is that teachers need to unlearn and re-learn. For them to unlearn and re-learn, it is important for us to engage with them on the very issues that we are talking about here; concepts of discrimination and diversity, and we have, a very useful legislative peg in the Right to Education. And if we connect with it, every child has a Right to Education of Equitable Quality.

We cannot ensure education of equitable quality for every child unless we take care of few things: The child has to feel respected and not alienated. In order for us to make the child feel respected, we need to know the children by entering into their domain and their lives, and from that, a variety of pedagogic practices can emerge. These would help today's teachers to get more intimately connected with what is happening in the world of the child. The child's home and the child's community can become part of a very systematic teacher training process. We will have to do several pilot interactions in different parts of the country, with different sets of teachers, before we come to an understanding of what are the broad things that we need to do as part of teachers' training. However, one of the core features of the programme is engagement with children-observing how children think, how they learn, what scares them or pleases them, what makes them happy, etc. This is not part of the realm of teacher education, either at pre-service or at in-service level, and this will help to deepen the relationship between teacher and child and open up a space for an interpersonal understanding between teacher and children.

There is a teacher inside a classroom with 30 children. This is an organic living space and if we start working at the level of the class that space can be used very well. We need to know that if all that we are saying does not merely appear as pedantic statements or something desirable or even ethical, and whether we will be able to appeal to the teacher as a person.

A very important issue is that of self-development. We are all aware that, unfortunately, a teacher is on the last rung of the educational administration and they are engaged in all kinds of activities. Recently, in Delhi, teachers were deployed for counting stray animals in Delhi. They are also called upon to perform election duty. They do not have control over what they teach because that is decided somewhere by the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT). They do not even have the right to decide how well the children have done because it is CBSE, a faceless body that decides how well a child has done. The interaction between a teacher and children inside the classroom is a very important

one and has to get legitimacy in the whole educative process. Only then a teacher will feel empowered enough to engage because right now it is meaningless that whatever the teacher does, the teacher gets no credit for it. So that area, I feel, needs to be looked at.

We must look at de-centralized curriculum development. We cannot have a national curriculum that is rolled across to everybody. Very cogent examples that some of our activists give is that if you want to teach a child in Kerala and you want to contextualize education, then the child in Kerala knows about coconuts, can probably swim before she can walk and knows about fish, and several other things. On the other hand, a child in Ladakh probably never had an opportunity to swim because it is such a cold place, but s/he would probably walk and run easily on snow. So, the points of entry into the world of education for these two children will have to be different and it does not mean that the child in Kerala is not going to learn about snow, but there is a time to enter into that; this is logical.

We cannot possibly see how a NCERT textbook or a national text-book or even a state textbook can give you the variety of entry points that we require for our education for it to be closely connected with the geo-culture. A de-centralized curriculum is absolutely needed, at least at the elementary stages; a curricular programme that is based on the geo-culture of the region and includes observing water bodies in that area, the bio-mass, the local songs and the local folklore. At present nursery rhymes across the length and breadth of this country are of the nature of Jack and Jill. Nobody knows who Jack or Jill is. Instead, there can be local songs and a whole range of local history, for example.

If all this knowledge can become the basis of curriculum building, then we may be able to engage the students in a more meaningful way. Also, the teacher will necessarily have to become a learner, for right now the teacher does not have an incentive to become a learner. At present, the thought is that s/he only needs to transact and deliver something. But since this knowledge is not bound in a textbook, the teacher will have to actually go out of the way to learn and then create. A teacher exploring these areas with children will

prove to be a wonderful learning experience for both of them because it is bound to be true that the children will know the names of the trees and the seeds which the teacher may not know. So, that also alters the power relations between the teacher and the taught.

We have been talking about what is the legitimate knowledge or what is knowledge worth treating as knowledge. When we have children of different sub-groups inside the same classroom, one way is to negotiate that kind of situation. We are not saying this is perfect, but is there a perfect knowledge at all, or is it that we should accept knowledge as perfect only when academics and researchers have agreed upon it? There can be alternatives. A group of class V children can get together on one platform inside the classroom and listen to multiple local histories, negotiate and reach a certain level. Actually, it is their knowledge at that point that will get refined and be continually questioned. There will be continuous negotiations which is actually the very purpose of education.

Some small experiments of this kind have been done which have yielded important observations. One important aspect of education in a diversity setting is to have a systemic engagement with the parents of the children. A lot of teaching and learning resources which the teacher may not be aware of can come from interactions with parents. Members of the community can come into the classroom and they can make powerful contributions to the school. During such an experiment in a small school, in a rural area where every parent was supposed to become a teacher for a day, we had a parent who was a potter. He wondered what he could teach in the school and came with the idea that he could make the 'round' thing which he had seen being used in schools to show the world. So, he made a globe and asked the teachers to draw the map. What followed was a systematic interaction between the teacher, the parent and the children.

Documentation will need to become part of the curricular activity and all the in-service teacher training programmes will have to focus on this so that each teacher develops his or her own curricular or textual material. Now, how we negotiate it with a state textbook is another issue. They cannot do it themselves and it is going to require a larger group to influence the policy.

Formal teachers and para-teachers

Some recent research reports have indicated that the para-teachers are better than the regular teachers. A para-teacher is untrained, locally selected, does not get teacher pay scales and is paid a pittance by the Village Education Committee. Her/his service is also not fixed. According to some, these teachers are far better teachers than the present teachers with a service pay scale, etc. However, I want to point out that the research pertains only to classes I and II. Even the District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) study which Prof. Agnihotri and Dr. Dewan have done clearly show that the quantum of learning between class III and IV, even after three years of attending these schools, is very low. I think it is very important to point out that whatever gains have accrued because of *Shiksha Mitra* scheme have only been for up to classes I and II. One could argue that 30 years ago children went to school at the age of eight and they learnt alphabets at home so class I and II level of education can happen at a semi-literate home as well.

The other point is that I have had an opportunity to interact with many of these para-teachers. They are extremely frustrated, angry and take this up only because they do not have another job. The moment they get another job, they leave. So one can imagine how such a teacher could engage for the kind of new diversity education we are talking about. They are not bringing in the kind of attitude and mindset and why will they. How do you expect them to make a Dalit child feel inclusive when they are the Dalits of the teaching society?

Question

Joseph Bara: I carried out an experiment in a village called Tejarh, where we had brought 60 tribal children. The para-teachers taught the

children for two years and we decided not to use script, but oral instruction. They used the computer screen to interpret the syllables and

subsequently, the children picked up the script. After two years all the children passed the entrance test for the class VI. My conclusion would be that para-teachers are capable of teaching children up to the class V because in a real setting, real time experiment, in two years these children had picked up skills up to class V, including spoken English, which is a very rare achievement for tribal children. Excellent software was used for this purpose and the children can now read any English book without understanding it. They

only know how to look at the phonetic clusters and they can read any word.

Janaki Rajan: What you are saying is, something like a bridge programme such that children who had been out of school for some time and who were not in the age group of classes I and II and who had somehow missed the bus of education, were able to do something with your software and one year of preparation; it is possible.

Preparing Teachers to Handle Diversity

Vimala Ramachandran

When we talk about diversity in school, very often people say that one of the biggest stumbling blocks within the education system is the people who actually point fingers at teachers. But essentially I am engaged in doing a contemporary history of teacher development. I have been working on it for the last 6-7 months and the only message that comes across very clearly is that you do unto teachers what you want the teachers to do with the children. You cannot expect a kind of a training process for pre-service or in-service that negates a teacher and completely throws out their experience, demolishes their self-esteem and self-confidence. Teachers participate in the six day *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* modules where they are told that all that they have been doing is wrong and everything that they have learnt is useless. They are asked to learn what they are told during the five or six days and all they can do is to retreat into the little textbooks that they have.

So, if you want to really build a school or a classroom where you actually respect diversity and you use diversity as a resource, it is very important to work with teachers. There also needs to be a complete re-imagination or re-thinking on how we look at pre-service training and in-service training.

The second point that I would like to make is that teachers are also from the same society as we are

from. So, they also carry their prejudices, caste identities, and economic status along with them into the classroom and very often in the government school, the social status of the teacher is pegged three or four times higher than the social status of the children that she/he is dealing with.

Thus, there is very little empathy and identification between the teacher and the children and in such a situation how is it that you enable these teachers to actually make the little bridge. This has been possible in some successful experiences like *Shiksha Karmi* scheme in Rajasthan starting from 1987 to almost 2000. They did identify local teachers to work with children, trained them as *Shiksha Karmis*, and provided an excellent back up system for the teachers. They not only had pre-service training but there was regular in-service training. In fact, if you go back and visit some of the reports of the early training programmes, one of the very clear requirements was that a teacher should be willing to drink water, sit and eat in a Dalit's house. They also had to sleep there. One had to pull out numbers and whatever number one got, one had to accept that dormitory. So you had to live with other people and then you lived like that for 40 days which was the initial *Shiksha Karmi* training. Those people emerged out of the training with a completely different understanding not only of

education, but of social relationships and learnt to actually respect each other.

So, I think, somewhere in our teacher training programmes we have not looked at how we can change the attitudes and practices of teachers. This changing of attitudes and enabling self questioning of some very deep rooted prejudices is very important. One needs to go a step further and have a continuous monitoring and support system, where suppose if you come across a practice that a Dalit child is made to sit near the backdoor while the forward caste children sit in the front of the class-room, then you actually take action against that teacher. So, you have to actually enforce the spirit of the Constitution (non-discrimination) while providing teachers an experience where they learn to respect each other. So, this area of teacher development has been a neglected area and needs a very serious consideration in this country.

I would like to conclude with one more point. I have been talking to the teachers' union in the last couple of months. The union in Kerala and Tamil Nadu has been able to negotiate in such a way that except for census and natural calamities,

teachers are not deployed for anything other than teaching. And that has affected their self-esteem positively.

On the other hand, in Rajasthan, teachers are made to supervise self-help groups, conduct Below the Poverty Line (BPL) census, give polio drops, manage fodder banks, issue job cards for National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), etc. This actually undermines their work of teaching children.

With all this you are actually undermining the social status of a teacher and seeing her/him as the lowest rung functionary in the government who can be pushed around endlessly. I think in some way teachers are absolutely central to this area of looking at discrimination in education. Unless we focus our attention here nothing can happen. I was really shocked to find that State Governments spend zero per cent on teacher training. All the money that is spent on teacher training is actually sourced from the Government of India through DPEP earlier and now through *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA). Also, there is a lot of corruption in the pre-service teacher training which seems to be coming up as a big industry.

Comments

Narendra Gupta: When it comes to teachers' training, I see teachers and doctors almost at par. Almost 99.9% doctors prescribe one or two unreasonable drugs in their prescriptions and these drugs cost almost twice more than the essential drugs. Money is the biggest motivation for them to prescribe these unreasonable drugs. We talked to them and explained certain issues after which they changed the manner of prescribing drugs. This shows that they do know what is rational and what is not.

How do I change their attitude, their motivation and practice so that they begin to behave ethically? We have evolved a programme called Social Epidemiology. Doctors were told that their clinical competence, acumen will build only when they start documenting their work. Even if they see 10 patients of Malaria they can document these 10

cases: How they treated the patients, how many days the recovery took, the follow-up, etc. This documentation can then be turned into publishable material, not only in a local journal, but even in an international journal. It was found that tremendous interest was generated among the doctors below the age of 35 years but the older doctors did not show any interest in changing their ways of working.

So, we have to find some similar mechanism where teachers recognize the importance of their being secular and egalitarian, and the need to respect diversity.

It is also important to focus more on younger teachers, mostly those under the age of 35 years as it is hard to instill deeper levels of sensitivity among older ones in spite of workshops or trainings.

D. D. Nampoothiri: The training programmes for teachers have to be conceived at a level at which certain other managerial issues can also be taken up. For example, in Kerala we have a network of unaided (recognised and unrecognised), aided as well as government schools. The productivity of aided schools has gone down. This is because the unaided unrecognised schools conduct the classes and make their students go through the unaided recognised schools to appear for the exams. This has created a whole lot of problems. The managements draw a huge salary but they have no knowledge of the concept of educational process or the well being of institutions under their dispensation. They do not have any managerial skill. Besides they are not given any exposure in that regard and no training is imparted on how to deal with the teachers. Teachers run amuck; they do not take regular classes, absenteeism is rampant and none of this is reported. On the other hand, the unaided private schools are no better. They have the latest infrastructure, but the teachers who include educated people with Ph. D, M.Phil degrees are paid the minimum, Rs.1,000 to Rs.2,000. Thus these teachers leave as soon as they get some other worthwhile job.

These concepts of how to manage a school are also reflected in the higher education sector. A large number of private colleges are coming up, but the management or the principals are not oriented to how they should function. I believe the CBSE principals have a training programme run by Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) and other institutions, but this is not the case in Kerala. The principal is just appointed by rotation or perhaps by seniority and her/his credentials are not checked or questioned. As a result of such problems school education and higher education sector in Kerala are declining.

Amit Kaushik: We look at teacher support but we are not looking at, perhaps, issues of management which are equally important. Regarding the presence of teachers in the classroom, it is all right to send a teacher for a 20-day training in the hope that it would change her/his attitude and make a difference in how they address diversity in the classroom, but if the teacher is actually not going to be in the classroom, then where does that leave us? We have heard stories of how teachers sub-

contract their jobs completely to somebody else in a rural village, where they do not want to go. That is an important issue too.

Priyanka: If we have to deal with the teachers, then we have to deal with them the way we want them to deal with the children; and also, consider that they are the lowest in the hierarchy.

Along with that, it is also true that the teachers union is the strongest union, at least in Rajasthan and for several other North Indian States. Examples of sub-contracting are also rampant; teacher transfers and appointments are a source of electoral patronage. Therefore, what confuses me and the question that comes to my mind is that, on the one hand we are talking about training where the teachers are trained to conduct the class in the best possible way that one would like to conduct. However, unfortunately, the rest of the experience that the teacher goes through, threatens to render the training useless. It involves looking up to higher officials and trying to please them in order to keep one's position secure, and finding a powerful patron. There is no talk of plurality or diversity. An institution which is characterised by patronage invites corruption and the teacher is functioning in such an environment. So, how do we then navigate between the two? In such an environment, let us look at the *Shiksha Karmi* in the Lok Jumbish experience again. I have read and heard a lot about those trainings, but have not been a part of it. But I have seen the result of the training. I would like to ask why the motivation that was generated has not been sustained. So what has gone wrong and what is it that we did not get right or what is it that we are not talking about?

When we are talking of diversity, I am rather pessimistic and cynical about the whole system. What type of diversity we are talking about? Here is a system which was introduced by Macaulay where there is no scope of creativity, and the indigenous knowledge system. We celebrate diversity but the teachers are trained to execute only one kind of education. If you see the educational development from the British period to post-Independence period, and analyse what substantial change the system has made, one would find virtually nothing. I think, the system

is very rigid with no scope for creativity. Probably, you are successful because you simply train your teachers to make students pass well and make their mind little more dynamic. However, manipulations happen and teachers are always hand-picked. So, there is no proper system of training teachers or appointing teachers. The same teachers go to some of the refresher courses with the same type of courses. So, I think, this system is somewhat stereotyped.

H.K. Dewan: I have couple of issues. Firstly, I think there is a lot to draw and understand from what we mean by curriculum and therefore, what aspects of it we can or cannot touch. What could be universal and what is it that would be decentralised? The second is the question of refresher courses/training. Orientation programmes are about interaction. They cannot be looked upon as producing finished products. We must realize that teachers are also human beings and they live in a space which is partially made by them and their own mind is affected by that space. Therefore, any programme for motivating them, orienting them to think about things differently, and I am insisting on not using the word 'training', requires a facilitative environment for these ideas to stay. We need to make a distinction between supporting teachers and giving them a facilitative and respectful environment to generate their own ideas. In Hoshangabad, we see very little excitement and the experience would slowly eliminate itself from memory. It is in this light we should look at the Shiksha Karmi and DPEP. They created such euphoria of participation that people were moved. It changed the life for many educational workers.

All such experiments including Lok Jumbish must be lauded for making efforts to create a facilitative environment for the teachers. That is what has been missing in the DPEP and SSA. In spite of having 20 days of training, there is no recognition of the fact that this interaction has to be placed in an environment where it can be nurtured and sustained so that a discourse is generated among teachers which will hopefully lead to a change in the classrooms.

The SSA trainings are handled by so-called Master Trainers (MTs) and they are addressed by the acronym 'MTs'. The entire design of the

programme for preparing the MTs for interacting with the teachers is an ineffective exercise because it is a five-day programme where you have a key resource person training for three days and a Master Teachers' Trainers Programme for two days. The key resource persons do not participate in preparing the module. The MTs have no role at all and they have no scope of even modifying the module. If a MT deviates from the module, the external observer points that out. So these orientation programmes are in fact, anti-diversity.

Therefore, when we talk of teacher preparation, we also need to discuss the question as to what we are directing teacher preparation for and whether there is a consensus in the group which controls education regarding where they want education to go. Without that, any amount of teacher preparation is going to be counter-productive. Even the teaching community who are engaged in education in their teacher training colleges, seems to firmly believe that education is about teaching; teaching is about telling, which means that the job of the child is to silently sit and listen to the teacher and obey and respect all that is said. So with that framework, if our teacher preparation programme is being carried out, it is no surprise that it generates no interest. The teacher has to complete the full module including the assessment which demands reproduction of what was taught in the classroom. Therefore, when we talk about teacher preparation, we need to address some other issues as well. What is facilitative for ideas to grow in an educational institution and what kind of patience do we need to allow that discourse to build and not look for instant results in three months, six months? So much money has been spent, but there is no significant output.

Peter D'Souza: My comments are basically around three ideas. One is the incentive system. While we spend a lot of time thinking about the programme, what is the incentive for a teacher to be a part of this programme? The whole system again seems to be given as a set up. This is based on the very amateurish set of reflections because I have not done deep study.

I use the word 'incentive' as I think it has become so important today in Social Science language that

we must begin to think why somebody should make this extra effort to be part of all these skill up-gradation efforts, the 20-days in a year training and so on. If you say people enter this system through political patronage, why should suddenly they be enlightened teachers and therefore participate in all these programmes so that they can be better teachers? That needs to be probed a little bit in terms of this idea of the incentive structure to be a better teacher. The second idea, I am not sure if it is not old fashioned, but for teachers to perform these various roles that we are describing requires them in some sense to transcend their social location; they have to speak for all social groups. In this case, what would a teacher be required to do? What are the conditions to create the transcendental momentum so that they can begin to actually engage in speaking to all groups without the prejudices within which they are otherwise socially located? So, I am wondering if one should even consider this question of the transcendental act so that they can actually begin to speak as teachers. This is where the third idea comes from. It is of teaching as a vocation. Do we even ask this question today? I remember whenever we think of the ideal teacher, it is always this person who goes that extra mile, who does not do this because of anything else but for the deep love for learning or the deep love for teaching.

Ganesh Devy: I want to mention that there are some structural blocks in the realization to any significant extent of the hopes expressed here. The block comes from the structure of higher education in the country. Most of our higher education has been technology focused for the last 50 years. The next issue of course is that many are left out because there are not enough colleges. And then not many from those who enter college pass out. Those who pass out have to bribe their way through to get jobs and then they recover the money by starting tuitions for science subjects at high school level.

At the time of Independence, there were 58 universities, and today there are about 45,000 colleges and universities for higher education. Private universities run courses in law, engineering, humanities, but there is not even a single University for Education which can

produce good science teachers, good humanities teachers and so on.

We have a scenario where there is a vast demand for teachers but we do not want to use that opportunity of turning the unemployed to a supply chain of good teachers.

Rama Kant Agnihotri: I agree that structural changes should be brought about. To say that the whole education system is corroded and all teachers are corrupt is incorrect as children still go to school and come out with good marks even within government schools.

I have been sort of involved in a large number of teacher training programmes and I think it is imperative that we treat teachers with a sense of respect and dignity and give them enough space to articulate their systems of knowledge, their experiences and ideas. But I think it is equally important to fight the irrational and wrong ideas and the wrong things that they have learnt and they are teaching. The total conceptual machinery is not right and that has to be rectified. We need to recognize this if the process of learning has to be moved further, all the social stereotypes, for example, caste stereotypes, gender stereotypes, have to be negotiated in a comprehensive way in all teacher training programmes.

Narendra Gupta: How do we build a facilitative environment? As we go higher up in the hierarchy, people tend to think that they know everything very well and that they can undergo training in a capsule form and then go and implement things in the field very elaborately.

I was involved in the Jan Mangal Programme (a health initiative) with the Government of Rajasthan. While I was planning the training programmes for this group with a couple of volunteers, I had to create a team of MTs. During this I was asked why I wanted to train doctors for five days to become resource persons for the programme. I was told they can be taught in half a day and then they can organize training for five days.

I told them that all these trainers needed orientation on the role and responsibilities of the Jan Mangal Couples, unpaid volunteers recruited

by auxiliary nurse midwives after consultation with community to help meet the objectives of the Jan Mangal programme, generate awareness, create demand for family planning products and address socio-cultural barriers. They have to go through all the exercises.

This helped in flattening and removing the inequity which existed between MT and the person who is finally getting trained. The MT also internalised the training experience. I think if we bring some kind of a flattening in the training system itself, perhaps, we will be able to bring in equity, commonality and a sense of solidarity between MTs and others. So, the approach has to be very comprehensive.

Vimala Ramchandran: I agree on the point about transcending social location. I think that is really very important as a teacher, as a doctor, as a civil servant, or as a policeman. How do you enable people who are government servants or service providers or people who are community workers to be able to transcend their social location and be able to work with people from different communities without showing the kind of prejudice and without sending out negative vibes? I also agree that teaching has to be seen as a vocation and that you really need to move towards a professional identity of a teacher.

I would like to add another point in terms of enhancing both the skill and confidence of the teacher. The reason I am saying this is because the quality of higher education actually ends up determining the quality of our teachers. There is a kind of attrition that goes on and somehow people (generally men) who do not get into any other field come into the teaching profession. Among women that is not necessarily the case. I have just come back after interviewing many teachers and at least 50-60 per cent of women have chosen teaching as their first option partly because they feel it enables them to manage both home and office and in the specific context of Tamil Nadu and Kerala because it is a non-transferable job. Once you are posted as a teacher in a school, you can remain there for the rest of your life. This indicates the need for creating a more sensitive environment.

Lack of skills and subject knowledge and confidence is a big issue because teachers who go through a Diploma in Education are not able to deal with Mathematics beyond the level of class II or III.

H.K. Dewan: I think this issue of incentive for education needs to be elaborated a little bit. One of the points in that facilitative environment is that the teacher must feel positive about her role in the entire system. It could be because of some financial benefit, or just the fact that you are able to share with peers and to learn from them and you just discovered something new.

One of the elements of a facilitative environment is that the teacher feels a sense of learning. Many studies, though one can question the veracity of those studies as well, have shown that extra incentive or extra salary does not really make a difference to performance. It is important to recognise that incentives are very important, but the nature of incentives needs to be thought about very carefully. They cannot be financial always. Financial Incentive may work for something that you have to do once or twice. It cannot be for a long-term activity like educating children.

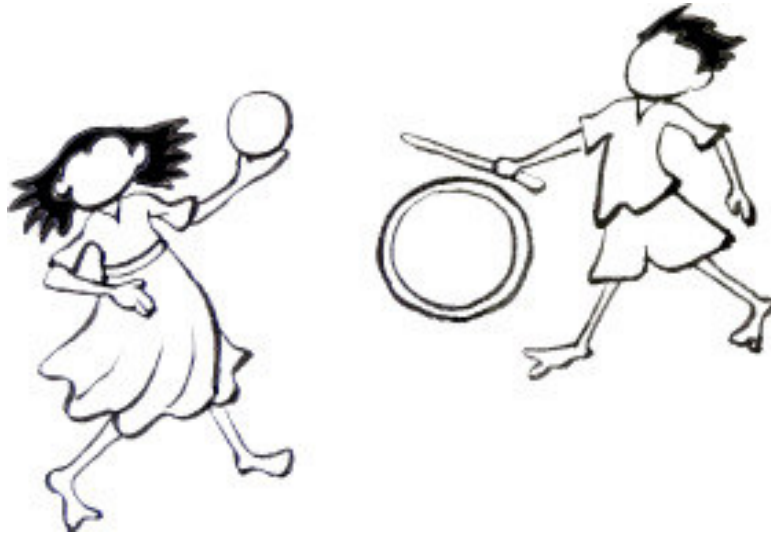
Regarding transcending the social boundary, it requires an extremely facilitative environment and a space to negotiate with peers and superiors in a group. This is so because the teacher is confronted with the task of questioning the wisdom learnt all of his or her life. For teacher coming from a background of insecurity and social experience, it is natural to come with a baggage of his or her experiences and upbringing, of what is valued and talked around him or her. The training programme that you provide for six or seven days is not adequate for shedding the baggage. The person who is interacting with me also has the same baggage that I have. We pay lip service to the actual question of the Dalit children in the classroom. We do not actually address or even realize what the manifestations of inequity in the classroom are. So we look at the entire process of equity as something which has to be transacted through a module. One has to read about it, somebody has to speak about it and the matter is over. How can this influence my behavior and my attitude? What do I do in my class? It is extremely

difficult to put down that baggage and not see in a child in the classroom a potential rival to one's own child when they would come to give an engineering exam or medical test, or when it is time for a Navodaya School Fellowship.

We do not have a process by which we can appreciate enough the transcending of class and caste aspirations to the other children in the classroom. In our teacher preparation programmes, our motivation exercise is *Mil ke chalo* (walk together) as if we are marching into a war which we can win in 15 days. We are talking about processes of transforming society through education and they are not processes that can be completed in such a short time. Therefore, we need

to be optimistic and realistic and should realize that it is a process that will take a few more generations and we may have to encounter many problems in the process.

So, what can we do for teacher preparation? How can we help the teachers to feel instinctively motivated and also become sensitive to the children in the classroom, who may not be like their own children at all? I think these are two very important elements of professional preparation apart from a third - which we often do not pay attention to because we think that teaching is a behavior- the teacher needs to be aware of the purpose of education and learning.



Backdrop

D.D. Nampoothiri

Let me put in a couple of introductory statements about the kind of experiences we generally have in Adivasi Education.

Certain concepts can be useful to analyse and understand the plight of Adivasi children who have left schools. Borrowing from Pierre Bourdieu, I would like to throw light on how these children lack cultural and social capital more than economic capital in terms of being unaware of the possibilities and opportunities which they could avail of. I am sure cultural capital is not an unfamiliar term - it is one which a community or an individual obtains from the larger society by growing up in a milieu. Bourdieu especially uses the example from Paris where there are people with an aristocratic background who send their children to London or Harvard to study and those whose children study in Paris itself. There is a lot of difference, the boys and girls who move out gather a lot of information, skills and a mindset and a very different set of self-confidence. This is missing in a person who is stuck to the grooves of a small area especially a remote area.

So, I think one would find issues of a different nature in the case of an Adivasi milieu. May be one can call them 'at risk children' and 'at risk communities' in terms of the educational process. It is very difficult for them to achieve an educational level which is at par with other communities. This is a structural issue and I believe that this is the context in which we have to look at the problems of Adivasi education.

Kerala claims to be a state with 100% literacy and that would imply literate Adivasi communities as well. But a project we undertook two years ago showed that their achievement level is much below the desired levels as compared to the other communities. Very few students from the Adivasi communities, mainly from the Malayarayans community, get into engineering or professional colleges. Most of the other communities still lag behind especially the Paniya community which forms 50% of the Adivasi population in Kerala. There are only one or two students who have got admission to the professional colleges even as late as in 2006-07. This is the kind of challenge that we face.

Challenges to Adivasi Education: A Delineation

Ganesh Devy

It is customary now in the country to speak of the SCs and the STs as if just one comma is enough to separate them, but they cannot be submerged within a single clause of the longish political statement. However, it is necessary to note that tribes is a category which is not yet fully defined and definitely not understood even partially in this country.

What is a tribe

When the Portuguese came to India they described

all the communities in the country using the term tribe; the British travelers in the earlier part of the colonial times did not use the term that liberally. They had other terms like 'jantu', 'barbarians', etc. In the beginning of the 19th century, the term tribe got settled in the English colonial discourse for those areas which did not have a clear political leadership in such a way that treaties could be struck. In the Peshwa Kingdom, the British did not speak of tribes, but in the areas which were forested and so on, the term tribe was used for all

communities in respect of the ethnographic origin they had.

In the 1860s, the term tribe was very liberally used in the context of Africa in the English language. Particularly those communities after the Franco-Persian war, when the map of Africa was drawn in straight lines, who were spill over beyond those straight lines were problematic communities for the Europeans and they came to be described as tribes. Even in India, most of us believe that all African communities are tribes and it is a mind-boggling linguistic historical mistake about description of any people anywhere in the world. When the Germans decided to set up their Department of Forest to build their Navy to grow trees in Germany, the British decided to set up a Department of Forest to build the British Navy. But the Department was set up not in England; even today they do not have Department, a Ministry of Forest & Environment in England; it is in India and two-thirds of the land mass was given to the Forest Department. One-third was given in revenue in such a way that the forest land could be sequentially and gradually released to the Revenue Department. That arrangement continues even today. The two-third has now shrunk to much less. The people living in forests who resisted this creation of the Forest Department and new law then were put in a list described as the List of Indian tribes - this happened in 1872. The British had created another list the year before which was made under the title 'Criminal Tribes of India'. These were not the forest dwellers necessarily. These were those who minted money, the money makers. The coin had to be of exact value; the correspondence of weight and value was fixed in India and therefore the princes did not get into making coins, but it was in private sector. Many other communities who were somehow, as the British thought, infringing on their trading activity or their state right were all pushed into another category. We accepted those lists and occasionally tinker with them, add to them, rarely removing from them. That list of scheduled tribes stayed with us.

Those tribes notified as criminals subsequently in free India got de-notified because most of them were nomadic communities. The last census was conducted in 1931, which was a scientific census of these communities. In 1961, there was some

reproduction of that, but as of today, we do not know how many of these communities are there. At one time I was advising the Government of India on de-notified tribes and I had listed 191 communities as de-notified and nomadic communities. It is a grey area; the Ministry of Tribal Affairs in this country does not know exactly how many tribes are there because tribes are listed State-wise and when the State-wise listing is added, we come to the figure of 680 or roughly, say 700. Some of them are called primitive tribes because the British called them primitive tribes. There is no verification, there is no human development index that compares one tribe with another and the Ministry itself was created very recently.

In this situation, whoever has been described as tribe is accepted as being a tribe. Not all tribes are necessarily tribes as tribes are understood in the post-industrial imagination. The next feature is that all tribes are not of one kind. All tribe blocks are not of one type, they belong to at least four distinct language families, namely, the Austro Asiatic, Dravidian, Indo Aryan and Sino-Tibetan and there are distinct differences among these blocks.

Drafting an education policy

Now, when we think of one single policy for their education it is like deciding on synthetic food to be given to all fish in an ocean; for some, it will be poison, for some food. However, I will join that general folly of thinking of a single policy for all tribes together because there is no option at the moment in this country.

We have to think of the reservation policy and of the communities listed as 'tribals' who have the lion's share of professional positions, occupations and have also been the subjects of much criticism and stereotyping as a creamy layer. The next type is the generation in the villages which is not able to see any future in the agricultural or forestry occupations because the land size is small. A typical land holding of a tribal in this country is 1.46 acres and they know that there is no future in agriculture for them. Therefore, the second brother or the third brother in a family takes high school education seriously, in the hope that somewhere he will become a peon or a cycle repairer.

So, this is the class which needs good high school education. There is a mass of youngsters among tribes in immediate need of good high school education and then there are the tribals, who are still on the extreme fringes, still in the villages, and are hoping that they will somehow survive with the help of agriculture. They are illiterate as we understand literacy and therefore their need is of primary education.

The linguistic data in the Census of 1971, lists about 90 languages as the non-scheduled languages, but not even one tribal language, or perhaps one, is now in the scheduled languages. The large linguistic diversity in this country is preserved by tribals, but education is one agency which will be very eager to destroy that linguistic diversity. Therefore, primary education in tribal areas has to be sensitive to the linguistic diversity or we would have no choice but to allow more than 80 languages to die in our presence and it would be no less than genocide.

Therefore, primary education in tribal areas has to develop tools to teach the people in their own languages and whether it fits the policy, whether it is affordable or not. It is a moral responsibility because these languages were created over centuries; in some cases it could be 50 years, in some three centuries or in some about 2,000 years. What has been created by such vast mass of people cannot be allowed to die merely because we have this hope that everybody should become just lexically literate. It is not writing which is a sacred thing but knowledge.

It is a folly to think that writing would bring about a knowledge society or community. The scripts have no logical connection with languages. The English language does not have a script of its own and it is the Roman script which is being used to write English. Various scripts can be used for various languages and we have witnessed scripts being used to write one language and later another too.

Indian languages which counted as languages were put to script by Lalluji Lal under the aegis of Fort Williams College, Calcutta (a centre of learning languages) at the beginning of the 19th century. All tribals remain on the borders of states because in every state they are a linguistic minority

except for the new states which have now come up as a result of tribal politics.

Primary education for tribals must be language sensitive and must use oral means rather than scripts. This does not imply that they need not learn how to write but that they can do so later after the process of knowledge building starts. I feel that the primary education in this country wastes about three years of a child's life just forcing the child to recognise characters and reproduce them. I carried out an experiment with children and succeeded in reducing these three years. This experience has been documented to be presented to the Ministry of Education with the belief that it will save a vast amount of resources in this country.

Another issue is the extension of the tenure of childhood by our school system to 15 years, two years of kindergarten (KG) and one year of nursery in addition to the 12 years. While the tenure for childhood is 15 years, the time given for innocence is much less and this mismatch between innocence and the childhood is causing a serious psychic disorder among the younger generation. Firstly, they have become incapable of asking good, seemingly innocent questions, and secondly, they are becoming violent. Now we are addressing the issue of violence and lack of creativity separately, but to return to primary education, language sensitivity is a must and the emphasis on the written has to be reduced and more emphasis should be put on the oral.

Fighting stereotypes about tribals

For the high school education, there is a conspicuous lack of laboratories and science schools in tribal areas. In tribal districts of India, there are not more than 40 science colleges, which is an indication of how many schools allow children to go to the Science stream. Gujarat has a population of 70 lakh tribals and there are only two high schools allowing children to attend 12th standard with Science. So they are all forced to study for a Bachelors degree in Arts or Commerce (B.A./B.Com.) possibly. Because there are no Science schools, Mathematics is a subject which is not taught well or not taught at all in high schools in tribal areas. It is a paradox that we are preparing tribal children to produce good work in the languages of the states first by taking away

their own mother-tongues. Somebody is castrated and then asked to be extremely generative. It is a bit of an irony that we expect so little of them and then blame them that they are not performing well.

In the area of higher education, tribals are victims invariably of a tremendous unstated hatred from the teacher community. This may be because they are seen as being there by default or by virtue of the reservation policy. However, I would like to argue that examinations are common for them even at the entrance points though there may be a small concession given. People hesitate to send their family members to a doctor who belongs to the Scheduled tribe for treatment because they believe that s/he is not likely to have enough knowledge of medicine. This stereotyping seems to be common and needs to be rectified through sensitization and absolute rigid insistence on the quota. Even if there were no Constitutional obligations regarding this issue, one should have got into a movement demanding the prevention of atrocities against tribals and scheduled castes. Just as there is a mandatory cell for supporting women, who suffer in service, there has to be in every college as part of educational policy, a cell to mentor and support the tribal children.

So, this kind of discrimination at the college level also does not help their cause in bringing forth the knowledge system they have inherited just because they do not get integrated in the knowledge pool that the country is generating. This is about the Adivasis.

The total population for the de-notified and nomadic tribes is six crores and in all there are 191 such communities. They carry the stigma of being thieves and criminals and the children face the same situation in the classrooms. I was fortunate to study in a 'Vadar' school in Sangli. Vadars are stone crushers, they migrated from Orissa to Andhra, then to Karnataka, and then to Maharashtra. Therefore, they are called 'Vodra' or 'Vadars' even today. Vadars have enormous skills and they have worked on buildings, the Victoria Terminus in Bombay for example. Unfortunately, they are seen as criminals and there is nothing at all in the Education system to help change that attitude and recognize their skills. They are also rope makers, weavers, village level iron smiths and others.

We need to create a special school which is not inside a building but which is on a location that recognizes the skills of these people and issues them certificates for the same. We need a method of calibration so that the wisdom that people have gets recognized and rewarded. Ultimately, these are people who are service providers who know about their services, the marketing, the supply line, the making, and the apprenticeship very well.

Thus, we need to create a new school system which will give them certification; which would integrate them in the citizenship matrix of the country as honorable citizens.

Challenges to Adivasi Education

Joseph Bara

As a student of History, I am a little pessimistic and my pessimism is based on certain historical facts. We have conducted one experiment after the other with our education system. I happen to work on Gandhian education. Surprisingly, there has not been any debate on Gandhian education but overnight we have come up with a new concept called Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW).

Gandhi's wisdom and his critique of the colonial system of education were very clear: That the

colonial system is very literary, rigid and kills creativity of the mind. So, there is no scope for what we call creative intellectual development. Why have we not discussed this issue? There is no mention of it even in the Kothari Commission report. There are many other examples but let us now come to tribal education.

They are the commonest of the common people. But in the process of flattening of diversity, we find discrimination and deprivation of these people. Also, tribals are always known for their

cultural identity outside the caste system. In fact, there is a great dilemma of the social scientists in describing or defining a tribe. Tribals would sometimes be defined as residues of the caste system put at the bottom of the hierarchy. They are a group of people, who are most misunderstood and abused in the Indian situation. The national figure for literacy among the tribals is 41.1% which is much below the national average of 64.84%. Related to this is the stark reality that there are heavy drop-outs. In Jharkhand, from where I come, tribals form about 30% of the population and annually in the Board examination of class X, they account for about 50% of the total failures. The abysmal situation of tribal education comes to the fore in all states. According to the report from Chhota Nagpur, out of 91,000 students in class I, 61% were repeating the class, 34% for two years and more than 27% for over two years. We do not know the exact figures now because no child can be failed till class V. To examine the situation, particularly in post-Independence India, allow me to draw some inferences from history and see what the failures are, whether we have reformed the system or whether we are dealing with the remnants of the colonial system.

This can be seen under three heads: The agency of education, culture/language and pedagogy and contents. As far as agency is concerned, it is well known that the Macaulian system advocates the Filtration theory. Filtration means there was no scope for education of the masses. In 1954, mass education was introduced for the first time and the concept was advocated, but nothing concrete was done. The government delegates the task of

educating the tribals to the missionaries (who have their own agenda) because the tribals invariably live in the interior areas. After independence, many NGOs have been carrying out this work.

The more important point, probably, is regarding language and culture. Certainly one would like a mother-tongue for those to whom other languages are foreign. This language is only one indication of the vehicle of culture. The colonial concept of education was to civilize the tribals. Sadly, this notion persisted even after the independence of the nation. The concept of integration surfaced and efforts were made to 'integrate' the tribals to the mainstream. We have the Aadim Jaati Sewa Mandal and the like, for example. On the other hand we also have theories, such as the Museum Piece Theory by Verrier Elwin according to which the tribals should be left alone and no efforts are needed for civilizing and integrating them. In fact, there are so many examples of the tribals consciously or unconsciously making efforts to maintain their culture and at the same time desiring English education.

The third point is that of pedagogy and content. We carry out experiments in tribal areas with an understanding that if they worked in one area and they would work in other areas too. But this may not be the case in tribal areas. The assumption that tribals do not have any experiment of their own is also false. For example the Dhumkuria School was the edifice of the tribal concept of English Education. The school still exists today though in a dilapidated condition. I am yet to come across any reference to this school in any debate or book on tribal education.

Sewa Mandir's Work in Tribal Mewar

Priyanka Singh

I will describe largely Mewar, Rajasthan, which is predominantly characterized by tribals who make up for about 75% of the population. Out of the 600 villages in which Sewa Mandir works, 500 are completely tribal villages and 100 have a mixed population which includes Rabaris and Gayiris and one sees some common

characteristics. The whole area is poverty stricken and in one sense the issues across these 600 odd villages are pretty much the same. This tribal culture which we are talking about is not clear enough because it seems to be a paradox. On the one hand we see the rootedness in culture declining in the younger generation, yet on the

other hand you also see a very strong identity with the land, and the forest. The rate of migration is very high and yet a large number of people still want to stay in the villages because village life is also looked at as a life style. There does not seem to be one single reality and multiple things seem to be happening here. But I will try to distill out some points in the context of education.

Most of the schools here are government schools although some private schools related to the RSS have started coming up in the very remote villages also. Then there are a few NGO led schools. Despite all these, even today a large number of children are still out of school mainly because of poverty. Also, the perception of the communities about themselves that they can do some thing to change the situation seems to be very low. They are in very debilitating conditions and this has to be looked at together with fragmentation and the absence of cohesive societies. At some places, you run into these notions of tribal community as being one cohesive unit that are very strongly inter-related. But that does not seem to be true and all these together makes it difficult for these communities to make demands on the government system, and demands within themselves, to change things.

We run 200 odd small schools with 25-30 children per school. Our experience of running these schools broke some of the myths and our own understandings about certain stereotypes and what works in these communities. For example, the idea that if there was a teacher from the same community, say, if it was a tribal teacher teaching tribal children, the teacher would be more motivated and there would be more community pressure on the teacher. This did not seem to hold true. High rates of absenteeism in our own schools which I mentioned earlier are indicative of this trend. We were able to bring absenteeism down to some extent. But the communities' own expectation of what a school should be like and how often a teacher should be there seems to be low. In this kind of a scenario, I would say that the impact of what we have done and what seems to be a possibility for future is that if there are sites of good quality education, primary and other education then it will help families overcome certain constraints such as that of poverty and gender.

In creating these sites, teachers, as was discussed, have been a key resource in what we have done. We have done a lot of work with them and we have made a very high investment in terms of time, money and people involved. We have been interacting with them regularly and not just during trainings. The work has also been strengthened and cemented by other efforts on deepening solidarity within the communities. So there have been a range of interventions that would help the community to come together, look at themselves and interact with the external world.

Regarding the issue of language, due to some limitations we have not been able to use books in the local language. It has also not been possible to create such materials. However, we have been able to use the local language in the classroom interactions, for example in the Saura experiment. But the point that I want to make here is that there are many ways in which we can have a child, a community, or a teacher to respect their own identity and culture. Using the mother-tongue or the dialect or the local language in the textbooks or otherwise is not just the only way. Referring back to the Saura experience, the idea was not just using the Saura language, but stories, anecdotes, life stories, etc. of the community and its people, whether it is in the texts or interactions. We explored several other fronts because of our limitations in using the local language and so that we do not get tied down to one way of doing things. Definitely, making these efforts has been a big struggle because it also meant working not just with the teachers and the communities, but also working on ourselves, our own baggage of understanding and biases. This raises the issue about the kind of institutional spaces that allow you to work on yourselves. So, if there is space and scope for interveners to work on themselves then it is an important ingredient.

I would like to reiterate the need for optimism and hope. Change is possible only when we work on several fronts; on a combination of several ideas. Only policy changes will not change things on ground. Our experience shows that it takes an understanding of all the different kinds of constraints at the level of policies, teachers, schools, constraints endemic and internal to the community, and constraints to interveners like us

in recognizing and finding sustained solutions. We are not into theorizing but we can document our experiences in order to share our learning with

others particularly with experts who are working in this area.

Experiences and experiments

Narendra Gupta: I have the experience of working with six schools where the students comprise tribal children. They are patterned in much the same way as the Rishi Valley School. Till class IV teachers have the freedom to decide on the broad framework of what needs to be taught to students but from class V there are clear guidelines. There are common school examinations for class V at the district level in Rajasthan. You can ask the District Administration to allow the children from your school to take the same examination, which is otherwise offered to the government school children. We found that this system worked quite well because it gave us four years to work with children using local situations, local objects, even local language to a certain extent.

I still remember that long time back when we were influenced by Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire, we wanted to develop our own educational materials to teach children. We developed a primer in which we used local icons and local language. The people who contributed to the development of that primer were, except for one, tribals who had passed the VIII, IX, or X class. The primer turned out to be an extremely interesting piece and they used them successfully in the classrooms. To scale it up, we brought together a group of people whom we wanted to train so that they could teach further in other schools. We then conducted workshops and found that the spirit with which the primer was created and the spirit that people who had created that primer had could not be passed on. Eventually, when it went to third layer of the training, all the underlying messages, objectives and the spirit of the primer on the whole was lost.

The lesson learnt was that at least till class IV teachers should have a broad framework of the content to be taught but they should also have the freedom to think about whether that particular framework is applicable in the local situation or

not and based on that they should be able to decide and plan their work. I think for a far stronger grounding, you can have children contribute. We see that 80% of the children, who pass class V examination offered by the government system, score a first division and the rest score second division; but nobody ever fails. Children from these schools have now become engineers and doctors. Some have done their Diploma in Engineering and two have opted for medical education. At least for the initial years, there should be some kind of freedom available to teachers to plan educational curriculum as they deem appropriate within a broad framework.

Ganesh Devy: When the 11th Five Year Plan was drawn, the Ministry of Education appointed a committee for Protection of Languages. I was given the charge of the Ninth Schedule Languages. So, we prepared a document for the Ministry on how to protect tribal languages and strengthen them. Then a Committee for de-notified tribes was also appointed of which I was the Chairman. We gave specific suggestions for education of de-notified and nomadic tribes according to the category and the area. Unfortunately, neither of these documents reached the Ministry of Tribal Affairs. They have not reached even today. The document for de-notified tribes went to the Ministry of Social Justice as a Commission was established under the Social Justice Ministry and the document for education remained with the Education Ministry.

Now the lack of seriousness is not in the absence of number of attempts, but in the integration of the inputs and that is where a group like this could actually integrate policy inputs in Planning Commission, the Ministries and among the educationists, and then actually campaign for acceptance of that document nationally, sensitizing the citizens, writing in media and so on. In other words, it needs a movement and not just planning.

Questions

Rama Kant Agnihotri: The question I want to zero in on is that if we consider under-privileged and minority groups, all characterized by diversity - linguistic and cultural - and their own identities and by utter poverty; what in theoretical and pedagogical terms is the special agenda for tribal education?

A lot of things said were applicable across the board for these groups. In fact, to me, they are applicable even for others, minus the poverty. What exists in the so-called high end and/or government schools is not the kind of education that we want. I think it does not exist, but I was wondering whether it is possible to even consider it in terms independent of castes. Tribals are not the only deprived group. I am sure there are a large number of non-Hindu groups that are independent of caste or at least for whom caste does not play an important role in the social structure.

Peter D'Souza: I have seen the discussion as sort of presenting problems at three levels, all of which are extremely important and valuable at the level of policy, where the argument is it is inattentive, it is insensitive, it is unstudied, it ignores the conditions of tribal people, etc. All this is a discussion of implementing but we know that,

even in the setting up there is neglect. For example, there are just two colleges with science that are set up for the tribal people and so on, and then there is a third level in terms of the actual working. There were some comments which, perhaps, need a little more probing. One should not work on the assumption that the teachers, who come from the same communities, could be more motivated. So far we have been discussing it from the supply side; but what happens to the demand side? Why is it that from the demand side, we have no pressure and very little involvement? The current situation is admittedly anti-tribal or at least very unfavorable to the tribal children and we need to change this.

To change, the same opportunities or spaces were available to tribal communities. But why has that voice not emerged? There are many MPs from these communities and they formally have the same access to educational systems. So why has not that voice emerged? Is it geography or is it something else? There is a strong Dalit movement which in a sense challenges these deficiencies that we have identified. But nothing similar has happened with the tribal movement. Why is this different?

Responses

Joseph Bara: When we refer to experiments, and talk about knowledge society, we talk about a movement. Everything is subsumed under the same one system. But is the tribal knowledge system really contributing to the knowledge society or the country?

About 128 districts are officially declared as inaccessible in the country under Naxalite influence where the government does not hold at all. This is an articulation of a demand. They are demanding that all this is useless for them including the governments because it is a question of a whole package and that relates to the location. The scheduled castes are located side by side and

these tribals are located at a distance. The face of the government that they have seen including school has not been kind in any way and has been destructive for them. That is one reason.

Historically, when the University system came to India, the tribals were deliberately kept out because they were seen as trouble makers since forest land was involved. So till independence there were no colleges in any area which are now constitutionally the scheduled tribal areas. It is time for the Indian Republic to think seriously about what kind of a Republic it is. It is too large a question, but the tribal resistance is very significant and immediately present here. It cannot

be seen as akin to the terrorism problem. We have publicity but not enough interpretation in the public discourse. I think this could be a programme for fellowship for this Institute.

Priyanka: Why is the demand for education not emerging? There must be some answer, and as you rightly juxtaposed it, why did it happen with Dalits and not with tribals? A partial answer, though it needs more probing, is that in whatever we do, if we do not focus it around good education, it is not possible. There are caveats to that. Some specific plan for tribals needs to be made but also that need is not unique to tribals. I am saying this a little hesitatingly because I know that there are some issues which are very unique and which need unique answers, but by and large, if we do not give good and meaningful education none of it will work.

Harsh Sethi: Tribal education policy must be a good inventory of good practices that would help. We have been asked what is unique and specific about something called the 'tribal question' but there is no one thing called the Scheduled Tribe or the tribe for that matter. There are many different kinds of communities in many different kinds of locations with very many different kinds of historical experiences. Therefore any one given set of packages which are likely to be applicable to all is ipso facto erroneous. There is a second part to it, that even in terms of what we have categorized as part of the scheduled, whether in terms of tribes, denotified tribes or nomadic tribes, this kind of proximity to or distance from the caste order differs in different places depending on the kind of role and contextual conditions. This aspect of tribal caste or peasantisation of the tribes has also been there for very long time. This is particularly important because areas that at one stage were handed over to the forest department and subsequently became part of a scheduled area have a range of legal restrictions placed on them in terms of the kind of opportunities, structures that they offer to those who are working there.

Now large parts of what I call peasantised tribal groupings or communities are in fact, quite upset with these restrictions being placed on them. So,

there is, they say, the mainstream kind of grouping, and the other. The final comment is that often the political response in terms of the demands which come from groupings of this kind which are numerically significant and geographically concentrated, is in terms of saying: Give us one state. We have seen some thing of that kind, but it is fascinating that it is neither with respect to Dalit communities or tribal communities.

The existing political leadership in post-Independent India has ever hugely demanded up gradation or improvement of education. And even with respect to the existing schemes which are officially there, when one talks to this leadership and asks: "What specific hostels for tribal and Dalit children have you got? What investments of are being made? Where are these hostels being run?" One is not going to get a satisfactory answer.

Whatever the response is, cynical or not, there are clearly two tracks: One, what educationists seem to think that these communities might need and therefore be given the kind of policy prescription that we come up with, and two, the existing political leadership coming out of these communities and what they seem to be articulating leads the process. I think these tracks are two very different kinds of worlds.

Gopal Guru: The tribals are not a homogeneous group and they do not live in the same situations. The clear cut precise definition is yet to emerge. There is a hierarchy of consciousness among the tribals. We have not mentioned the North East Indian states. An Adivasi is not to be looked at favorably in the North East. The earlier arrival of tribals of the North-East to modernity through education cannot be ignored. Therefore, what is applauded in terms of the restoration of local language would be shot down readily in North East.

The general image of tribal seems to be only in Jharkhand in the Central India, which might give you a partial picture which could be a deceptive picture at the same time. So, that has to be kept in mind when we are trying to really work on a policy package or any other planning. The response has to be differential; it cannot be a universal response.

The demand for education has to be stepped up keeping in view the two spheres of the public and the private, and the cultural and economic material. Treating the issue with the view that culture will remain stagnant is not supported by empirical reality. There is an ambition in tribals which is quite motivated by what is happening around the world. It cannot be contained. Lastly, whether it is a Dalit, tribal or a woman, particularly now with 33% reservation for them, we have to make a distinction between government and the State. Are they same or are they different?

I believe they are different and I think our approach and thrust is to become a part of the government; but what about the State? The State controls the government. Government is an empirical expression of the State and your only ambition is: I want to have a red beacon vehicle. That is my empowerment. I think that is a big problem.

H.K. Dewan: We need to separate three issues: Protecting languages, cultures and teaching tribal children. These questions would be difficult to deal with if clubbed together.

Ashish Saxena: I have some specific worries, particularly regarding teaching or giving education to scheduled tribes. Rather than trying to see scheduled tribe as a consolidated community we should see things in a differential way. On the one hand, we have the whole idea of creamy layer, and on the other hand, we see that there is a whole lot of variation within a state or within a region. Different scheduled tribe

communities share different things. For example, in the case of Jammu and Kashmir, there are about 8-13 tribes which are really coming up on the map of education. The other tribes are highly marginalized, particularly the Gujars and the Bakarwals, who are basically nomadic. They are far behind in terms of education. How can we accommodate them? We are trying to see the tribes in a holistic way without looking at the variation and their individuality. The second point concerns about their knowledge system. There is no denial that there is a need for preservation of their knowledge. However, we should not ignore the fact that they need to be exposed to wider knowledge. They are the service providers, but at the end of the day they need to be in touch with the wider world without getting exploited. Many times, it happens that they come out with their own economic pursuits or products, but they become victims of the so-called market situations.

Vimala Ramachandran : Today, in India, people who are involved in educational planning need to seriously sit down and review what kind of challenges are faced by the tribal areas and what kind of investments are required there. There has been a huge gap in planning starting from the 1950s and we are not willing to look at the specific challenges and opportunities in these areas. We have not actually drawn upon what has been done in the regular education system in tribal and forest areas. We need a much more rigorous reflection and planning exercise for making education more meaningful within the tribal forest areas of this country.

Multilinguality in the Classroom

Rama Kant Agnihotri

The primary issue in education is that the economic and socio-imperatives for running the education system should be taken care of. There is no substitute; that is non-negotiable and that is across the board once again. Once that is taken care of, I think that the most important issue in education and in curriculum is language, not only because it is constitutive of our being, culture and of our identity, but also because it mediates all other systems of knowledge - even if it is dance, painting or sculpture. There is a sense in which language mediates all these. Therefore, I think it is important that teachers, teacher trainers, university academics and all other agencies that matter in policy making or in implementation have some clarity on the concept of language, on its manifestations and so on. There are stereotypes about language and about the sociology of language. Of course, exceptions are there, but generally they have the kind of understanding that is incomplete and unsystematic. I think at best what they know can only be called biases and stereotypes.

Concept of 'a language'

So in general, the first proposition I want to make is that the concept of 'a language', though politically and socially viable, sort of understood in some sense, is really not tenable. I guess this concept is certainly understood by linguists who do formal linguistics, linguists who work like mathematicians or like geometers. For the concept of a language, they take a chunk and describe it like a scientist would or like a person would do algebra or geometry. But the concept of 'a language', as languages are used in communities, is not a viable concept. There are, linguistically speaking, no boundaries that are linguistically justifiable and divide languages. Unless we revise these notions, two very central issues, whether it is the issue of the education of children or it is the issue of teacher training, or even if it is the issue of

rationally and meaningfully incorporating local system of knowledge of which language is one, we cannot bring them into the space of the school in any meaningful way. We do need the concept of 'a language' in the sense of a universal grammar. We do need that concept in terms of an innate genetic endowment at least in one area, where processes of social exploitation have not invaded and cannot invade. We need that concept of universal grammar because that blueprint can be seen in all languages, whether tribal or non-tribal. It is hard to understand what was meant when somebody uses the concept of a civilized language. There is no uncivilized language at all and that is what universal grammar tells us.

Multilinguality as a classroom resource

It helps us to see that all grammatical systems, all languages are equally complex and have the potential to carry out any task, tasks from a folk song to the theory of relativity. All languages can do that without fail and the concept of universal grammar helps us understand that. Whether it is at the level of sounds, lexicon, and syntax or at the level of discourse, that kind of equality and complexity is demonstrable. And the demonstration of that complexity in teacher training camps always gives us very high dividends. Once we recognize the formal aspects of language and the nature of the universal grammar, then language is infinitely variable, highly fluid and we do need to recognize that. It is highly variable, both in geographical and social terms, and also both horizontally and vertically. A lot of work has been done in Linguistics and in Sociolinguistics to demonstrate and discover the nature of that variability, where the concept of monolinguality is redundant. There is nothing called a monolingual or monoculture. It is a matter of detail. We can all try to define and tell what Hindi is or what is English or what is Latin and we will be hard pushed to answer these questions; it is impossible to answer these questions.

So, any educational system that cannot ensure a place of dignity for the languages of children is not worthwhile having; this is across the board and the discussion in the previous sessions did show that it is possible. The moment you reject the languages of children, you reject their identity and their being and you introduce a multiplier effect into the drop out rate. Again, that has been demonstrated. Therefore, every classroom by default is a multilingual classroom ranging from a set of extreme variability within what we call a language (and even that would be difficult to define) to a very high degrees of multilinguality. This is one of our proposals and we are in a great minority. At the risk of being called a loner, I have been sort of arguing for a long time that multilinguality in any setting, which is the default case, can be used as a classroom resource and a very meaningful potential linguistic and cultural pedagogical strategy.

Multilinguality is a desirable goal because multilinguality correlates very highly and very significantly and positively with scholastic achievement, academic achievement, divergent thinking and very high levels of social tolerance. Again this is an empirical fact shown by a number of studies across the world. The seeds of this go back to our work in the early 80s in 'Eklavya Prashika' when we were not so convinced of this phenomenon. I have done a lot of work in South Africa and India, some of which is available in documented form. But it is not even a drop in the ocean. So, we need to seriously reflect on it.

India as a linguistic area

Multilinguality is not a matter of choice. It is not an ideology that one can take or leave. It is not a kind of an 'ism' but it is constitutive, and we have to treat it like that. The diversity is a given, whether you like to look at it in a physiological, biological or a socially and historically constituted sense. We are, of course, extremely guilty of historically turning some of those diversities into very high and regrettable levels of discrimination and hierarchies so that it is conceivable for people to talk in terms of civilized and uncivilized languages and in terms of languages and dialects. There are pairs of terms which do not make any sense to a linguist. Terms like Bhasha and Boli, Pidgins and Creoles, Khichdi or mixed codes or

mixed languages, are inappropriate and must be put in quotes, because they are all artifacts. Nothing is wrong with the people and their languages. They are as rule governed and as systematic as the purest and the highest variety of any language.

Language contact is not a recent phenomena and language fluidity is not something that has multiplied with high rates of migration in recent times. Language contact has always been there and it is a part of human groups and human societies. It has always been there and there is historical evidence of the Indo Aryan-Dravidian contact, in spite of the centre being bisected by the tribal belt. There are a number of features that traveled from Indo-Aryan to Dravidian and also that were borrowed from Dravidian to Indo Aryan. Not only that, it is conceivable that in spite of the diversity and linguistic heterogeneity available in this country, India is essentially a linguistic area. In spite of five different linguistic families that exist in this country that are completely divergent structurally speaking, there are features that are common in all these language families. These include for example, reduplication, something like *ghar-ghar* which is not a feature of English. We cannot say 'house house' in English; neither in German nor in hundreds of other languages of the world. In India, you can do it in North East, in Kerala, in Gujarat, in Madhya Pradesh, or anywhere. Reduplication is just one feature; there are about 25 features of that kind which constitute India as a linguistic area.

There is also another point that is raised slightly at a tangent, but will get connected. The maximum support for the concept of a language, for this kind of stereotype, comes from the well known equation that is said to exist, but actually does not exist. The equation is between a territorial chunk and something called the State, and something called region and religion, and with each, some or the other language that these must correspond. It is not how States have been constructed States. Even if we look at Europe, the US, England, or any place, they are characterized by variability and multilinguality rather than by one religion, or one whatever.

The other question that is raised is the whole issue of preservation of tribal languages. I have no problem with the kind of proposals that in a variety of ways imply that in the case of marginalized communities or in the case of tribals you must associate with the communities and try to understand them and their aspirations. But on the other hand, I think, as Ivan Illich put it very effectively, we must also be aware that we first spend millions of dollars to destroy tribal languages, tribal cultures and the cultures of the minorities and then we spend token amounts of money to make them museum pieces. So, if a tribal group says that it does not want its language but only English, you must understand why it is saying that. We can then make an intervention and have a linguistic plan. I am saying this in the context of language because this argument is very often given that these people want only English, and so they should be only given English. They do not want their own language. So, we need to enter into a dialogue with that kind of a point. I think diversity and schools are neither mutually exclusive, and in spite of the normativity that schools inevitably impose, nor are they diametrically opposed. They flourish with each other.

Multilinguality is a desirable goal because multilinguality correlates very highly and very significantly and positively with scholastic achievement, academic achievement, divergent thinking and very high levels of social tolerance.

Multilinguality as a pedagogical strategy

If we look at the SCERT (Delhi) books, they have some claims to multilinguality and at least theoretically, they have the oral tradition that was so much talked about. There is no sanctity to script so far as a language is concerned. All the languages of the world can be written in one script; there is no problem and one language can be written in all the scripts. After the NCERT position paper there is a wider acceptance of multilinguality and people are trying it out as a pedagogical strategy even though in a token kind of way. But it is possible.

As all of you know, India started with 14 but now we have 22 languages in the Eighth Schedule and we have two mentioned in the main body of the

Constitution. People forget that this country does not have a national language. South Africa decided to have 14 national languages. So that is written on the first page of the Constitution and all the speakers of those 14 languages were sitting there. They came from different tribes like Zulu, Khosa, Dabele, Afrikaans, and English and so on, and they said there cannot be multilingual classrooms.

To cut a long story short, I once gave a small demonstration to 300 people (in South Africa) about how the multilingual resource could be utilized. The interesting part is that there was one school teacher sitting there by the name of Ruth. She picked up that point and created a curriculum for one year for class VII with children who came from about 10 different linguistic backgrounds and created a multi-lingual classroom. The point I want to make is that no

classroom is different. It is just that no teacher ever asks what the linguistic profile of his or her class is. People just say they are all monolingual and speak the same language. Even in the remotest of tribes,

there is a high degree of variability. So this school was multilingual in this sense and she created a programme and experimented with it for one year. I was not aware of that. I was called back after one year and they wanted to show a film they made on this. They juxtaposed me talking about the principles of multilinguality on one side and the practice on the other side. The film is documented in a compact disc (CD), anybody can see it.

This has been implemented in small ways at some places, but I think, we do not have a choice. We have to think of more creative ways. I do not have all the answers, but the beginnings of the answers can be seen in some of these cases where the teacher learns to sit at the back of the classroom and be less intimidating and let the class become active, where the teacher is open to learn so many things that children bring to the classroom.

At the moment the children's systems of knowledge and children's languages do not form a part of our curriculum at all. We are the decision makers, we decide. We know the curriculum and

we have to decide certain section of it. But there is no doubt that the systems of knowledge and languages that children bring to the class can become an active part of the teaching processes.

Experience

Vimala Ramachandran: I had a chance once to spend about five weeks in one of the highlands of Laos in Southeast Asia. There was a group of teachers who were trying to do these kinds of things. They were trying to deal with a couple of languages in the classroom. They sort of painted the blackboards with different colored chalks with each word they were taking from the textbook. They then got a child to go and write it in his or her own language. They were using some varieties to write it, first in main Lao and then in Hmong and then there was one more. Every time they were doing a lesson, it was a live dictionary that

was being created by the children. The children would then go and draw next to the words. For the Hmong language, it was blue colored chalk, for the main Lao it is a pink colored chalk. So the children knew the color of the chalk for each language spoken. So anything that came up in the text-book they were taking and doing it so beautifully. It was one of the most fascinating experiences I went through when I saw what was happening in this little exercise and it was by just one of those people who were trained by World Vision. I found that this way you can actually bring in the diversity and use it as a resource.

Discussion

H.K. Dewan: Apart from multilinguality, there are other central issues to language education. In the culture of the primary school, the child is not expected to speak, and that is the first problem. Any communication that a child has to make, even if it requires urgent attention, has to be through drawing attention of the teacher and using a sign. Along with that is the question of what is correct and what should be the agenda for discussion in the classroom. How is it decided? In language learning situation, unless the agenda is decided by the teacher, there cannot be any meaningful input from the students. So, even if the teacher decides to allow the student to speak, the student cannot say anything because the issue that is being presented is a poem, a story, etc. which the student cannot relate to. Thirdly, teachers are often unaware that children cannot understand the language being used. And particularly for areas where the teachers come from nearby small town, there is no communication between large chunks of children and teachers. So I think before we come to these more challenging issues of how to use multilinguality in a classroom effectively, there

are certain basic issues that we need to actually worry about, for example how communication can start happening in a classroom. The teacher needs to recognize at least a 50 words vocabulary which is common between him or her and the children. There is a need for informal language communication in the classroom.

Rama Kant Agnihotri: These very important points that you have raised can only be addressed through multilinguality. There is no other way of addressing them because you want to provide space to the children to lose their inhibitions to be able to talk in their languages. It is of no consequence that the teacher does not understand it in the beginning. One thing we always forget is that classroom is an extremely formal and threatening space. Now the same kids when they go out of the classroom and the school, they translate and transcreate everything that has happened in whatever little way. Their languages are no more barriers. You should just see children in the playground- they talk. Let us capitalize on that resource and try to understand.

This is the first thing I observed in my Prashika (Primary Education Project, Eklavya) days when we were going to schools. I realized that these kids who were sitting numb in the classroom are suddenly talking to each other. For example, the point about script is useful here. Let us say we are talking about class III and IV; by that time there is some kind of script. If we understand that we need only one script to write all the languages then translation, group work and story telling become very potent sources in a multilingual classroom. You give a lead story. Imagine that in every group, there will be a degree of bilingualism. There will be some people, who know Bhili and Gondi and there will be one person who will understand Bhili, Gondi and Hindi. This is very common and through that process, it is possible to create activities and situations which will address silence. There is no other way of addressing the issues of the high levels of silence and inhibition in the class-room than trying to understand in a more nuanced and subtle way what multilinguality can do for us.

Gopal Guru: Let me try and put it in a very cogent way. I see the merit of doing this experiment in the classroom, which is an intimidating structure actually and that is why multilingual framework in the classroom helps in normalizing the situation. To that extent, this is really a welcome step. But there are two problems. We are already assuming that the language spoken in a different speech act is already linked up with experience of that particular child, even the experience of the teacher. So, you have multiple voices because the experience itself is multiple. You come to the class with multiple and varied experiences, and a varied articulation of that experience. That is why it becomes multilingual and that is enabling. But the situation is that this can be an initial condition of really helping a child to be creative and articulate, and to redeem the potential of the particular child may be on the playground, not necessarily in the classroom. But that is an initial condition. What about the essential condition of the development of the personality? The essential is not multilingual; it is already homogenized. The long term projection of the language is something that is not multilingual but is mono-lingual and very homogeneous in whatever form.

Therefore, there is an intersecting of the long term and the immediate. In the long terms, people always want them to speak 'that' language. The parents do not always give any freedom to the children to speak the language they want to speak. There is a superimposition of alien language on them right from the very beginning. The child wants to be creative in his or her own language, but there is a pressure from above of the long term. So, you want English plus this home language that you can always pick up. But what about the one which will give major break in your life? So, there is a temporality to this experience. I think that has to be kept in mind.

The other point is that since this experience of language will not stay with you, there will be a sort of deviation from your own authentic self. The more you move into the larger domain of producing knowledge, the multilingual will not. For example, by class X, you are driven by science curriculum so prominently, that you say goodbye to other forms of expressions though they are very important. Therefore, do you require people to have multiple experiences for multiple expression of language at the higher levels or can you just have it as a temporary arrangement?

Ganesh Devy: It is difficult to disagree with what Rama Kant has said from a linguistic point of view. I fully agree with you and these are my persuasions too. I want to add something to this. For over 200 years, English has been associated with livelihood and social mobility. The nation it would appear has decided that English is necessary for economic betterment; whether it is the Minister for Tribal Welfare or the Prime Minister himself, all believe this. We promised that English would be eliminated from the country after 15 years of the enactment of the Constitution and Hindi would come. But that's not how languages are made. A major emotional investment was made in creating language-based states; it turned into hatred rather than releasing creative energies. Result? For example, a fight is going on between Kannada, Telugu and Marathi in some places like Karnataka. Children they say should be Kannada speaking. In Gujarat today, if you wish to study in Gujarati in class 12, no good school is available. Parents are forced to send their

children to English medium schools. Even those parents who realize the significance of their own languages are forced to send their children to English-medium schools. This simply means that children are not able to read good literature in their own languages. There are very few children who can understand Sanskrit. Literature in Pali, Prakrit and Maghai is theoretically accessible to us but in practical terms we have dumped them. Once I called it amnesia; in the contemporary world, our languages have become a victim of amnesia and aphasia.

As you know children are severely punished in schools if they speak their own languages; they are fined, sometimes a rupee in extremely poor areas. We will evolve, we are evolving, several varieties of our own English. I feel very happy when people use 'ungrammatical' English; in fact, they are the ones who will save our country. Our college lecturers can not teach Mathematics or Chemistry in English. But they use expressions like: Shake, shake; move, move etc. I like them. But there is a question that belongs to the level of education policy. We have not been able to save our schools that use our own languages as medium of education. How shall we sustain and enrich our own languages at the formal and structural level.

Gopal Guru: There are levels of expression, but levels are also enabling. In one of the laboratories, I got the clue. If you want to give more heat to the solution in the tube, how do you explain it to the students and you are deficient in explaining it in English. He says 'hiiTiye' which means you want to heat up (something). Now this is enabling, a lot of multiple play is there. But if you want to insult a girl child in the class, you also have the wider range of expressions, or if you want to insult a Dalit or a tribal child, you have that range. So, this is the politics of morphological expression and I don't think that gets prominently expressed in local languages.

Ashish Saxena: If we try to see the multilingual project for the short term, it is good. But we have to keep in mind that there is always a sort of master language, which is also a sort of mainstreaming language. Secondly, we talk about respect for each

language. But if we come to the wider level, it means trying to see how the different languages are being celebrated or projected or may be reflected on some competitive platform. So, how much is it going to represent that aspect, particularly, at higher level. We see that we have a number of theses written in the regional languages. But when it comes to the bigger platform, some times these things are just lying in the dustbin. So, how can we represent those things in the public domain?

H. K Dewan: We cannot teach Hindi at the primary level without appreciating its politics. One of our most serious problems is that at the higher secondary and university education level, we do not have good books in Hindi. The translations are so bad that one feels that a word by word literal translation has been done using a dictionary. That language does not have any fluency or rhythm. And even that dictionary is dated. This I think is a very serious issue and we need to reflect on this. If we wish to respect the languages of children, it is of utmost importance that teachers themselves have respect for those languages. If in the discourse on education, if the demand for English comes from parents and teachers, then it is difficult to imagine how we will find a suitable place for Gondi or Kurhu. I fully agree with what I being said. Unless we use our own languages and focus on their literature, our identity gets articulated in a highly convoluted manner. The only empowered medium of articulation of one's culture and identity is one's own language.

Amit Kaushik: Some of the books in English that I have read are difficult to understand. English news used to be translated into English features. They won't understand the subject because the language is so awkward. We are giving an English medium, but we do not understand what is meant by being prepared in a medium.

Ganesh Devy: When all these issues were discussed, the Knowledge Commission thought of the National Translation Mission. Scholars from CIIL said that literary classics must be translated first in different Indian languages. We opposed this. We said that make a list of about a 1000 good university textbooks in Economics,

Sociology, Physics, Chemistry etc and have them translated into Indian languages. Many universities are already teaching at the higher level in the Indian languages. There is need to recognize and strengthen the effort rather than looking at it as a defect and a shortcoming. Secondly, we have not talked about Information Technology. This is going to be at the heart of any education system in the days to come. It already is very rapidly becoming easily accessible. We have a good opportunity to replicate that content in our languages and making it easily accessible to all. There are many people in this country whose English is bad but whose computer skills are very good. So, we can turn the history around if we plan in a visionary and systematic way.

I find it hard to disagree with anything that has been said here. But there is an aspect of things which I am not sure, whether it is being addressed, or exactly how it should be or could be addressed. The fact is that the situation today is not what it was, say 50 or 100 years ago. No country in the world today lives in isolation. While the issue of preserving, protecting and growing indigenous and our own culture, language, etc. is clearly something that we cannot dispute, the fact is that you do need to engage with the larger world out there. So, do we see that a transition is required; do we see that it is necessary to engage or are we seeing that engagement is not something that should happen at all?

There is no dispute about the fact that the preservation of languages is important. For example, someone mentioned that Sanskrit and, Pali are no longer in use or you find very few people who actually would use languages like that. Given the fact that you need to engage with a globalised sort of world, can we sit back and say that we want to turn the wheel of history around completely and sort of disengage from that larger globalised world in terms of language? Can we say that in terms of primary education, leading eventually to higher education, we should only be looking at what we have within India rather than accepting the fact that English is actually a medium that is used everywhere.

Take the example of China, even in the remotest of villages they seem to be locating and posting teachers in local village schools and they are

spending time teaching a whole generation of young Chinese students English, not necessarily at the cost of Chinese. But the fact is that they are seeing this as a strategic engagement with the larger world. So how do we see ourselves as doing that?

Harsh Sethi: Just two or three not necessarily connected points. Often, we get the statement of the politics of language in this country in terms of the imposition of Hindi over non-Hindi, etc. You do get an alternative formulation in terms of the politics of influence in this country as the decimation of erstwhile Indian languages by English. Now you may get a situation, as Ganesh said, of a whole variety of Indian English, but that to help you negotiate the household communication, in personal relationships and the bazaar is very different from your being able to negotiate everything else.

The second is that when we are talking in terms of levels of education and learning, then there is a scarcity of text-books. So, in any case we have to be clear that there are some constraints that the market gives us. Whatever the size of the linguistic grouping, whatever it is displacing in terms of the range that we are going to be playing around with, we are not going to be playing with 20% or 40% things, but we might be playing with 10 or 15.

The third point is that every other country that one knows of, which in its phase of making scientific and technological breakthroughs and mass education (that necessarily rely on English), has extremely sophisticated and well funded translation programmes at every possible level. Even now, for instance, it is very difficult to find a Japanese social scientist who can speak English with any order of competence. We are now getting a range of American trained Japanese, who are not bad, but they all seem to carry this little simulator and they all seem to understand exactly what you are saying; they can read English fluently and they have this little electronic dictionary. One sees the same thing with Chinese in the last 10 or 12 years.

Finally I think, this is absolutely true that unless we build power in a language in terms of it being accepted by the adult or the world of the market, it is usually unlikely that it will be building to move, as has happened in the Hindi belt, from the private

and the domestic and the every day sphere to anything else. In our world, we are not even successfully bilinguals. For example, Hindi is a language of one set of people for one set of things. The world of the dominant male professional and other successful people is the world of English. I think we have had different orders of distortion and we move very far away from children in schooling and therefore we need to have policy with respect to textbooks and how they are to be written, and in how many different languages, etc.

Joseph Bara: When you are talking of multilingual education, is there an assumption that in the set of what is multilingual, there must be at least one language of the market or can one just have in that set, languages of the home? The second point is, when we are talking of multilingual education in the Indian context particularly with respect to marginal groups and regions, is the thrust on overcoming disadvantage or is it about taking advantage of opportunities? These are not the same.

My sense is you are fighting a negative set of practices. In the second case, if I look at the argument of multilingual education located in Scandinavia, for example, they don't encourage students to learn Finnish or the five or six languages that could be part of that region, but there would be English or German or French. So, it is not that they do not want to share the different cultural worlds that, say, the Danish or the Norwegians or the Finns or the Swedes have produced, but rather want them to connect with the larger language of the market.

D.D. Nampoothiri: It is a tangential point but one of the problems we faced in our centre in Kerala is low quality of teaching English in schools. They teach English in Malayalam. I do not know how they do that, but the result is that a boy who has 70% marks in B.Tech., who has studied in one of the best Government Engineering colleges in Trivandrum, comes to our centre but he cannot speak a single proper sentence in English. How will you manage that? Our faculty has had a very tough time in dealing with the communication skills. The fact is that they have a sense of fear of ridicule when they speak, especially Dalits and Adivasi children. So in five months, we somehow managed so that a majority of them are able to use

the language reasonably well. It seemed no short of a miracle. There is a kind of fossilization of errors and poor teaching at the school level has really carried over and that is one of the major problems which we face. We have to use all kinds of strategies to make them overcome the inhibitions. For example, we would use theater as a strategy and ask them to stage a play in English after two months. Some of them do that.

H. K. Dewan: I would like to say two things. One stems from the earlier issue when we talk about multi-linguism as a resource, we are not talking about teaching all those languages, as far as I understand. We are talking about using it as a vehicle to learn some other language and that language is a common language which we have to think about; what it should be, in what region and why should we make that choice. That is a vexed question we have not talked about it. We are saying that multilingualism is a way of enriching the mind of a child because the concepts that come from different languages have different nuances and then those nuances are shared in the classroom. The child picks up all those nuances and therefore our understanding is deeper and that is what brings me to the next question.

I think we are producing students, who do not understand conceptually any area and therefore whether they speak English or not the only thing they can do is to run call centers and that is a serious problem of Indian education. If you want to have good Physics students, if you want to have good Mathematics students, good people who think about pedagogy in education, they need to know their language and I think you cannot capture the essence of the wisdom around in a language which is alien. It is possible that in 200 years, English will become the language of everyday speech in India. And if we are saying that we have thousands of varieties of English, then it is very good. This is like saying that we have thousands of different languages, again which is fine. The variety is fine but if all our languages are going to be replaced by English, then saying let us learn English as a style and then negotiate with the global world is not fine. If we understand one language well, if we know how to read in one language well, and know one discipline well, learning English is not a big deal.

The problem is that we are forcing ourselves to learn English, too early with teachers who do not know English in situations where there is no

background of the language and therefore, we are producing incompetent scholars.

Curriculum statements, textbooks and multilinguality

Minati Panda: Now, we have new NCERT textbooks in place and so if we take this perspective, our curricular statements remain the same. There will be no problem with that, but with a given set of textbooks, knowing that the teachers take it as given, can we practice multilinguality?

Rama Kant Agnihotri: I am a party to the position paper, but I will wash my hands off the textbooks. I do say that a lot of the questions that are raised are subsumed under the concept of 'a language' and people are not willing to put a question mark on that. I will give you an example. You cannot give me a single sentence of Hindi, something that you can then defend as a sentence of Hindi. You cannot, otherwise etymological dictionaries will have no meaning. Even in terms of syntax or morphology, Hindi will share several features with other languages. You will run into lot of problems. These are social artifacts, let us understand that first.

Secondly, I tried to put it across very strongly that this is not a question of choice or temporality. You cannot say, let us have it as a cosmetic sort of thing at the primary level and then we will get rid of it. No! multilinguality is constitutive of our beings. It has to be there. It may be there in a degenerate form or in a flowering form. The purpose of education should be to have it in an enriched form.

It is fine if you can do one thing well using multilinguality as a resource. Technically, we make a distinction between what is called BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skill) and CALP (Cognitively Advanced Language Proficiency). Now some of you talked about different kinds of discourses which are only one component of the multilinguality that I am talking about. This is at the level of CALP. So, you talk of literature, textbooks and university education. There is enough empirical evidence that if you can equip your child to develop CALP abilities in one language, they automatically get transferred to another. It is not uncommon. You do find a large

number of people who enjoy Hindi poetry as well as English, Urdu and Bangla poetry. So, multilinguality is not some thing about which you can say that there is enough of multilinguality now and let us proceed to the master language.

Looking at it historically, we are all historically produced. For 300 years when the British were ruling this country, they did not do anything to the languages; English was nowhere. The language of power and the language of getting jobs was Persian. Every Indian was learning Persian and anybody who mattered in the East India Company was trying to learn Persian. There is enough evidence to that effect. Macaulay comes much later and we know that scenario much better than that.

I would request every one to read David Graddol's book 'The Future of English?' What is the evidence to say that the myth of English will survive longer than the myth of Greek, Latin or Sanskrit, Arabic or Persian? The only support is technology. Technology supports English, but I think a moment's reflection will tell you that technology is supporting other languages equally well and will support them better very soon; it has got to.

So it is not proper to equate master language, global economy and everything with English. There is some problem there and we need to reflect on it. Coming to the very important question of empowering people in the target language or the language of the market or the community-- we look at these as if there was a fundamental contradiction between empowering in these two or three languages. In the history of writing good textbooks, a textbook is written not before the course, but after the course. All textbook writing bears evidence to this at the university level. A good professor gives a series of lectures at the university, then puts it together into a textbook. That is how textbooks have been written. So, my plea is that even within the same language, if you look, let us say only at the globally powerful

language, English, at the moment, if you want to empower every child with English, please do so, but with the awareness of that what has happened so far. According to Graddol, what happened to Persian will very soon happen to English. It is inevitable and he gives the reasons. It is an empirical study and is freely available on the Internet. Within the same language, the English that you are using for teaching at the university and writing research articles in the range of variability that you have, you need to control all those registers. In some of those registers other languages will come in and flow into English and enrich it or enrich other languages. That is what is meant by multilinguality.

So, it has to be there at all levels of human behavior; and I take this point - are we trying to capitalize on something that is already there or are we trying to make a set of legitimate fight for the under-privileged? I would say, I am trying to do both. I am really trying to do both and it is worthwhile doing that because I think that is the only hope we have for empowering the languages of underprivileged children. We do need to empower them. We do need textbooks for them.

I disagree that nothing has happened in Hindi. You just have to survey the Hindi world where a lot has happened. If you are not happy with the Hindi textbooks, go and read textbooks in Malayalam or Tamil. If you say that Malayalam or Tamil or Telugu have been empowered, we need to go into the processes that empowered them. One can look at what has happened to Bodo, little recognition and encouragement; there is a world of difference now. Santhali is already being written in five scripts. It is not dangerous; it is good and there is literature that is coming up, things are being written, magazines, journals, etc. are being written. I think we do need to get into that process of empowerment.

Finally, about the issue of experience and language, again a very important issue. Everybody comes with diverse experiences and they get encoded in diverse languages to the extent that thought, language, experience, emotion are so closely tied, it is sort of one unit in a sense. How do you transfer and share that? If that were not possible, no sharing will be possible and no translation will be possible. However

imperfectly, it is possible and in many cases, it is possible admirably; people travel across each other's languages and across each other's cultures. That is why even when two people or two communities meet, when they do not understand or speak a word of each other's language, they create a language to share each other's experience and those languages today which were created along the sea coast, on the trade route, are today's standard languages.

In the textbook committee I was looking after the English textbooks. I was being told again and again that these are 'Sarkari' school children and should be given very simple things; one should not start with sentences, and with texts. But one should realize that these are children who are coming to you with two or three languages already. They are full grown linguists who also know languages. Are you saying they cannot learn another language? And then once that is made clear, they were convinced that they should be given most competently rolled out textbooks.

Janaki Rajan: Thank God, or whatever higher power, that children learn languages by the time they are two or three years that is before they go to school. If we had expected the school to teach a child to speak, I suppose they would not have any language left.

The other point is from all the things that have been said, what is coming out crystal clear is that there is a huge agenda for institutions of research and higher education. We need anthropological studies and studies on pedagogies and we need to sit and deliberate about language and a whole range of other things. It is very important for IIAS to kick-start this process across the country.

To conclude, we witness a lot of skepticism about teacher education. Whatever is being said here is absolutely of no use unless we share it with teachers and that is 50 lakh teachers. Those 50 lakh teachers take it to children and then we will see the transformation of the schools happening. When we look at the number of children and teachers whom we are going to teach through these processes it is huge. We all know these processes are required, if we have to have any kind of change. But we need to truly believe that the government school children require the very best that research can offer. The moment we believe this, we will find ways to do it.

Abbreviations

ANM	Auxiliary Nurse and Midwife
BICS	Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skill
BPL	Below Poverty Line
CALP	Cognitively Advanced Language Proficiency
CBSE	Central Board of Secondary Education
CDM-SSC	Clean Development Mechanism Small Scale Programme
CII	Confederation of Indian Industries
CIS	Common Wealth of Independent States
CREST	Centre for Research and Education for Social Transformation
DDA	Delhi Development Authority
DPEP	District Primary Education Programme
GOI	Government of India
IIAS	Indian Institute of Advanced Study
IIP	Institute Industry Partnership
MT	Mother Tongue / Master Trainer
NCERT	National Council of Education Research and Training
NCR	National Capital Region
NREGA	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme
NRI	Non-resident Indian
RSS	Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh
SCERT	State Council of Education Research and Training
SSA	Sarv Siksha Abhiyan

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The seminar on “Flattening Diversity” was organised at IAS, Shimla during May 29-30, 2008. Participants in the seminar included distinguished academicians, researchers, field interventionists in different spheres, educationalists, civil right activists and many research students. This seminar explored how structures and instruments that were conceived as ways to bridge hereditary / historical baggage, cultural diversity, social and gender inequalities have worked in India – especially in the education sector.

The title of the seminar itself has two contrary perspectives; one that emerges from the need for equity and thus the need to flatten the unequal treatment of the children and the communities they came from. And the second that looks at the current scenario as an attempt to homogenise and thus remove diversity. The seminar examined whether we have actually flattened diversity by forgetting it – by pushing the issue under the carpet in actual practice while keeping it alive in political rhetoric. It highlighted the glaring disjunction between the political rhetoric, policy statement and the administrative practice which includes planning and execution.



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