Contemporary Dialogue

Editor
Virender Kumar Chandoria

Associate Editor
Tushar Gupta

Academic Editor
Pooja Singh

Editor: **Dr. Virender Kumar Chandoria**

Ethics Policy

Aims and scope

Contemporary Dialogue is a peer-reviewed independent academic journal published by Samwad shiksha samiti. Contemporary Dialogue publishes articles, empirical papers, and review papers that foster multidisciplinary thought and academic discussions on diverse contemporary issues related to social sciences, particularly core education, humanities, and social and behavioural sciences. It examines some of the most timely and important topics of the 21st century in the disciplinary areas, such as

- Early Childhood Care Education
- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
- Curtailing dropouts and ensuring Universal Access to Education at All Levels
- Curriculum and Pedagogy in Schools and Higher Education
- Teachers and Teacher Education
- Equitable and Inclusive Education: Learning for All
- School Complexes/ Clusters
- Information and Communication Technology/ Technology of the 21st Century
- Research Rooted in Indian Tradition and Culture Aspiration of the 21st Century Connecting Indian Tradition with Modern Technology
- Link between School Education and Higher Education
- Multilingualism
- Assessment reform
- Learning-Teaching materials
- Research Methodology

Mission Statement

With the mantra "**Aspire to Beacon Change**", we aspire to become a lighthouse for intellectual pursuance and revolutionary ideas of Education 4.0 that address contemporary challenges, promoting equity and inclusion for igniting tomorrow by empowering global thought leadership through Dialogue. We seek to catalyse the impactful conversations that resonate globally.

Our mission is to provide a better platform for researchers, academics, and practitioners to share their revolutionary ideas and rigorous research that seeks to address the challenges and opportunities of our time. We aim to cater to intellectual growth and collaborative research, drive

positive changes, empower new voices, ensure accessibility of knowledge to all, academic excellence and lifelong learning.

Why Choose Us?

Contemporary Dialogue offers a range of multiple content platforms, ensuring high academic standards through a rigorous peer-review process through our expert Editorial Board. Our multidisciplinary scope enables the broader dissemination of knowledge and bridges gaps between academic discourse and practical implementation.

We invite working contributions from new voices, researchers, practitioners, and thinkers that challenge norms, inspire conversation and push boundaries in addressing global change. Your contribution will shape tomorrow's discourse and bring lasting change. We offer your knowledge a global reach with open access.

Terms and Conditions

Eligibility for submission: Contributions from scholars, educators, and practitioners across the globe. All the submissions must be original, unpublished, and not under consideration for publication elsewhere.

Copyright and Ownership: Journal retains the copyright of work published in journal. However, even by submitting to Contemporary Dialogue, authors grant the journal an exclusive right to publish and distribute the article in all formats. Authors must ensure that any third-party content used in their work is properly attributed and permissioned.

Peer Review Process: All submitted articles will undergo a double-blind peer-review process. Manuscripts are evaluated based on originality, academic quality, clarity, and relevance. The final decision on acceptance or rejection rests with the Editorial Board.

Article Publishing Charge:
Contemporary Dialogue follows an open-access publishing model. While there is no submission fee, authors may be required to pay article publication charges depending on the article type and additional services like open-access availability.

Ethical Standards: Authors must follow ethical guidelines in their research and writing. This includes obtaining appropriate permissions, respecting confidentiality, and avoiding conflicts of interest. Any research involving human participants must comply with ethical standards and relevant regulations.

Revisions: Authors may be asked to revise their submission based on reviewer feedback. The revised manuscript must be resubmitted within the time frame provided. Failure to comply with revision deadlines may result in delayed or rejected publication.

Privacy and Data Protection: All personal information provided by authors will be kept confidential and used only for the purposes of the journal's editorial process. The journal complies

with data protection laws and will not share authors' personal details with third parties without consent.

Plagiarism Policy: Contemporary Dialogue has a strict zero-tolerance policy for plagiarism. All submissions will be screened using plagiarism detection tools. Any work found to contain plagiarised content will be immediately rejected, and the author will be barred from future submissions.

Acceptance and Publication: Acceptance of an article does not guarantee its publication. The editorial team reserves the right to withdraw a manuscript at any point before publication for reasons of quality or non-compliance with the journal's standards.

Liability: The journal is not liable for any damages, loss, or expenses resulting from the publication of any article. Authors are solely responsible for the accuracy, legality, and authenticity of the content they submit.

Changes to Terms and Conditions: Contemporary Dialogue reserves the right to amend these terms and conditions at any time. Authors will be notified of any significant changes, and submission after such amendments indicates agreement with the updated terms.By submitting a manuscript to Contemporary Dialogue, the authors acknowledge that they have read, understood, and agree to comply with the journal's terms and conditions.

Submission Guidelines: Submissions must adhere to the journal's focus on contemporary issues across various disciplines. All submissions should be plagiarism-free, and all referenced works should be properly cited. Submissions should be made electronically through this website. Manuscripts that appear in the Articles section have been subjected to a blind peer review by three or more members of the Editorial Board or alternative reviewers. This process generally takes two to three months, at which time authors are notified of the status of their manuscript. Please ensure that the following guidelines are addressed when preparing a manuscript. Failure to do so may delay processing the submission or result in a rejection prior to peer review.

Author Guidelines: Thank you for choosing to submit your paper to us. These instructions ensure we have everything required so your paper can move smoothly through peer review, production, and publication. Please take the time to read and follow them as closely as possible, as doing so will ensure your paper matches the journal's requirements.

Preparing Your Paper

Article Type: Original Paper

- Should be written with the following elements in the following order: title page; abstract; keywords; main text introduction, materials and methods, results, discussion; acknowledgements; declaration of interest statement; references; appendices (as appropriate); table(s) with caption(s) (on individual pages); figures; figure captions (as a list)

- Should be no more than 6000 words, inclusive of:
    - Abstract
    - Tables
    - References
    - Figure or table captions

- Should contain an unstructured abstract of 200 words.
- **Style Guidelines**
- Please consistently use the British (-ise) spelling style throughout your manuscript.
- Please use single quotation marks, except where 'a quotation is "within" a quotation'.
- Please note that long quotations should be indented without quotation marks.
- Please note that using footnotes is discouraged; all essential information must be included in the article's main body of the text.
- All Contemporary Dialogue submissions should be in English and submitted in Microsoft Word. However, Tables and figures should be embedded within the text rather than at the end of the document.
- All manuscripts must be double-spaced and must adhere to the guidelines published in the Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (7th edition).

Patron and Editorial Team

Patron
President, Samwaad Shiksha Samiti, Delhi, India.

Chief Adviser
Dr. Chand Kiran Saluja, Eminent Educationist, Delhi India.

Editor
Virender Kumar Chandoria

Associate Editor
Tushar Gupta

Academic Editor
Pooja Singh

Contemporary Dialogue is run by a team of experienced editors comprising an Editorial Team and an eminent Editorial Board. The **Editorial Team** is responsible for the day-to-day management of the journal and its policies. This includes managing all editorial processes and supporting the **Editorial Board** members who oversee the peer review of submitted papers. The journal's Editorial Board comprises distinguished academics and researchers working across and between the humanities, social sciences, and allied fields. The Board's broad representation and deep expertise help ensure that the journal meets and reacts to the needs of the many communities we seek to serve. All editors' work together to ensure that submitted research is expertly handled and that they consider it to be technically sound, academically valid, and ultimately suitable for publication.

Manuscript Reviewers

A special thanks to the many others who serve as peer reviewers of manuscripts submitted to the **Contemporary Dialogue,** along with members of the Editorial Board. We are grateful to them for giving their expertise and time to ensure the quality of manuscripts published in the **Contemporary Dialogue.**

This page is intentionally left blank

Editorial

About 130 years ago, on 19th October 1882 Joteerao Govindrao Phooley presented his experience before the education commission regarding the mass education of the poor population of colonial India, especially those who are Dalits and excluded by the society as well as colonial government. He told that "A school for the lower classes, Mahars and Mangs, (Dalit Castes) also exists at the present day, but not in a satisfactory condition." Phooley also argued that "There is little doubt that primary education among the masses in this Presidency has been much more neglected. Although the number of primary schools now in existence is greater than those existing a few years ago, yet they are not commensurate to the requirements of the community".

Even after 65 years of independence of India access to education especially for Dalits and poor's remains a serious problem in much of the so called modern and developing India, despite repeated promises to universalize participation in basic education. Globally, about 60 million primary age children do not attend school, according to global monitoring report. If we include those who attend for less than 80 per cent of the time, those who are seriously over age for their grade, and those who fail to reach minimum levels of achievement, many more are excluded. In India, it is claimed that about 130 million children are enrolled at primary level (grade 1-5), and a further 50 million at upper primary level (grade 6-8). Of those who enter grade 1, less than half seem likely to complete the full cycle of elementary education to grade 8 successfully, and enter secondary schools. And somewhere between about 10 and 40 million children are of school age but are out of school, depending on which data sources are used for calculation. Most recently, India has passed the Right to Education Act (2010) which guarantees free access to education for all children from 6-14 years of age. But there is a long road to travel to make this obligation a reality.

Disparities remain large between the northern and southern states, and between the majority population and scheduled caste and tribes, other backward classes, and Muslims. Gender is still associated with large differences in access to education in some areas. Efforts to reduce the differences in participation and progression at elementary level through the Sarve Shisha Abhiyan (SSA) have resulted in some diminution in the gaps between these groups, but gaps remain and access also is very unevenly available within groups of children from scheduled castes and tribes, other backward classes, and Muslims. For instance many researches, who were engaged within the experiences of Dalit children and children from the poor families that systemically and legally challenged the state to work towards giving them protection, care and education.

In this reference it is understandable thought that Sociology grows and changes continually in response to new phenomena within world societies, to discoveries and insights within the discipline itself and to the mandate for ever-increasing relevance that comes from the very people whom sociologists study. Today the prominent aspects of world economic, political and social relations revolve around issues of inequity, those based on class, caste, race and gender. In the context of India anthropological and sociological attention to the study of untouchables, know known as Dalits, represents a major trends in Indian sociology. As has been rightly argued by

scholars, those who occupied the bottom ranges of society were invisible owing to the cognitive blackout perpetuated by the upper caste, middle caste, urban and male researcher. Today, however, they are in full view and demand there legitimate share of representation of knowledge. It is further argued that the attempts to create their own knowledge systemare essentially aimed at destroying the caste system that is constructed through the complex hierarchies of labor, sexuality and knowledge.

Let me express my indebtedness to the authors, reviewers, and the members of the editorial board of the journal for making this volume possible to publish. I am sure that in future the stake holders of the journal will shoulder the responsibility to take this journal to more and more heights.

The write-ups of high quality order in the form of personal research, both theoretical and empirical, are welcome for publication in the forthcoming issues of the journal. Our prospective contributors are encouraged to write in the areas of education and social sciences.

Feedback from all quarters especially from the researchers, academicians and corporate executives are always welcome. There suggestions and observations will help us in bringing more and more efficiency in the journal. Further, we look forward for the works and experiences in the form of case studies, research papers, experiences from the ground and book reviews from the academic fraternity and social workers to be shared by the others through this journal.

Looking forward for more ideas and thoughts in future.

Virender Kr. Chandoria
New Delhi

Contents

This page is intentionally left blank

Educating Dalits*

Joteerao Govindrao Phooley
*Memorial Addressed, To the Education Commission
A statement for the information of the Education commission

Abstract
Government collect aspecial cess for educational purposes, and it is to be regretted that this fund is not spent for the purposes of which it is collected. It is said, are without any provision, what ever, for primary instruction. A good deal of their own poverty, their want of self-reliance, their entire dependence upon the learned and intelligent classes, is attributable to this deplorable state of education among the peasantry. Even in towns Brahmins, Purbhoos, the hereditary classes, who generally live by the occupation of pen, and the trading classes seek primary education. The cultivating and the other classes, as a rule, do notgenerally avail themselves of the same. A few of latter class are found in primary and secondary school, but owing to their poverty and other causes they do not continue long at school. As there are no specialinducements for these to continue at school, they naturally leave off as soon as they find any menial or other occupation.

My experience in educational matters is principally confined to Poona and the surrounding villages. About 25 years ago, the missionaries had established a female school at Poona but no indigenous school for girls existed at that time. I, therefore, was induced, about the year 1854,*to establish such a school, and in which I and my wife worked together for many years. After some time I placed this school under the management of a committee of educated natives. Under their auspices two more schools were opened indifferent parts of the town. A year after the institution of the female schools, I also established an indigenous mixed school for the lower classes, especially Mahars and Mangs. Two more schools for these classes were subsequently added. Sir Erskine Perry, the president of the late Educational Board, and Mr. Lumsdain, the then

Secretary to Government, visited the female schools and were much pleased with the movement set on foot, and presented me with a pair of shawls. I continued to work in them for nearly 9 to10 years, owing to circumstances, which it is needles here to detail, I seceded from the work. These female schools still exist, having been made over by the committee to the Educational Department under the management Mrs. Mitchell. A school for the lower classes, Mahars and Mangs, also exists at the present day, but not in a satisfactory condition. I have also been a teacher or some years in a mission female boarding school. My principal experience was gained in connection with these schools. I devoted some attention also to the primary educations available in this Presidency and have had some opportunities of forming an opinion as to the system and personnel employed in the lower schools of the Educational Department. I wrote some years ago a Marathi pamphlet exposing the religious practices of the Brahmins and incidentally among other matters, adverted therein to the present system of education, which by providing ampler funds for higher education's tended to educate Brahmins and the higher classes only, and to leave the masses wallowing in ignorance and poverty. I summarized the views expressed in the book inan English preface attached thereto, portions of which I reproduce here so far as they relate to the present enquiry:–

"Perhaps a part of the blame in bringing matters to his crisis may be justly laid to the credit of the Government. Whatever may have been their motives in providing ampler funds and greater facilities for higher education, and neglecting that of the masses, it will be acknowledged by all that injustice to the latter, this is not as it should be. It is an admitted fact that the greater portion of the revenues of the Indian Empire are derived from the ryot's labour – from the sweat of his brow. The higher and richer classes contribute little or nothing to the state exchequer. A well-informed English writer states that our income is derived, not from surplus profits, but from capital; not from luxuries, but from the poorest necessaries. It is the product of sin and tears."That Government should expend profusely a large portion of revenue thus raised, on the education of the higher classes, for it is these only who take advantage of it, is anything t just or equitable. Their object in patronizing this virtual high class education appears to be to prepare scholars who, it is thought would in time vend learning without money and without price. If we can inspire, say they, the love of knowledge in the minds of the superior classes, the result will be a higher standard, or morals in the cases of individuals, a large amount of affection for the British Government, and unconquerable desire to

spread among their own countrymen the intellectual blessings which they have received."Regarding these objects of Government the writer above alluded to, states that we have never heard of philosophy more benevolent and more utopion. It is proposed by men who witness the wondrous changes about in the Western world, purely by the agency of popular knowledge, to redress the defects of the two hundred millions of India, by giving superior education to the superior classes and to them only. We ask the friends of Indian Universities to favour us with a single example of the truth of their theory from the instances which have already fallen within the scope of their experience. They have educated many children of wealthy men and have been the means of advancing vary materially the worldly prospects of some of their pupils. But what contribution have these made to great work of regenerating their fellowmen? How have they begun to act upon the masses? Have any of them formed classes at their own homes or elsewhere, for the instruction of their less fortunate or les wise countrymen? Or have they kept their knowledge to themselves, as a personal gift, not be soiled by contact with the ignorant vulgar? Have they in any way shown themselves anxious to advance the general interests and repay the philanthropy with patriotism? Upon what grounds is it asserted that the best way to advance the moral and intellectual welfare of the people is to raise the standard of instruction among the higher classes?

A glorious arguments this for aristocracy, were it only tenable. To show the growth of the national happiness, it would only enecessary to refer to the number of pupils at the colleges and the lists of academic degrees. Each wrangler would be accounted a national benefactor; and the existence of Deans and Proctors would be associated; like the game laws and the ten-pound franchise, with the best interest of the constitution."One of the most glaring tendencies of Government system of high class education has been the virtual monopoly of all the higher offices under them by Brahmins. If the welfare of Ryot is at heart, if it is the duty of the Government to check a host of abuses, it behoves them to narrow this monopoly day by day so as to allow a sprinkling of the other castes to get into the public services. Perhaps some might be inclined to say that it is not feasible in the present state of education. Our only reply s that if Government look a little les after higher education which is able to take care of itself and more towards the education of the masses there would be no difficulty in training up a body of men every way qualified and perhaps far better in morals and manners."My object in writing the present volume is not only to tell my Shudra brethren how they have been duped by the Brahmins, but also to open the eyes of Government to that pernicious system of high

classeducation, which has hitherto been so persistently followed, and which statesmen lik e Sir GeorgeCampbell, the present Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, with broad universal sympathies, are finding to behighly mischievous and pernicious to the interests of Government. I sincerely hope that Government willere long see the error of their ways, trust les to writers or men who look through high class spectacles, and take the glory into their own hands of emancipating my Shudra brethren from the trammels of bondage which the Brahmins have woven around them like the coils of a serpent. It is no less the duty of each of my Shudra brethren as have received any education, to place before Government the true state of heir fellowmen and endeavor of the best of their power to emancipate themselves from Brahmin thralldom. Let there be schools for the Shudras in every village; but away will all Brahmin school-masters! The Shudras are the life and sinews of the country, and it is to them alone, and not to the Brahmins, that Government must ever look to tide over their difficulties, financial as well as political. If the hearts and minds of the Shudras are made happy and contented, the British Government need have no fear of their loyalty in the future."

Primary Education

There is little doubt that primary education among the masses in this Presidency has been much more neglected. Although the number of primary schools now in existence is greater than those existing a few years ago, yet they are not commensurate to the requirements of the community. Government collect aspecial cess for educational purposes, and it is to be regretted that this fund is not spent for the purposes of which it is collected. Nearly nine-tenths of the villages in this Presidency, or nearly 10 lakhs of children, itis said, are without any provision, whatever, for primary instruction. A good deal of their own poverty, their want of self-reliance, their entire dependence upon the learned and intelligent classes, is attributable to this deplorable state of education among the peasantry. Even in towns Brahmins, Purbhoos, the hereditary classes, who generally live by the occupation of pen, and the trading classes seek primary education. The cultivating and the other classes, as a rule, do not generally avail themselves of the same. A few of latter class are found in primary and secondary school, but owing to their poverty and other causes they do not continue long at school. As there are no special inducements for these to continue at school, they naturally leave off as soon as they find any menial or other occupation. In villages also most of the cultivating classes hold aloof,

owing to extreme poverty, and also because they require their children to tend cattle and look after their fields. Besides an increase in the number of schools, special inducements in the shape of scholarships and half-yearly or annual prizes, to encourage them to send their children to school and thus create in them a taste for learning, is most essential. I think primary education of the masses should be made compulsory up to a certain age, say at least 12 years. Muhammadans also hold aloof from these schools, as they show-how evince no liking for Marathi or English. There are a few Muhammadan primary schools where their own language is taught.The Mahars, Mangs, and other lower classes are practically excluded from all schools owing to caste prejudices, as they are not allowed to sit by the children of higher castes. Consequently special schools for these have been opened by Government. But these exist only in large town. In the whole of Poona and for a population exceeding over 5,000 people, there is only one school, and in which the attendance is under 30 boys. This state of matters is not at all creditable to the educational authorities. Under the promise of the Queen's Proclamation I beg to urge that Mahars, Mangs, and other lower classes, where their number is large enough, should have separate schools or them, as they are not allowed to attend the other schools owing to caste prejudices. In the present state of education, payment by results is not at all suitable for the promotion of education amongst a poor and ignorant people, as no taste has yet been created among them for education. I do not think any teacher would undertake to open schools on his own account among these people, as he would not be able to make a living by it. Government schools and special inducements, as noted above, are essential until such a taste is created among them. With regard to the few Government primary schools that exist in the Presidency, I beg to observe that the primary education imparted in them is not at all placed on a satisfactory or sound basis. The system is imperfect in so far as it does not prove practical and useful in the future career of the pupils. The system is capable of being developed up to the requirements of the community, if improvements that will result in its future usefulness be effected in it. Both the teaching machinery employed and the course in instruction now followed, require a thorough remodeling.

   (a) The teachers now employed in the primary schools are almost all Brahmins; a few of them are from the normal training college, the rest being all untrained men. Their salaries are very low, seldom exceeding Rs. 10, and their attainments are also very meagre. But as a rule they are all unpractical men, and the boys who learn under

them generally imbibe inactive habits and try to obtain service, to the avoidance of their hereditary or other hardy or independent professions. I think teachers for primary schools should be trained, as far as possible, out of the cultivating classes, who will be able to mix freely with them and understand their wants and wishes much better than a Brahmin teacher, who generally holds himself aloof under religious prejudices. These would, moreover, exercise a more beneficial influence over the masses than teachers of other classes, and who will not feel ashamed to hold the handle of plough or the carpenter's adze when required, and who will be able to mix themselves readily with the lower orders of society. The course of training for them ought to include, besides the ordinary subjects, an elementary knowledge of agriculture and sanitation. The untrained teachers should, except the thoroughly efficient, be replaced by efficient trained teachers. To secure a better class of teachers and to improve their position, better salaries should be given. Their salaries should not be less than Rs. 12 and in larger villages should be at least Rs. 15 or 20. Associating them in the village polity as auditors of village accounts or registrars of deeds, or village postmasters or stamp vendors, would improve their status, and thus exert a beneficial influence over the people among whom they live. The schoolmasters of village schools who pass a large number of boys should also get some special allowance other than their pay, as an encouragement to them.

(b) The course of instruction should consist of reading, writing Modi and Balbodh and accounts, and a rudimentary knowledge of general history, general geography, and grammar, also an elementary knowledge of agriculture and a few lessons on moral duties and sanitation. The studies in the village schools might be fewer than those in larger villages and towns, but not the less practical. In connections with lessons inagriculture, a small model farm, where practical instruction to the pupils can be given, would be a decided advantage and, if really efficiently managed, would be a productive of the greatest good to the country. The text-book in use, both in primary and Anglo-vernacular schools, requires revision and recasting as muchas they are not practical or progressive in their scope. Lessons on technical education and morality, sanitation and agriculture, and some useful arts, should be interspersed among them in progressive series. The fees in the primary schools should be as 1 to 2 from the children of cess-payers and non-cess payers.

(c) The supervising agency over these primary schools is also very defective and insufficient. The Deputy Inspector's visit once a year can hardly be of any appreciable benefit. All these schools ought atleast to be inspected quarterly if not oftener. I would also suggest the advisability of visiting these schools at other times and without any intimation being given. No reliance can be placed on the district or village officers owing to the multifarious duties devolving on them, as they seldom find time to visit them, and when they do, their examination is necessarily very superficial and imperfect. European Inspector's supervision is also occasionally very desirable, as it will tend to exercise a very efficient control over the teachers generally.

(d) The number of primary schools should be increased–
1. By utilizing such indigenous schools as shall be or are conducted by trained and certificated teachers, by giving them liberal grants-in-aid.
2. By making over one half of the local cess fund for primary care education alone.
3. By compelling, under a statutory enactment, municipalities to maintain all the primary schools within their respective limits.
4. By an adequate grand from the provincial
   or imperial funds.Prizes and scholarships to pupils, and capitation
   or other allowance to the teachers,as an encouragement, will tend to render these schools more efficient.

The Municipalities in large towns should be asked to contribute whole share of the expenses incurred on primary schools within the municipal areas. But in no case ought the management of the same to been tirely made over to them. They should be under the supervision of the Educational Department. The municipalities should also give grants-in-aid to such secondary and private English schools as shall be conducted according to the rules of the Educational Department, where their funds permit, such grants-in-aid being regulated by the number of boys passed every year. These contributions from municipal funds may be made compulsory by statutory enactment. The administration of the funds for primary education should ordinarily be in the hands of the Director of Public Instruction. But if educated and intelligent men are appointed on the local or district committees, these funds may be safely entrusted to them, under the guidance of the Collector, or the Director of Public Instruction. At present, the local boards consist of ignorant and uneducated men, such as Patels, Inamdars, Surdars, & C.who would not be capable of exercising any intelligent control over the funds.

Indigenous School

Indigenous schools exist a good deal in cities, towns and some large villages, especially where there isa Brahmin population. From the latest reports of Public Instruction in this presidency, it is found that thereare 1,049 indigenous schools with about 27,694 pupils in them. They are conducted on the old villagesystem. The boys are generally taught the multiplication table by heart, a littleModi writing and reading,and to recite a few religious pieces. The teachers, as a rule, are not capable of effecting any improvements,as hey are not initiated in the art of teaching. The fees charged in these schools range from 2 to 8 annas.The teachers generally come from the dregs of Brahminical society. Their qualifications hardly go beyondreading and writing Marathi very indifferently, and casting accounts up to the rule of three or so. They setup as teachers as the last resource of getting a livelihood. Their failure or unfitness in other callings of lifeobliges them to open schools. No arrangements exist in the country to train up teachers for indigenousschools. The indigenous schools could not be turned to any good account, unless the present teachers arereplaced by men from the trainingcolleges and by those who pass the 6th standard in the vernaculars. The present teachers will willingly accept State aid but money thus spent will be thrown away. I do not knowany instance in which a grand-in-aid is paid to such a school. If it is being paid anywhere, it must be invery rare cases. In my opinion no grants-in-aid should be paid to such schools unless the master is acertificated one. But in certificated or competent teachers be found, grant-in-aid should be given and will be productive of great good.

Higher Education

The cry over the whole country has been for some time past that Government have amply provided for higher education, whereas that of the masses has been neglected. To some extent this cry is justified,although the classes directly benefited by the higher education may not readily admit it. But for all this nowell-wisher of his country would desire that Government should, at the present time, withdraw its aid from higher education. All that they would wish is that as one class of the body politic has been neglected, itsadvancement should form as anxious a concern as that of the

other. Education n India is still in its infancy.Any withdrawal of State aid from higher education cannot but be injurious to the spread of educationgenerally.A taste for education the higher and wealthy classes, such as the Brahmins and Purbhoos, especiallythose classes who live by the pain, has been created, and a gradual withdrawal of State aid may be possibleso far as these classes are concerned; but in the middle and lower classes, among whom higher educationhas made no perceptible progress, such a withdrawal would be a great hardship. In the event of suchwithdrawal, boys will be obliged to have recourse to inefficient and sectarian schools, much against their wish, and the cause of education cannot but suffer. Nor could any part of such education be entrusted to private agency. For a long time to come the entire educational machinery, both ministerial and executive, must be in the hands of Government. Both the higher and primary education requires all the fostering careand attention which Government can bestow on it.

The withdrawal of Government from schools or colleges would not tend to check the spread of education, but would seriously endanger that spirit of neutrality which has all along been the aim of Government to foster, owing to the different nationalities and religious creeds prevalent in India. Thiswithdrawal may, to a certain extent, create a spirit of self-reliance for local purposes in the higher andwealthy classes, but the cause of education would be so far injured that the spirit of self-reliance would takeyears to remedy that evil.

Educated men of ability, who do not succeed in getting into public service, may be induced to open schools for higher education on being assured of liberal grants-in-aid. But no onewould be ready to do so on his own account as a means of gaining of livelihood, and it is doubtful whether such private efforts could be permanent or stable, nor would they succeed half so well in their results.Private schools, such as those of Mr. Vishnu Shastree Chiploonkar and Bhavey, exist in Poona, and withadequate grants-in-aid may be rendered very efficient, but they can never supersede the necessity of thehigh school.The missionary schools, although some of them are very efficiently conducted, do not succeed half sowell in their results, nor do they attract half the number of students which the high school attract. Thesuperiority of Government schools is mainly owing to the richly paid staff of teachers and professors whichis not possible for a private school to maintain.

The character of instruction given in the Government higher schools is not at all practical, or such as isrequired for the necessities of ordinary life. It is only good to turn out so many clerks and schoolmasters.The Matriculation examination unduly engrosses the attention of the teachers and pupils, and the course of studies has not practical element in it, so as to fit the pupils for his future career in independent life.Although the number of students presenting for the Entrance examination is not at all large when thediffusion of knowledge in the country is taken into consideration, it looks large when the requirements of Government service are concerned. Were the education universal and within easy reach of all, the number would have been larger still, and it should be so arranged as to be within easy reach of all, and the books onthe subjects for the Matriculation examination should be published into the Government Gazette, as is donein Madras and Bengal. Such a course will encourage private studies and secure larger diffusion of knowledge in the country. It is a boon to the people that the Bombay University recognises private studiesin the case of those presenting for the entrance examination. I hope, the University in granting the degreesof B.A., M.A., &c., many young men will devote their time to private studies.

Their doing so will stillfurther tend to the diffusion of knowledge. It is found in many instances quite impossible to prosecutestudies at the colleges for various reasons. If private studies be recognized by the University, much goodwill be effected to the country at large, and a good deal of the drain on the country at large, and a good dealof the drain on the public purse on account of higher education will be lessened.The system of Government scholarships, at present followed in the Government schools, is alsodefective, as much it gives undue encouragement to those classes only, who have already acquired a tastefor education to the detriment of the other classes. The system might be so arranged that some of thesescholarships should be awarded to such classes amongst whom education has made no progress The system of awarding them by competition, although abstractedly equitable, does not tend to spreadof education among other classes.With regard to the question as to educated natives finding remunerative employments, it will beremembered that the educated natives who mostly belong to the Brahminical and other higher classes aremostly fond of services. But as the public service can afford no field for all the educated natives who comeout from schools and colleges, and moreover the course of training they receive being not of a technical or practical nature, they find great difficulty in betaking themselves to other manual

or remunerativeemployments. Hence the cry that the market is overstocked with educated natives who do not find anyremunerative employment. It may, to a certain extent, be true that some of the professions are overstocked, but this does not show that there is no other remunerative employment to which they can………………

Betakethemselves. The present number of educated is very small in relation to the country at large, and we trustthat the day may not be far distant when we shall have the present number multiplied a hundred-fold and all betaking themselves to useful and remunerative occupations and not be looking after service.In conclusion, I beg to request the Education Commission to be kind enough to sanction measures for the spread of female primary education on a more liberal scale.

****

*Note: The Memorial to Hunter Commission by Jotirao Phule is a document of immense importance in the historyofeducational reforms in India. A document older than a century and a quarter, it contains the seeds of theideas like free and compulsory education to all now enshrined in the Constitution of India. It is probablythe first document of its kind that speaks of creating a taste of education in the masses and making itaccessible to all.

Courtesy:

JOTEERAO GOVINDRAO PHOOLEY, 19th October 1882 Merchant and Cultivator and Municipal Commissioner,Peth Joona Ganja. [Education Commission, Bombay, Vol. II. Calcutta, 1884, pp.140-145] *Note: This should be 1851, might be a printing error (ed. complete works of Mahatma Phule)

This page is intentionally left blank

Dialogue

School as a site of Cultural Reproduction and Class Hierarchy

Ashu Kapoor

Department of Education, University of Delhi
Email: ashu_kapur@yahoo.in

Abstract

Existing research on the relationship between education and social stratification has underscored a host of organizational, institutional, and psychosocial mechanisms. It is through these mechanisms that contemporary pedagogy perpetuates an inequitable distribution of educational credentials, as well as the economic *and social rewards that accompany them. The paper aims to unite profound theoretical knowledge with empirical research and analysis. The paper will provide not only a strategic engagement with the theoretical architecture of Bourdieu's work, but also its relevance in the Indian schooling system. It addresses the need to elaborate the concept of school as a site of cultural and social reproduction, aiming to address some of the questions that need immediate consideration.*

Keywords: School, Reproducion, Culture, Hierarchy, Socity.

Introduction

Schools are the microcosm of society; they inevitably play a central role in not only generating new knowledge, but at the same time, reproducing the social and cultural inequalities from one generation to the next. Michael Young, in his paper raises a crucial question of "what are schools for?" Undeniably, schools serve as a means to achieve the

ends, but the question one needs to ask is, what are the ends it strives to achieve, at the same time, reflecting on the means through which the ends are achieved. Thereby, according equal importance to both means and ends. Ends can also be termed as aims of education, which are further narrowed down to the specific objectives. Is the ultimate aim, the transmission of knowledge, or the inner happiness and joy, is it the production of new knowledge or is it the maintenance of existing power structure? Every education system needs to brood over these aspects, prior to execution and implementation of the charted out policies and plan. However, it is a known fact that most intellectuals and academia do not go beyond the universal functionalist definition of schools. Hence, the hidden and disguised functions that the schools perform often go unaccounted. Theorization and reflection on such a critical issue often escapes the researcher's and intellectual's attention. Or on the other hand it might be possible that despite being aware of the reality, they perform the task of making the 'unobvious', seem most natural. Since decades, school education in India aims to ensure universal access to knowledge. However, some of the fundamental questions that need outright attention are: Whose knowledge is transmitted through schools? Which knowledge is considered worth transmitting? Why only such knowledge is transmitted? Who decides the knowledge to be transmitted? Whose culture is reproduced in schools? How such a culture is legitimized? Why such culture is reproduced? What are the means through which such culture is reproduced? What ends does reproducing such culture serves? Which particular group's interests are served by reproducing such culture?

Considering the above-mentioned questions, the paper involves a detailed discussion of the key concepts of cultural capital, habitus, field and symbolic violence, central to Pierre Bourdieu's theory. Since, Bourdieu, a renowned French Sociologist, has had an enormous influence on social-cultural thought, leaving an indelible mark in the field of sociology of education; for developing a comprehensive understanding on the subject, his ideas and thoughts have been elaborated.

The larger question is of forming a coherent understanding of the mechanism of cultural reproduction and class hierarchy, through which social inequalities are perpetuated in the Indian schooling system. The aim is to understand, how cultural reproduction takes place through/in education, and its intimate connection with class hierarchy and power. Since, the concepts developed by Bourdieu intersect and interweave

in complex ways that make it difficult to abstract one from the other. Hence, what follows in the next section is a long essay on the topic.

Education: Its Purpose and Structure

As affirmed earlier, since time immemorial, schools have been conceived as a miniature society, which aim at educating the young individual through both, transmission of previous knowledge, and generation of new knowledge. Schools as part of formal education system have always been accorded with certain goals, which are supposed to be achieved within a well-designed structure. In the past, various theorists and educationists, considering the socio-historical conditions, have accorded different meanings to education; and the institutions of education i.e. schools. *"The scriptures in all religion and the classics of all ancient societies have treated education as an aspect of the constitution, preservation and maintenance of society itself and the process of education as a means of reproducing the earthly society" (Shukla and Kumar, 1985: 2).* In international context, Durkheim conceptualized education as a tool to maintain the existing social order, and Dewey thought of education as an ongoing experience, which enables an individual to acquire skills and values for self-growth and development. In the Indian context, while Mahatma Gandhi emphasized upon the overall development of the child, Tagore stressed on the natural development of the child. These and other such educationists and theorists conceptualized the purpose of education and, therefore of schools as both, functional and liberated. Coming to the critical question of the nature of knowledge being transmitted through schools, Krishna Kumar raises a significant question of "what is worth teaching?" which is inseparable from the question of "what is worth knowing?" He rightly asserts, *"The problem of curriculum is related to our perception of what kind of society and people we are, and to our vision of the kind of society we want to be" (Kumar, 1987: 1).* On zooming in, it will be found that it is not only curriculum that reflects our perceptions and intensions, but every aspect of school unveils the layers of meanings beneath it, be it the pedagogical practices, or assessment procedures.

In Bourdieu's views, academic field does no more than reproducing and legitimizing the existing class divisions. The class divisions that legitimately perpetuate in the social space. In order to maintain social hierarchy intact, schooling processes

perpetuate the inequality through its three-edged sword; prejudiced curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. In order to understand the power structure existent in the society, Bourdieu considered school to be the best place for observation and analysis of rampant power dynamics. *"The role of schools besides producing 'educated men' of judgment is to produce intellectually skilled wage-earners for production and circulation of commodities" (Lane, 2000:60).* From the admission of the students to primary classes, to the choice of subject stream at the senior secondary level, every aspect of school education accelerates the distinction between the social classes. The adjournment of "Right to Education Bill" since so long speaks volumes about the dubious standards of the political leaders of our nation. The problem becomes even more aggravated in the Indian capitalist state where there are distinctions based on several counts, such as caste, class, religion and so on. Reiterating the Marxist perspective, it is said, *"Education does not stand alone and remote from the practices and thought processes of society in general. It both reflects and supports the social inequalities of capitalist culture" (Hill: 2009: 102).* In the present age of neo-liberalism**,** the market forces have a profound influence in shaping educational institution's policies and programmes. Thus, considering "state", and school to be "autonomous" is nothing more than a farce.

Understanding Basics: Social Space, Field and Habitus

In defining the social world as "social space", Bourdieu considers the latter as a multi-dimensional "space of positions", in which agents and groups of agents are defined by the relative positions occupied by them within that space. Academic field, like every social field is perceived by Bourdieu as a site of "struggle" wherein every participant tries to establish one's position over and above the other. He believes that the individual does not live a rootless life. He does not lead his life, afresh and does not experience it anew each time. It is said, *"Although men make their own history, they do not do so in circumstances of their own choosing" (Jenkins, 1992: 70).* Hence, there are many factors working simultaneously, which give meaning to person's life. Apparently, life trajectory is not a result of linear progression, but a constellation of numerous multi-folded factors.

Therefore, in Bourdieu's view, fields are not open spaces, but structured spaces of dominant and subordinate positions, based on types and amounts of capital that a person possesses. The struggle within every field pits those in subordinate positions, against those in superordinate positions. Academics is one such field that exuberates such

struggle. Moreover, fields impose on actors (in academic field- different stakeholders of education, primarily the students belonging to varied social strata), specific forms of struggle (like making an entry into the system). Entry into a field requires a tacit acceptance of the rules of the game (like definite eligibility criteria for admmisions) meaning that specific forms of struggle are legitimized.

Academic field, like any other field has objective structures, through which the agents practice. The relation between structures and practices is not linear but cyclic, of which habitus is an integral part. Bourdieu accords much importance to "Habitus", which plays an indispensable role in the process of socialization. *"Habitus in Bourdieu's work refers to a system of embodied dispositions which generate practice in accordance with the structural principles of the social world" (Nash, 1990: 432-33).* The main point is that habitus is a mediating construct, one that mediates between rigid structures and evolving practices.

Class, Classification and Class Hierarchy: The root/route of "Distinction"

Although, discrimination can be done on the basis of any of the indicators such as class, caste, gender, ethnicity etc., yet class remains a crucial indicator of perpetuating inequality in any society. Bourdieu considers a multi-dimensional view of class practice. Class according to Bourdieu does not have only an economic base, but is also dependent on social position that an individual procures. *"Social Class is not defined solely by a position in the relations of production, but by the class 'habitus' which is normally associated with that position" (Swartz, 1997: 146).* Class as an overarching concept in Bourdieu's theory, constitutes both material situation i.e. based on the economic income, wealth or property a person possesses (similar to Marxian perspective of class), and symbolic position i.e. based on one's lifestyle, dispositions or status one occupies (similar to Weberian notion of status). For Bourdieu, social class and culture correlate. In his view, *"Cultural practices are markers of underlying class distinctions" (Ibid., 143).* He includes in his class analysis, lifestyle indicators, tastes, educational credentials, occupation, income, gender and age. On theoretical grounds, the constellation of stratifying factors makes sense, but in reality, there are no clear-cut boundaries. There is an immense plurality of possibilities. Common, collective, shared material and symbolic resources constitute class in Bourdieusian theory. In order to understand the social-class position, one needs to understand the important constituent factors of social classes,

which in simple terms is volume of different kinds of capital. Social class determines not only how far the student will go on in the school, but also the kind of streams they will be placed in and the life they will lead. From seating arrangement to their participation inside the class, almost everything is chalked out based on class distinctions. Otherwise, social classes have no meaning in themselves; the meaning is accorded to them. Moreover, schools as a support system exacerbate the class distinctions even more. PROBE report makes observation on the basis of the study conducted in rural villages that, *"By negating working class experience and glorifying values and ideals which lie outside the world of working-class children, lead the child to see himself as aliens in the school world"* (PROBE:1999, 75).

How class distinction existent in Indian society is reproduced through educational system can be understood by focusing on the hierarchical stratification of the educational structure. *Velaskar, emphasizes on the external and internal hierarchical structuring of the paper (Velaskar, 2006: 202).* All existing schools can broadly be classified into: Exclusive, elitist, Private schools and impoverished government schools. Dual system of education exists in India; wherein both government schools and private schools are run. Public Schools cater to the lower class students, while private schools encompass the whole lot of upper class and middle class students. It is said that schooling tends to create a mind-set a way of seeing, thinking and relating to the world. Social class is the crucial axis along which such disadvantage, or privilege, is continually reinforced. Students from divergent class backgrounds encounter very different educational opportunities and experiences, follow distinct academic and professional trajectories, and are accordingly channeled into dissimilar positions within the social hierarchy. The accounts from the field reflect the grave realities wherein *"the schooling system acts as a filtering process, which picks the best and the brightest and helps them to realize their potential"* (PROBE, 1999: 3). In this way, cultural reproduction reinforces social reproduction, thereby maintaining the existing social order intact. Schooling in general intensifies the existing divide between elite and masses in several ways. In the same vein, Ramachandran highlights the disturbing trend of hierarchies of access, providing evidence to *"the large number of out of school children on one hand and growth of and enrolment in private schools on the other"* (Ravi Kumar, 2006: 76).

At the ground level, the state's role in maintaining class hierarchies cannot be overlooked. State is regarded as an effectively neutral means of delivery of intended

outcomes. However, in actuality things are not that linear and straight forward. Schools are perceived as having 'relative autonomy', through which they can take decisions as per their discretion. Ironically, the state has a hidden stake in the everyday practices and processes of the educational institutions. Especially by having a glimpse on the funding pattern of the state, one can see the hidden agenda that is kept under cover by the state. The trends in educational expenditure bring to the notice the agenda of the state in promoting higher education, while showing a resource crunch in case of universalization of elementary education. Through its policies and programme, it maintains its position and exercise power. It is a widely accepted fact that *"the lack of education leads to greater vulnerability in labor markets" (Srivastava, 2001: 219).* The profound interrelation of the education and the employment opportunities is a well-established fact. In Bourdieusian view, more educational qualifications a person has, greater are the chances of success. However, in case of economically underprivileged groups, the child is the only hope who can alleviate family from the abject poverty and dreadful conditions. Hence, child labor is an obstacle, which put shackles around child, thereby weighing heavily on his life experience. Even if a child makes an effort to go to school, he is bound to drop out, since he does not possess the cultural capital as other elite class children do. The mechanism can be explained in simple words as, *"Unable to cope with the burden of non-comprehension, many children give up. Others are withdrawn from schools by their parents...ironically, these parents themselves uneducated, are often resigned to believe that their children are not 'brainy enough' for school. The system gradually filters out most children" (PROBE: 1999, 82).* In an empirical study on working children's thought processes and cognitive structures it was found that *"Working children's ability to free themselves from rules stand in sharp contrast to the kind of schooled thinking exemplified in the use of single algorithm to solve all types of given problems" (Arvind, 2007: 163).* One needs to pay heed to the fact that there are several ways of problem solving used by children, depending on the social context that prepares them.

Culture, Cultural Capital and Cultural Reproduction: Challenging the 'Natural'

India as a country has a distinctive culture, however within Indian society, several exclusive cultures foster together. Indian society is known worldwide for its unity in diversity, although, the situation is quite different, when a microscopic view is taken. It is true that, it is the culture, which provides the very source of human communication and interaction, but equally true is the fact that culture can also be a source of domination and

control. "The arts, science, religion, indeed all symbolic systems- including language itself not only shape our understanding of reality…they also help establish and maintain social hierarchies. *Whether in the form of dispositions, objects, systems, or institutions, culture embodies power relations" (Swartz, 1997: 1).* In Indian society, distinctive cultural practices can be discerned by taking a closer look at one's region, religion, caste, class, and so on. Since, Indian society is socially, politically, and economically hierarchized, one culture is not considered as 'different' from the other, but as 'superior' or 'inferior' to the other. For instance, in case of cultural regional differences, North India is not only distinct from South India, in terms of language, color, values, dress, demeanor etc., but is also assumed to be superior by the North Indians in terms of its cultural practices and notions. Similarly, in Hindu religion, the basis of stratification is caste, wherein, priestly caste enjoys all the privileges and claims their castes to be on the top of the hierarchy, while pushing the other castes at the bottom. In the same vein, the cultural practices of one group are not considered as "different", but as "superior" or "inferior." In almost all industrialist societies, Bourdieu and Passeron assert that the order and social restraint are reproduced by indirect cultural mechanisms, rather than direct, coercive, social control. In view of Bourdieu, when the practices and experiences of the dominant class are enforced upon the underprivileged class as legitimate, is what "symbolic violence" is. The enforced culture is perceived as a symbolic violence by Bourdieu, which distances the disadvantaged child from his native culture. Infliction of symbolic violence is most evident in the life accounts of the underprivileged classes in the PROBE report. Illustrations of arbitrary cultural imposition, as highlighted in the PROBE report are most profound in case of the content of the texts. The texts make the poor child internalize their subservient position in society as the stories of the text emphasized the power of the mind over manual labor.

About cultural capital, Bourdieu asserts that the capital is inherited from the past and is in a continuous process of creation. He does not restrict his account of capital to material/economic capital alone. In Bourdieu's view, capital can present itself in three fundamental guises:

- "Economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights.
- Cultural capital, which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as

- Social capital, made up of social obligations (connections), which is convertible in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility" (Ball, 2004: 16).
- Cultural capital assumes a significant place in Bourdieusian theory. It can exist in three forms: the embodied state i.e. in the form of long lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods; and in the institutionalized state, as in case of educational qualifications.

The institutionalized state of cultural capital, particularly acts as a mechanism in enhancing the future-life options of the children. Various researches bear testimony to the fact that "The probability of sending a child to school improves because of parent's education"; it certainly adds to the child's cultural capital (Srivastava, 2001: 220).

Education occupies a central place in Bourdieu's work. In view of Bourdieu, in educational institutions, it is the culture of the elite that is propagated and practiced. Family is the first principal institution for the production, transmission, and accumulation of various forms of cultural capital. However, schools reproduce the cultural capital initially built within the family.

Education actually contributes to the maintenance of the inegalitarian social system by allowing inherited cultural differences to shape academic achievement and occupational attainment. Educational system undoubtedly perpetuates the social inequalities by masking the real intentions and motives behind the process of socialization. The schools tend to socialize the child into particular cultural tradition, the tradition of the elite class. A working class child is expected to imbibe and assimilate the dominant cultural practices, in order to achieve success in future life. Although, it is the economic capital that underlies the cultural capital, yet cultural capital has its own significance.

The process of cultural reproduction is not always explicit, but symbolic, disguised or hidden. The hidden agenda of cultural reproduction is certainly in maintaining social hierarchies. In view of Bourdieu, culture is arbitrary in two senses, in form and content. Students compete for access to the scarce social and cultural capital, as educational credentials and networking opportunities, enhance the life-options of the

disadvantaged children. Access to education for the disadvantaged children is the primary step towards improving their life-chances.

However, data of the BIMARU states, which lie at the bottom of the rankings in rural India, speak a ton about the existing unequal access to education. BIMARU states are those states in the northern parts of India, which remained in abject poverty, while southern States registered dynamic economic growth. The social hierarchies of these states provide a glimpse into the working of the cultural capital mechanism. The condition of provision of education in these states is quite unfortunate.

Conclusion

One can say that school as a site of cultural reproduction and class hierarchy is a result of the complex interplay of caste, class, gender, and ethnic dimensions, which further differ from region to region. The inculcated dispositions that the students bring with them to school are of vital importance in their interactions with educational institutions. Therefore, in the end it can be said that school helps maintain the hierarchical social system and serves as a chief "legitimizer". School under the garb of being "neutral" reinforces the existent class hierarchy.

Academic field emerges as a marker and reinforcer of already existing social class divisions. Through this paper, I have attempted to break the "myth" of school as a liberating force, instead highlighting the cultural reproduction mechanism of school, which further reinforces the social class hierarchy. The main thrust of the paper had been the contention that educational system puts into practice the hidden curriculum, implicit pedagogic action, and masked centralized meritocratic examination system, all of which require initial familiarization with the dominant culture, as the only means of success for the underprivileged group.

****

References

- Arvind, Gaysu. (2006). Culture, Cognition and Pedagogy: Evolving a Discourse of Possibility. Journal of Cultural Historical Psychology, 4, 42-51.
- Arvind, Gaysu. (2007). Culture, Artefacts and Mediated Learning. In Manikutty, Sankaran. (Ed.). Intercultural Communication Competence: Learning Teaching and Research in a Borderless World. New Delhi: Macmillan
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (1977). Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction. In Karabel, Jerome & Halsey, A.H. (Eds.). Power and Ideology. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Bourdieu, Pierre & Passeron, Jean-Claude. (1990). Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture. Richard Nice (tr.). London: Sage
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (2004). Forms of capital. In Ball, Stephen J. (Ed.). The Routledge Falmer Reader in Sociology of Education. London: Routledge Falmer.
- Bourdieu, Pierre. (2007). Social Space and Symbolic Space. In Calhoun, Craig; Gerteis, Joseph; & Moody, James; et al. (Eds.). Contemporary Sociological Theory. USA: Blackwell Publishing Ltd.
- Hill, Dave & Kumar, Ravi. (2009). (Eds.). Global Neoliberalism and Education and its Consequences. New Delhi: Routledge.
- Lane, Jeremy F. (2000). Pierre Bourdieu: A Critical Introduction. London: Pluto Press.
- Nambissan, Geetha B. (2006). Dalits and the Right to Education. In Ravi Kumar. (Ed.). The crisis of Elementary Education in India. New Delhi: Sage.
- Nash, Roy. (1990). Bourdieu on Education and Social and Cultural Reproduction. British Journal of Sociology of Education, 11, 431-447.
- PROBE Team. (1999). Public Report on Basic Education in India. New Delhi: Oxford.
- Ramachandran, Vimala. (2006). Hierarchies of Access. In Ravi Kumar. (Ed.). The Crises of Elementary Education in India. New Delhi: Sage.
- Richard, Jenkins. (1992). Key Sociologists: Pierre Bourdieu. London: Routledge.
- Shukla, Sureshchandra & Kumar, Krishna. (Eds.). (1985). Sociological Perspectives in Education. New Delhi: Chanakya Publications.

- Srivastava, Ravi S. (2001). Inequality and Education Security. In Dev, S. Mahendra; Antony, Piush; Gayathri, V.; Mamgain, R. P. (Eds.). Social and Economic Security in India. New Delhi: Institute for Human Development.
- Swartz, David. (1997). Culture and Power. London: Chicago Press.
- Velaskar, Padma. (2006). Educational Stratification and Reproduction of the Disadvantaged. In . In Ravi Kumar. (Ed.). The Crises of Elementary Education in India. New Delhi: Sage.

Conflict Resolution in Educational Environments: Challenges, Strategies, and Innovations

**Swati Pandit
*Tushar Gupta

*PhD Scholar, Department of Education, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, Uttar Pradesh.
Email: swatipandit90@gmail.com

**Assistant Professor, Department of Education, University of Allahabad, Prayagraj, UP, India
Email: tusharguptaedu@gmail.com
ORCiD ID:https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9965-6015

Abstract

Conflicts form a part of life today in different situations: society, education, the workplace, etc. These barriers are not simply outwards, particularly interpersonal conflicts, but have also become internalized, leading to what is now termed 'intra-personal conflicts.' India prioritizes international peace and understanding, viewing the entire world as one family (NPE, 1986). Educators, administrators, researchers, and policymakers must take one step toward understanding and finding solutions to these different concerns for more peaceful and balanced living.As addressed throughout this paper, conflicts can be seen in different environments, such as classroom-level, digital, systemic, inclusivity-related, and higher-education challenges. This paper explores conflict resolution in educational environments, such as classroom-level, digital, systemic, and inclusivity-related conflicts.

Keywords: Conflicts, Conflicts Resolution, Classroom-level conflicts, Digital conflicts, Systemic conflicts and Inclusivity-related conflicts

Introduction

"Seek first to understand, then to be understood." -Stephen R. Covey

Man is a born rational being with infinite potential given to him in his mental and reflective abilities. The ability to think positively and peacefully is within the nature of every human being. The world can be peaceful and harmonious by activating that innate potential for developing harmony. We may, therefore, make this world a more enjoyable and peaceful place to live by fostering the same inner peace. Conflicts may be defined in several ways from different perspectives. However, the definitions may differ in context, process, intervention and study areas (Jares, 2002). The term "Conflict" emerged in the late 20th century and was influenced by the work of Morton Deutsch and Roger Fisher. Conflict is a social process that occurs when individuals or groups hold opposing objectives or principles (Jares, 2002). Conflicts must address four key elements: the underlying causes, the conflict protagonists, the process of conflict resolution, and the context (Valente et al., 2020).

Integrating peace into the educational curriculum is a pedagogical strategy and a potential catalyst for national healing and revitalization (NCF, 2005). In an educational setup, the educator's prime objective is to ensure a proper learning environment for the learners. However, the rising conflicts between teachers and learners and among peers in the past few decades have made this objective increasingly challenging. This paper, therefore, delves into the importance of conflict resolution in the educational environment, as it is crucial for making the teaching-learning process more effective and contributing to national healing and revitalization.The key objective of this paper includes-

- To study conflict resolution in educational environments, such as classroom-level, digital, systemic, and inclusivity-related conflicts.
- To explore the challenges encountered in different educational environments.
- To explore best practices for conflict resolution in different educational environments.
- To identifystrategies and innovations to overcome conflicts in different educational environments.

Conflict Resolution inthe Educational Environment

For education to be meaningful, it must empower individuals to adopt peace as a lifestyle and enable them to become administrators rather than passive observers of conflict (NCF, 2005). Conflict resolution is an essential aspect of the curriculum, and

thus, policies, strategies, and innovations are implemented to resolve conflict and elevate the value of peace. This is mainly known in different studies as "Conflict Resolution Education (CRE)." During the last twenty years, conflict resolution education (CRE) programs have taught learners about effective methods for handling conflict in their schools and communities (Jones, 2004). Critical life skills, as specified in National Education Policy 2020, are one of the primary objectives in the holistic development of a learner (NEP, 2020). CRE is essential for developing critical skills to create empathetic communities and foster positive connections (Jones & Compton, 2002).

CRE plays an important role in overlapping different fields, such as peace education (Jones, 2004). According to Sommers (2003), peace education promotes the development of communication skills such as active listening and strong speech, problem-solving skills such as brainstorming or establishing consensus, and cultural knowledge and empathy as critical life skills mentioned in NEP 2020. CRE and peace education have comparable motives, goals, essential skills, and material. However, CRE is used domestically, whereas peace education is done internationally, and peace education places a greater emphasis on social justice perspectives and more significant systemic concerns of violence than conflict education programs (Jones, 2004).

Fig. 1. Perspectives of CRE and PeaceEducation
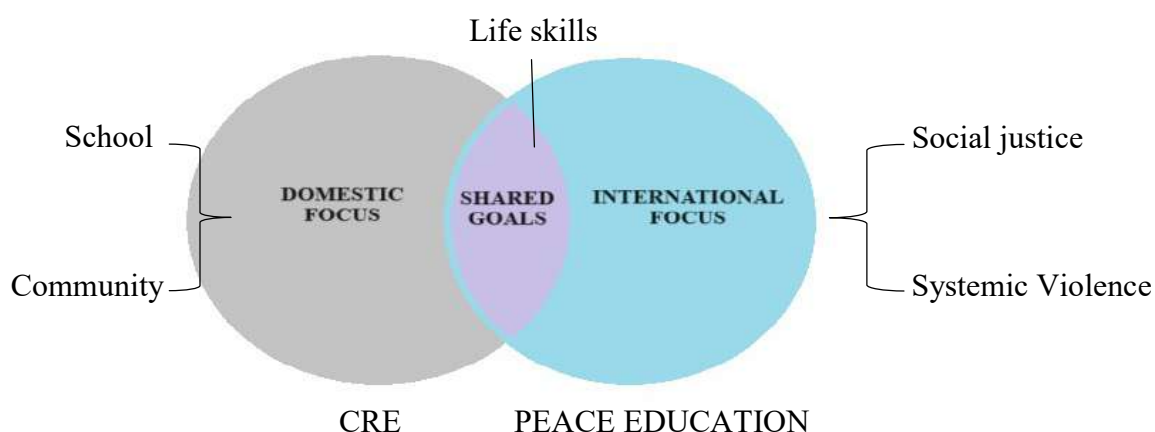
Classroom-level conflicts

A contributing element to conflicts between teachers and students is the decline in learners' motivation to acquire knowledge (Frolova, 2009). Students' need for the quality of the educational process and innovative forms of classes is another level of conflict between the teacher-learner (Frolova, 2009). Hence, teachers must be sensitized to pre-service and in-service issues to overcome such conflicts. Conversely, research has discovered that dedicating time (value time) with learners, such as promoting self-awareness, nurturing negotiation skills, strengthening social relationships, and mentoring to prevent addiction, leads to resolving conflicts at the classroom level and avoidance behaviour and negative repercussions like favouritism done by teachers may be factors that lead to the loss of respect of teachers towards learners (Behal, 2022).

The world is known for its diverse culture. As a result, in school, learners come from multicultural backgrounds with ethics, diverse needs, ethnicities, languages, and traditions. The study showed that if teachers do not deal with diversity sensitively, learners are more likely to experience frustration, miscommunication, and intercultural conflict (Roux, 2001). Therefore, a teacher must be effectively "multicultural" to overcome multicultural conflicts. Education begins in early childhood, and it is essential to implement pedagogical practices and structural aspects in Early Childhood Care Education (ECCE) to avoid conflicts in the later stages of learning. Research has shown that increased instructional time, teacher-student supportive interactions, peer interactions and friendship, child engagement, teacher training in emotionally supportive environments, teacher-family trust-based relationships, and the sharing and caring activities result in multicultural conflict resolution in a heterogenous classroom (Khalfaoui, 2021).

In the 21st century, life skills like communication, empathy, and problem-solving have become imperative among learners. It is necessary to build among them to make them social beings. Conflict resolution is not only facilitated by the teacher, but the teacher can also involve peer activities of critical thinking and problem solving, which helps them resolve their problems by creating positive peer relationships. This is termed explicitly as "peer mediation". A conflict resolution training program is designed to assist students in resolving conflicts involving two or more individuals (Parker. 2024).

Studies have shown that after giving intervention programs for conflict resolution, females have shown a much more significant effect than males, who have shown a very

moderate effect. In addition, CRE must be proactively implemented every academic year for its long-term effect (Srividya, 2016). Moreover, there is a significant relationship between the aptitude for leading negotiations and the ability to resolve conflicts, particularly regarding academic success (Ye & Don, 2024).

Fig. 2 Classroom-level Conflicts, Strategies and Innovations

Classroom-level Conflicts

MuticulturalIssues   Peer Conflicts   Teacher-Learner Dynamics

Strategies and innovations

- Value time with students
- Peer mediation
- Teacher training (pre-service, in-service)
- Nurturing negotiation skills & social relationships
- Promoting self-awareness
- CRE & Life skills
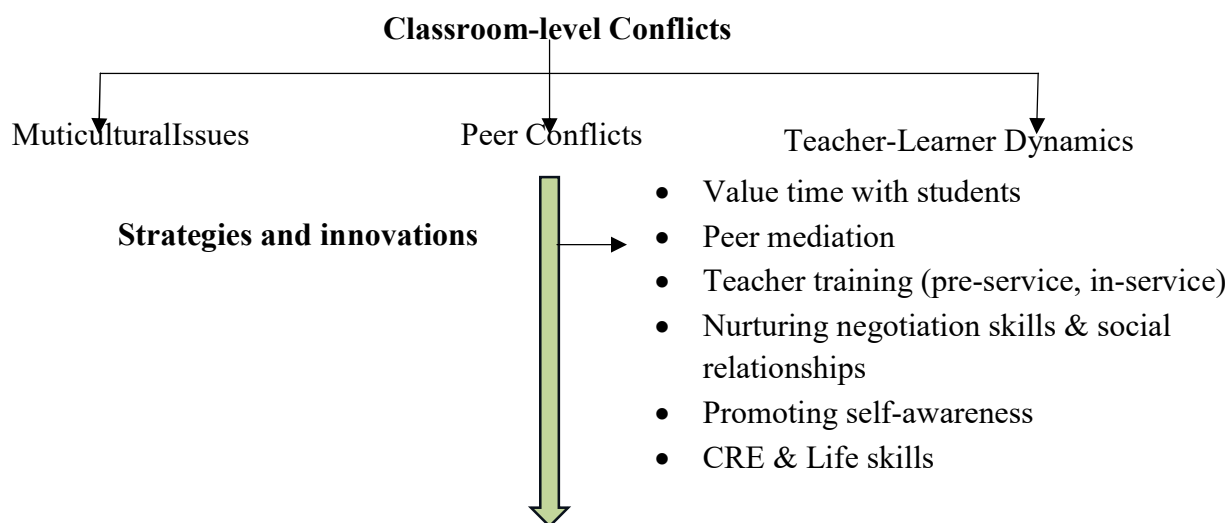
Digital conflicts

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the world shifted from traditional to digitally equipped classrooms. Online classes were a significant challenge for continuing education, particularly in rural areas. The crisis (pandemic or disruption) brought out the practicality of online teaching instead of prioritizing the creation of new pedagogical concepts or reflection (Ewing & Cooper, 2021). Conflictshave always been a part of online interaction, whether cyberbullying, online disputes such as teacher-student conflicts in digital classrooms regarding communication, differing opinions on online discussion, academic integrity, disparity in digital literacy, technical glitches, etc.Problematic social media use and conflict (PSMUC) significantly affect higher levels of cyber-victimization via higher levels of social stress, i.e., feelings of isolation and social exclusion(Kim et al., 2024). As students become accustomed to digital technology, their experiences may differ from how teachers believe it should be used in teaching methods or what they consider necessary teaching (Aagaard, 2015).

Digital literacy is considered to be the most critical component of 21st-century skills, which create life skills for both the learner and the facilitator, such as information literacy, critical awareness, creativity, and time management (particularly in teachers). However, reducing the overuse of digital media is also helpful, as the study revealed that students do not feel like a person as a whole without a phone (Lofving, 2023). Moreover, students also found copying and pasting assignments and projects, which leads to decreased creativity among learners and heavy reliance on internet sources (Lofving, 2023). To resolve such plagiarism conflicts, the stakeholders'strategies should be considered, such as academic integrity policies, encouraging research skills programmes, curriculum reforms, particularly application-based assessment, which represents learners' self-reflection, collaborative platforms to share best practices, etc.

Students who experience cyberbullying have reported considerably higher levels of perceived stress and poorer mental well-being compared to students who do not experience cyberbullying. This effect is especially pronounced among females, students with lower academic achievement, and those who often use the Internet (Ramadan et al., 2024). Addressing cyberbullying requires a comprehensive strategy that encompasses several aspects, such as educating, raising awareness, implementing reporting systems, enforcing legal measures, and providing mental health assistance (Malik &Dadure, 2024).

Fig. 3Digital Conflicts, Strategies and Innovations

Digital Conflicts

Online Disputes   Technical and Digital Literacy   Cyberbullying

Strategies and innovations

- Academic Integrity Policies
- Raising Awareness
- Collaborative platforms for best practices
- Reporting systems and legal measures
- Mental health assistance as digital well-being
- Curriculum reforms
- Digital literacy skills through CRE
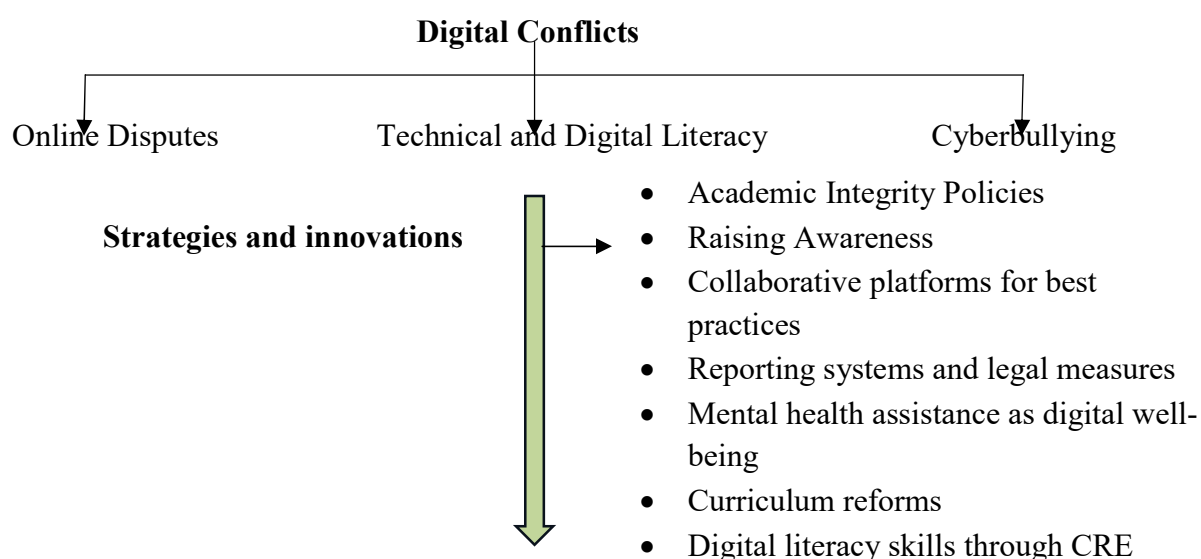
Systemic conflicts

For any organization to run effectively and achieve its vision, the organizational climate within the system must be kept healthy. Good management is anessential supplement to resolving system conflicts. For this, one must have the leadership skills for effective management to run an organization and keep a positive environment around its employees. The interaction between the teacher and the administration is at risk of conflict due to several organizational and managerial dysfunctions. These dysfunctions include redundant control, an authoritarian leadership style, conflicting directions, and ambiguity or unfairness in the distribution of additional extracurricular activities (Frolova et al., 2019).

The Central and State Governments must work together to implement education policies successfully. The central government has released many educational policies and curricula, such as NEP 2020, but successful implementation is still a challenge that hinders the execution of any policy.Central-state miscommunication, resource allocation, resistance from state and private schools, bureaucratic resistance, teacher shortages, appropriate training programmes, and frequent monitoring can lead to "systemic conflicts." The education ministry withholds SSA funds from Tamil Nadu (India) for not accepting NEP provisions (Times of India, 2024).

There has been a growing number of conflicts between the central government and state authorities, which have been consistently evident. Headteachers did not receive in-service training on managing school finances (Lucume& Matete, 2024). Effective financial management and seminars thus become necessary for in-service teachers.

In the modern period, teachers are considered facilitators who employmultidimensional techniques. Various programs are currently being implemented to strengthen teachers' pedagogical and life skills, both in their pre-service and in-service teacher education, to improve the quality of education (NEP, 2020). The National Education Association (NEA) has highlighted various challenges in both classroom and administrative settings.

These include overcrowded classes, limited resources, insufficient parent support, job insecurity, and low salaries, especially in private and government schools. Teachers face excessive administrative work and pressure to meet performance metrics under a multidimensional approach (NeaToday, 2024). Despite facing numerous problems,
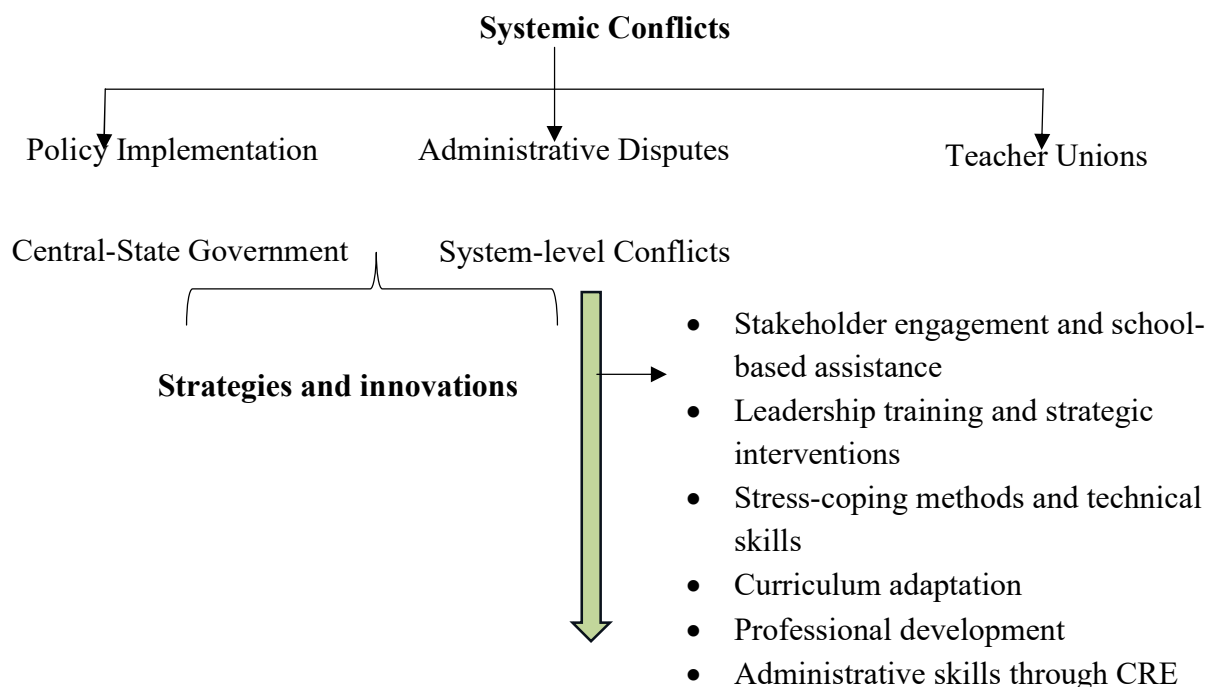
individuals inside the business must also navigate various conflicts for personal gain as well as professional gain, resulting in feelings of anxiety, tension, and an imbalance between work and personal life. Teachers' self-efficacy, locus of control, and stress-coping methods (planning class activities, comparing oneself to coworkers, confiding in family and friends, and finding alternate means of relaxation) were protective against anxiety, stress, and aggression.

Furthermore, the study also found that teachers' technical skills and school-based assistance were excellent coping methods for managing anxiety and stress (Truzoli, 2021).Moreover, it has been determined that resilience significantly contributes to the detrimental impact of role conflict (Archarya, 2024; Padmanabhanunni, 2023; Liu et al., 2021).Hence, it is necessary to possess unwavering resolve to shield from the adverse consequences of conflicts.

Good administration abilities are essential for the success of any organization. Leadership should possess such formidable influence that it inspires its staff to operate efficiently, fostering a conducive organizational atmosphere. Effective educational leadership promotes effective teaching practices, professional development, and student results (Groenewald et al., 2024).Research revealed that school leadership practices improve learners' outcomes and learning attitudes/processes (Tan et al., 2024). Administration leadership also results in high-performance organization in school (Kalmolnate&Intarak, 2024).

The causes of conflicts in school administration include adherence to quality work principles, the need for speed in job accomplishments, good academic performance, differences in values and personality, nuisances, the nature of relationships between staff members, and inadequate resources in schools (Kimathi, 2017; Mathieu, 2008; Plunkett &Attner, 1989; Okoth & Yambo,2016; Ghaffar, 2009; Campbell et al., 1983). Strategic interventions are necessary to resolve conflicts of this nature. Effective conflict resolution can be achieved through the active engagement of stakeholders in establishing school objectives, adapting leadership training programs to suit specific contexts, and fostering a supportive culture that promotes mutual trust among governments, local communities, and school principals (Tamadoni et al., 2024).Additionally, the head of the department should consider implementing peer mediation, regular counselling, training programs, equitable distribution of workloads, and fostering sympathetic and emotional intelligence as part of their resolution process.

Fig. 4 Systemic Conflicts, Strategies and Innovations

Systemic Conflicts

Policy Implementation   Administrative Disputes   Teacher Unions

Central-State Government   System-level Conflicts

Strategies and innovations

- Stakeholder engagement and school-based assistance
- Leadership training and strategic interventions
- Stress-coping methods and technical skills
- Curriculum adaptation
- Professional development
- Administrative skills through CRE

Inclusivity-related conflicts

The primary objectives of nearly all educational policies worldwide are to provide a quality education that is equitable and inclusive, ensure the right to education, promote gender equality (including LGBTQIA+), universalize education, and ensure access to education to all, including socio-economically disadvantaged groups (SEDGs).One of the most challenging conflicts in the classroom occurs when learners feel excluded and marginalized as a result of the facilitator's failure to provide a conducive and safe atmosphere for learners with disabilities, often known as "inclusion-related conflicts."The concept of inclusive education varies among school systems, leading to diverse teaching techniques and variable results (Schuelka et al., 2019). Faculty members' attitudes towards learners with disabilities significantly hinder their professional progression (Collins, 2000; Hong & Himmel, 2009; Coriale et al., 2012).

The findings also indicated that implicit attitudes were substantially more unfavourable than explicit attitudes (Rohmer et al., 2022). The study found that language obstacles, lack of confidence, insufficient training, and poor school physical conditions

limit successful inclusive education (Balik &Ozgun, 2024). Teachers have obstacles while assessing young children with special needs, designing tailored education plans, modifying teaching, managing classrooms, and dealing with challenging behaviours (Ozokcu et al., 2017).
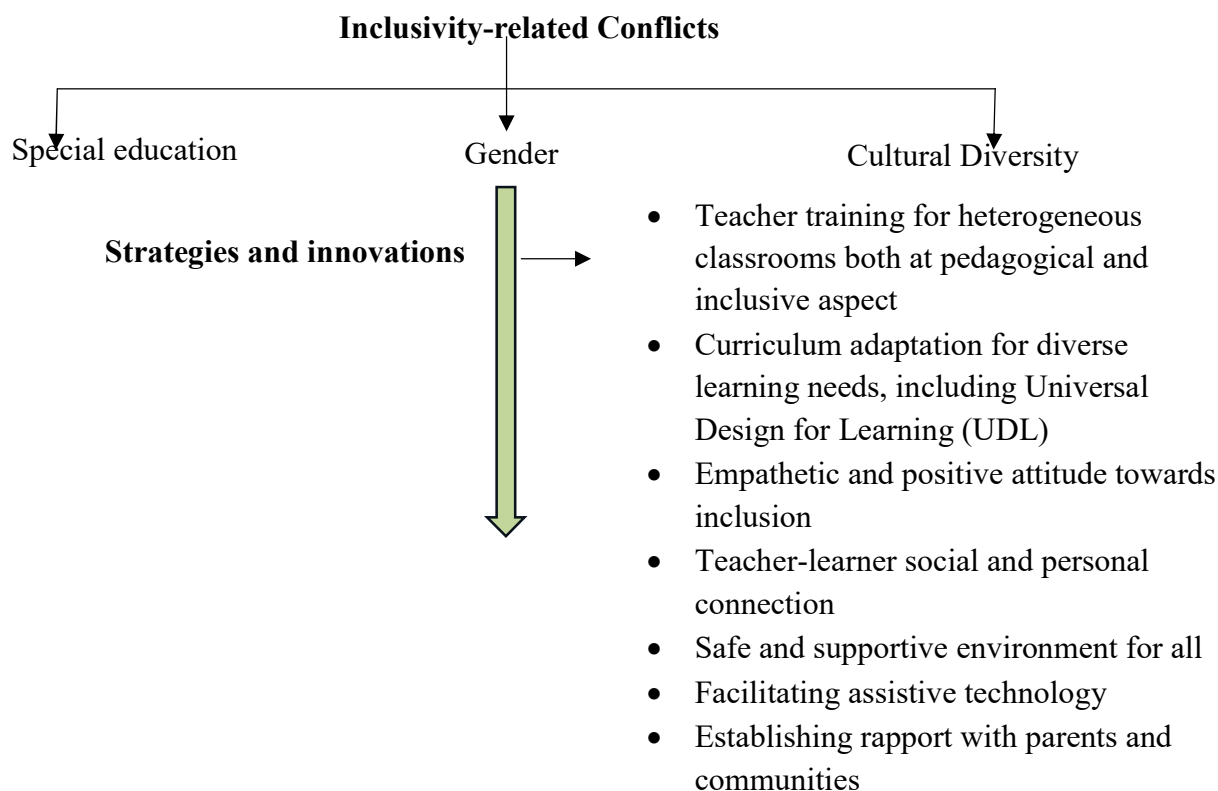
Typically, students who do not have disabilities attend ordinary schools, whereas those with disabilities participate in special schools. One of the primary challenges is a lack of resources. Many educational institutions lack the essential infrastructure and instruments to support students with various needs (Ji, 2024). We have schemes like SSA (Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan) through which initiatives like Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBVs), Ekalavya Residential Model School (EMRS), Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNVs) have been established. Similarly, special schools are there for children with special needs (CWSN).

On the other hand, we are talking about inclusivity, particularly learning with the differently-abled. The reasons for this issue may include insufficient resources, inadequate training of instructors in meeting the needs of students with disabilities, institutional gaps, lack of awareness and outreach, curriculum adaptation challenges, and geographical constraints.

Inclusivity will remain the primary conflict in education if strategies are not addressed. Research suggests that social and personal connections with disabled peers are crucial for addressing unfavourable perceptions (Wainstein et al., 2024). According to research, teachers should internalize positive thoughts about inclusion to protect themselves from emotional exhaustion (Rohmer et al., 2024).

Furthermore, Schools may provide inclusive settings where every learner flourishes by allocating resources to teacher training programs, facilitating access to assistive technologies, and cultivating partnerships with parents and communities (Pradhan & Naik, 2024). By embracing cultural variety and supporting tolerance, educational institutions may create an environment where all students feel valued, respected, and empowered to thrive (Eden et al., 2024). However, numerous policies and documents outline various pedagogical approaches for different types of learners. However, empathic behaviour and curriculum adaptation by a facilitator are the most critical factors in implementing a conducive and safe environment for all learners to achieve quality education and minimum dropouts.

Fig. 5 Inclusivity-related Conflicts, Strategies and Innovations

Inclusivity-related Conflicts

Special education   Gender   Cultural Diversity

Strategies and innovations

- Teacher training for heterogeneous classrooms both at pedagogical and inclusive aspect
- Curriculum adaptation for diverse learning needs, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Empathetic and positive attitude towards inclusion
- Teacher-learner social and personal connection
- Safe and supportive environment for all
- Facilitating assistive technology
- Establishing rapport with parents and communities

Conclusion

In conclusion, conflicts are part of our internal cognitive process, whether they transpire internally or externally. Conflicts in the educational environment occur when two or more people oppose each other's perceptions. They can be classroom conflicts between teacher and learner, peers, multicultural backgrounds in the classroom, digital conflicts such as cyberbullying and online disputes, systemic conflicts in terms of policy implementation, teacher unions, administrative disputes, inclusivity-rea, and ted conflicts in marginalized groups and SEDGs. However, classroom conflicts can be resolved by good pedagogical strategies that can be sensitized during pre-service and in-service teacher education, peer mediation, and empathy towards learners. Furthermore, academic integrity policies, research skills programs, curriculum reforms, particularly application-based assessment, which represents learners' self-reflection, collaborative platforms to share best practices, raising awareness, implementing reporting systems, enforcing legal measures, and providing mental health assistance can be used as a strategy to address

cyberbullying issues. In addition, effective communication and collaboration among the central State, peers, and administration is the most critical strategy for addressing systemic conflicts in the educational environment.

Similarly, in addition to these conflicts, teachers' willingness to be empathic toward diverse learners and strategize pedagogical ways can help settle inclusivity disputes and other educational conflicts. Moreover, as educators, providing Conflict Resolution Education (CRE) to all learners from a young age is critical in fostering healthy relationships. As said, the cause must be addressed prior to the impact.

****

References

- Rohmer, O., Palomares, E. A., & Popa-Roch, M. (2024). Attitudes towards disability and burnout among teachers in inclusive schools in France. *International Journal of Disability, Development and Education*, *71*(1), 83-100.
- Eden, C. A., Chisom, O. N., & Adeniyi, I. S. (2024). Cultural competence in education: strategies for fostering inclusivity and diversity awareness. *International Journal of Applied Research in Social Sciences*, *6*(3), 383-392.
- Pradhan, K. C., & Naik, M. S. (2024). Inclusive education: a foundation for equality and empowerment at the elementary stage. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research in Arts, Science and Technology*, *2*(2), 1-8.
- Ji, A. (2024). The Study on the Dilemma of Teachers in Inclusive Education in China. *Transactions on Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, *5*, 340-346.
- Özokçu, O. (2018). Investigating preschool teachers' self-efficacy in inclusion practices in Turkey. *International Education Studies, 11*(9), 79. https://doi.org/10.5539/ies.v11n9p79
- Tamadoni, A., Hosseingholizadeh, R., &Bellibaş, M. Ş. (2024). A systematic review of critical contextual challenges facing school principals: Research-informed coping solutions. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *52*(1), 116-150.
- Wainstein, T., Yeung, D., Jennings, L., GenCOUNSEL Study, & Elliott, A. M. (2024). Adolescents' implicit and explicit attitudes toward their peers with genetic

conditions. *Journal of adolescence*, *96*(6), 1249-1262. https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12335

- Balık, F., &Ozgun, O. (2024). Inclusive education in early childhood: Teacher perceptions, practices, challenges and needs.*Uluslararası Anadolu SosyalBilimlerDergisi*, *8*(2), 487-506.

- Schuelka, M. J., Johnstone, C. J.,Thomas, G.,& Artiles, A. J. (2019). The SAGE Handbook of Inclusion and Diversity in Education.Sage Publications Ltd.

- Okoth, E., A., & Yambo, O. J. M. (2016). Determining causes of conflicts in secondary schools and their influence on students' academic achievement in Kisumu City, Kenya. Journal of Harmonized Research in Management, 2(2), 135-142.

- Plunkett, W. R., &Attner, R. F. (1989). Introduction to management (3. ed). Boston: PWS-Kent Publ. Comp.

- Ghaffar, A. (2009). Conflict in schools: Its causes & management strategies. *Journal of Managerial Sciences, 3*(2), 212-227.

- Campbell, R. , Corbally, J. , & Nystrand, R. (1983). Introduction to educational administration (6th ed.). Allyn and Bacon.

- Tan, C. Y., Dimmock, C., & Walker, A. (2024). How school leadership practices relate to student outcomes: Insights from a three-level meta-analysis. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *52*(1), 6-27.

- Devon. (2023, August, 04). How Can Professors Encourage Motivation in College and University Students?A.B. Motivation. https://www.abmotivation.com/how-can-professors-encourage-motivation-in-college-and-university-students/

- Jares X. R. (2002). Educação e conflito: Guia de educação para a convivência. Porto: Edições Asa.

- Valente, S., Lourenço, A. A., &Németh, Z. (2020). School conflicts: Causes and management strategies in classroom relationships. *Interpersonal Relationships. IntechOpen Limited*.

- Jones, T. S., &Compton, R. (2002). Kids Working it Out: Stories and Strategies for Making Peace in our Schools. Jossey-Bass.

- Jones, T. S. (2004). Conflict resolution education: The field, the findings, and the future. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly, 22*(1-2), 233-267.

- Groenewald, E., Groenewald, C. A., Cruz, R. A. D., Uy, F., Kilag, O. K., & Villaver Jr, M. (2024). Navigating Educational Leadership: Challenges, Styles,

and Impacts–A Systematic Review. *International Multidisciplinary Journal of Research for Innovation, Sustainability, and Excellence, 1*(2), 262-267.

- Frolova, E. V., Rogach, O. V., Ryabova, T. M., &Zuykina, A. V. (2019). Factors of Conflict in the Educational Environment of the Modern School. *European Journal of Contemporary Education*, *8*(3), 513-523.

- Roux, J. L. (2001). Social dynamics of the multicultural classroom. *Intercultural Education*, *12*(3), 273-288.

- Khalfaoui, A., García-Carrión, R., &Villardón-Gallego, L. (2021). A systematic review of the literature on aspects affecting positive classroom climate in multicultural early childhood education. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *49*(1), 71-81.

- Parker, B. M. (2024). Study of the lack of student ability to repair relationships among school peers.**Culminating Experience Projects**. 440. https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gradprojects/440

- Ye, W., & Don, Y. (2024). Assessing the effects of negotiating leadership skills and conflict resolution on student achievement in Zhejiang Province, China: A structural equation modeling approach. *International Journal of Innovative Research and Scientific Studies*, *7*(3), 888-900.https://doi.org/10.53894/ijirss.v7i3.2960

- Kim, S., Garthe, R., Hsieh, W. J., & Hong, J.S. (2024). Problematic Social Media Use and Conflict, Social Stress, and Cyber-Victimization Among Early Adolescents. *Child Adolescent Social Work Journal, 41*, 223-233. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-022-008571

- Aagaard, J. (2015). Drawn to distraction: A qualitative study of of-task use of educational technology. *Computers and education, 87*, 90-97. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.compedu.2015.03.010

- Ewing, L. A., & Cooper, H. B. (2021). Technology-enabled remote learning during covid-19: Perspectives of Australian teachers, students and parents. *Technology Pedagogy and Education, 30*(1), 41-57. https://doi.org/10.1080/1475939X.2020.1868562

- Löfving, C. (2024). Teachers' negotiation of the cross-curricular concept of student digital competence. *Education and Information Technologies*, *29*(2), 1519-1538.https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-023-11800-x

- Meinokat, P., & Wagner, I. (2024). Classroom disruptions in digital teaching during the pandemic–an interview study. *Frontiers in Education*, *9*, 1335249. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1335249

- Ramadan, O. M. E., Alruwaili, M. M., Alruwaili, A. N., Elsharkawy, N. B., Abdelaziz, E. M., El Badawy Ezzat, R. E. S., & El-Nasr, E. M. S. (2024). Digital Dilemma of Cyberbullying Victimization among High School Students: Prevalence, Risk Factors, and Associations with Stress and Mental Well-Being. *Children*, *11*(6), 634.https://doi.org/10.3390/children11060634

- Malik, A., &Dadure, P. (2024). Cyberbullying in the Digital Age: Consequences and Countermeasures. In P. Pakray, P. Dadure, S. Bandyopadhyay *Empowering Low-Resource Languages With NLP Solutions* (pp. 247-273). IGI Global.https://doi.org/10.4018/979-8-3693-0728-1.ch012

- Lucumay, L. S., & Matete, R. E. (2024). Challenges facing the implementation of fee-free education in primary schools in Tanzania. *Heliyon*, *10*(2), e24172. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e24172

- Truzoli, R., Pirola, V., & Conte, S. (2021). The impact of risk and protective factors on online teaching experience in high school Italian teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of computer-assisted learning*, *37*(4), 940-952.https://doi.org/10.1111%2Fjcal.12533

- Padmanabhanunni, A., Pretorius, T. B., &Khamisa, N. (2023). The role of resilience in the relationship between role stress and psychological well-being during the COVID-19 pandemic: A cross-sectional study. *BMC psychology*, *11*(1), 45.https://doi.org/10.1186/s40359-023-01082-w

- Liu, F., Chen, H., Xu, J., Wen, Y., & Fang, T. (2021). Exploring the relationships between resilience and turnover intention in Chinese high school teachers: considering the moderating role of job burnout. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *18*(12), 6418.https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph18126418

This page is intentionally left blank

Qualitative Research: The Mirror of the Social Reality

Shiny Bhardwaj

Department of Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education, Jamia Millia Islamia
Email: shinybhardwaj@gmail.com

Abstract

A lot has been said and done in the tradition of qualitative research. Its history can be traced back to the 17th century when through ethnography, evidences had been recorded and reported (Vidich and Lyman, 2000). Qualitative research methods came to the fore during the 70's and 80's as a criticism to the then prevalent quantitative methods in research. The researcher in a qualitative research embraces a pivotal role. I perceive the tenets of qualitative research to be imbibed by its scholars. Therefore the framework can be best built keeping the researcher as central to the whole process. Henceforth, I present this paper *from the vantage point of a qualitative researcher* who must be thoroughly conversant with various aspects of qualitative research. In the sections that follow, an attempt has been made to decipher qualitative research in relation to the nature of inquiry, methodology and techniques that can be used. The issues of reliability, validity and ethics in this realm have been addressed under different sections.

Keywords: Research, Inquary, Mathodology, Hierarchy, Socity.

Introdution

Qualitative research locates the participants in their own natural environment and looks deeply into the quality of their social life. It is a research 'in-situ', i.e. the researcher becomes a part of the setting he chooses to study. He explores and describes

the setting in its own unique context and records all that emerges in his account, which is analyzed after his fieldwork, is over. The findings therefore are contextual and typical of that particular research setting. Emphasis is placed on 'experience' in qualitative research. The 'qualities' that the experiences center around are the basic unit in qualitative data analysis. The researcher, then, becomes the eyes and ears of the situation for the people who share his research work. The way he makes sense and represents the data highlights the defining features of that research setting. In order to render a study 'qualitative', it must exhibit several attributes. Eisner (1998:32-39) enumerates that for a study to be qualitative it must be 'field-focused' where the researcher employs the 'self as an instrument' to perceive and make sense of the situations, using 'expressive language' that minimizes his subjectivity yet bears his signature to communicate the 'interpretive character' of the emergent reality as well as of the participants in the field, and presenting a 'coherent, insightful and instrumentally utilitarian' account of the setting by 'paying attention to its particulars' that render it as a unique case of the larger social milieu. Similarly, Creswell (2007:38-39) also lists several aspects that a study must exhibit, to be called 'qualitative'.

Qualitative research is not restricted to a particular discipline. Each discipline has its own array of principles and interests that can be explored using qualitative methods. Their usage can be seen in the fields of education, psychology, marketing, management, nursing, communication studies, etc. Common among them are the underlying nature of inquiry, methodologies and the array of techniques that exemplify qualitative research, which will now be elaborated.

Nature of Inquary

The philosophical assumptions with regard to the ontology, epistemology, axiology and methodology determine the nature of inquiry in qualitative research. Reality is seen as subjective and multiple. Each participant in the research setting has his own version of the reality thereby resulting in alternate perspectives for the same thing. This emergent and multiple reality calls for multiple tools to tap its qualities. In order to reconstruct this in the writing of his study, the researcher presents the situation by corroborating his findings in verbatim and multiple accounts of several participants. Throughout the study, he strives to build a rapport with the participants so that he is able to get a fuller insight to the interactions and actions that take place. The researcher tries to minimize the "distance" or the "objective separateness" (Guba and Lincoln, 1988:94) between himself or herself and those being researched (Creswell, 2007:18). He acknowledges the fact that research tends to be 'value-laden' and 'subjective in nature' (Walker and Evers, 1986:29), so by making his presence and perspectives explicit during

the writing of the study an attempt is made to minimize them. In qualitative research, the researcher follows 'inductive logic' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:3; Creswell, 2007:19) and adopts a flexible design so that he may incorporate any development in the setting, since reality is understood as dynamic and emergent.

Methodology

The term 'methodology' encompasses the processes of scientific inquiry that take place in a research (Kaplan, 1973). In the field of qualitative research, there appears to be no well-tried and tested tool kit that would direct a novice or even a well practiced investigator in conducting his fieldwork. Grounded theory, ethnography, case studies, phenomenology and narrative studies are only approaches towards qualitative inquiry. Their steps of inquiry cannot be defined because of the nature of reality encountered. Creswell (2007:39) lists "emergent design" as one of the defining features of a qualitative study. It is a major conviction of qualitative research orientation that what is being searched for will emerge as the setting reveals itself (Holliday, 2007:6). An investigator must have a keen and practiced eye so that he may extract hidden meanings things have, in order to gather a rich account of data. The dynamics of a social setting are such that they are complex, always changing and reveal themselves in multifarious (even contradictory) ways; therefore any predetermined set of methods is bound to go kaput. Eisner (1998:170) emphasizes "Going into the field with a preformulated plan of procedure, indifferent to the emerging conditions is the surest path to disaster".

This, however, does not mean that the investigator goes unprepared and without any focus. One must become "opportunist and adventitious" (Ibid). Improvisation skills and creativity on part of the investigator are a must, otherwise he may end up being lost in the research setting. Therefore, "flexibility, adjustment and iterativity are the three hallmarks of the qualitative method" (Ibid). This, according to Bryman (1999:41) is the strength of qualitative research.

In the absence of a robust methodology that would ensure success in the fieldwork and the analyses that follow, there are some basics to which an investigator may stick to in order to stay afloat in the field. First and foremost is *'getting access'* to the field. Access is the starting point of all fieldwork, obtaining which is a crucial and sensitive matter. Since consent of those who we seek to study is needed, full disclosure of the research to the participants is expected from the investigator. Since qualitative research by its very nature is dynamic, therefore even the exact aims of the study are prone to change with the passage of time, as the study unfolds. In such a situation Eisner (1999:172) suggests that as an investigator "it is better to provide a general rather than

specific description of aims, if for no other reasons than so they (investigators) can shift gears when necessary".

Once access has been acquired, the researcher is exposed to the surroundings that he had chosen to explore. Depending upon the research question, an investigator may already have a clear idea about what to look for in the field- a prefigured focus (Eisner, 1998:176), or, may allow the situation to speak for itself- allow for an emergent focus (Ibid). In both the cases one must be prepared for the emergence of the unanticipated, and locate it within the larger social context and as part of the scheme of things. Initially a novice would take time to make sense of what exactly he is looking at, since he is usually overwhelmed by the intensity of the place that makes it difficult for him to sieve out the relevant information. With time, he will get the 'feel' of the setting and gradually things will get sorted out in his mind. Themes and focuses will emerge later on during the analysis part, and he would develop a keen eye and a sharp mind to bifurcate the data. Staying focused is the key therefore.

Analysis of the data involves extraction of themes on the basis of recurrence of the messages construed from the events observed (Eisner, 1998:189). Themes must be so extracted that best portray the situation that had been studied. These themes provide structure to the writing of the research report.

In qualitative research one has the liberty to use a range of data collection techniques and portray the analysis in the best possible way. "Use what you need to use to say what you want to say" (Eisner, 1998:187).

Techniques

"Methods are not passive strategies; they differently produce, reveal and enable the display of different kinds of identities" (Fine and Weis, 1996). Qualitative research employs a host of techniques in order to collect data that is rich and useful, namely participant observation, interviewing, focus groups, diaries, case studies and discourse analysis. Of these, participant observation is the method central to qualitative research, followed by interviewing, therefore, major emphasis will be on them in this section.

Participant observation: Through this technique the observer obtains data as a member of the group or setting he chooses to study. "The observer lives with the people, eats the food they eat, gets closer to them and takes an active part in their activities; in other words, he participates in the life of the people by adopting a role" (Srivastava, 2004:28). The information he gets thereby is first-hand information. By being an 'insider', he enjoys access to all the resources and activities that people perform as members of that group. Consequently, it is believed that people's 'reactivity syndrome'

gets transcended since the investigator's presence is not a threat to them, as then he is a member of the same group. The duration of such a technique may span according to the profundity of the data and analysis required. Yet, there are debates about whether an investigator is actually able to bridge the psychological divide in the other members that label him as an 'outsider', regardless of the time he has spent and the degree of involvement he practices. While planning observations, field researchers must consider issues such whether the observations will be covert or overt, degree of involvement, site of the observations, structure of observations and the focus of the observations (Flick, 2002:137-149). Based on the degree of involvement, Gold (1969) and Junker (1960) provide a continuum along which a researcher's role can be located in a research setting: complete observer, observer as participant, participant as observer and complete participant.

A complete observer simply observes and a participant observer takes part in daily events. For many researchers the degree of engagement is highly variable. Out of the whole plethora of things that are available, an observer may direct his focus on aspects such as "spaces, objects, actors, acts, activities, events, time, goals and feelings are the various aspects that must be observed in any research setting" (Spradley, 1980:78). Ethical considerations over the 'covert mode of observation' have been raised, therefore this mode has been condemned widely as it takes the form of surveillance and deception and the result thereby is largely claimed to be as half-truths and 'manipulated', according to those observed.

Interviewing: In qualitative research where participant observation is not possible and/or required, interviewing provides the requisite data for the research. "The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (Brinkmann and Kvale, 1996:1). Every interview process entails construction of knowledge through the interaction that takes place between the interviewer and the interviewee, since it is an interchange of views and ideas between them, on a topic of mutual interest. Every interview has an underlying structure and purpose and whatever interaction takes place is within the parameters set by the interviewer. In this vein, "interview is not a conversation between equal partners, because the researcher defines and controls the situation" (Ibid). The decision to interview must be a conscious one in the sense that a researcher must adopt interviewing as tool to collect data considering the nature of the data required, time at his disposal and the research questions of the study. Interviewing is best suited for situations when the researcher "has less time and the settings or people are otherwise not accessible" (Bogdan and Taylor, 1984:80-81).

An interview process consists of a number of steps. The first is framing questions. One needs to carefully word the question, so that suggestive clues are not delivered unintentionally. This holds true for unstructured interviews as well where the interviewer frames questions instantaneously. Then comes the step of accessing the setting, followed by understanding the language and culture of the respondents coupled with deciding how one would present oneself in front of the respondents (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000:654-55).

One of the most decisive issues in interviewing is choice of informants. The informant must be an insider who can provide vital information to the researcher on a range of issues pertaining to the research setting. Interview process also consists of recording and transcribing the information thus collected and then analyzing it in order to extract themes and connections between various elements of the setting under the study. There are various types of interviews such as journalistic interviews, legal interrogations, academic oral examinations, philosophical dialogues, and many more. Interviews can be broadly classified as structured, semi-structured and unstructured interviews depending upon the extent to which the interviewer attempts to control the focus of the respondents' answers.

Significance of the Self and Ethics

The researcher is an integral element in a qualitative research. His self is an undercurrent in the trajectory that the study takes, and also how it is written. Eisner (1998:169) elaborates "qualitative inquiry places a high premium on the idiosyncratic, on the exploitation of the researcher's unique strength, rather than on standardization and uniformity". This is the reason why all qualitative writing bears a 'signature' (Ibid: 34) of the writer. The lens through which the researcher perceives and portrays the research setting is an outcome of his own interest, attitude, aptitude and context.

The issue of 'ethics' in research encompasses all the above four domains of the researcher's personality. In my opinion, ethics are a part of the affective behavior of a person, the researcher in this case. It is the issue he must bear in mind while doing his fieldwork, ensuring that no threat is imposed on the integrity of the people who are participants in his research. Covert researches have been widely condemned and are considered unethical on various grounds. Ethical issues are concerned with matters of informed consent, deception and confidentiality. The American Sociological Association Code of Ethics places prime importance on these three aspects. It is imperative to fulfill the requirements pertaining to them. Informed consent is required if the "data are collected from research participants through any form of communication, interaction or

intervention" (ASA, 1999:12). The issue of 'deception' largely overlaps 'informed consent'. Deception happens when participants are unaware that they are part of a study and/or are misled about the purpose or details about the research and/or are not aware about the true identity of the researcher (Bailey, 2007:20). 'Confidentiality' is an agreement whereby participants are assured that their identity and sensitive information would be concealed and protected under all circumstances. The subject of ethics is embedded throughout the process of field work and therefore the researcher is required to consistently take decisions regarding them.

Writing The Research Report

The rigor in a research work is reflected in one's writing. Writing is representational and transforms our experience in the process of making it public (Eisner, 1998:28). While writing his research a qualitative researcher must articulate his rationale for the choice of social setting, the methodology, emergence of themes and focuses, data recording technique and his own stance on the research setting as a whole. Since interpretive character is the highlighting feature of qualitative research, the researcher's subjectivity, the consequent value-ladeness and the tendency to judge have always borne a question on the reliability and validity in qualitative research. It has been accused of lack of objectivity. In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (1998:8) state "Qualitative researchers emphasize the value-laden nature of inquiry. They seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning." In order to strengthen their position as objective participants in the fieldwork, Geertz (1993:6) suggests "thick description" of the field accounts so that the validity of the research work is not questioned.

The researcher must stay for a prolonged duration in the field so that he has the time and resources to cross check and clarify any contradictions in his findings. Eisner (1998:110-114) suggests 'consensual validation, structural corroboration and referential adequacy' in the writing as a step towards ensuring validity of the research and rendering the research true to life. Stating the exact narratives enable readers to make sense of the context independently, thereby further reducing the scope of bias of the writer. Other measures of ensuring validity include negative case analysis, auditability, confirmability, bracketing, and balance (Lincoln and Guba, 1985).

Voice of the writer is an important aspect in his writing. "The written study itself takes on an agency of its own story- the argument" (Holliday, 2007:91). He must make explicit all his arguments and assumptions that he thinks played a role in influencing his perspectives of the situation.

For the purpose of ensuring reliability, the researcher must triangulate his findings and request for peer evaluation who can give him critical comments on the nature of his research. But in qualitative data analysis there is no test of significance to determine if the results "count"; in the end, what counts is a matter of judgment (Eisner, 1998:28).

CONCLUSION

Through the paper an attempt has been made to explore the realm of qualitative research, in reference to the nature of inquiry, methodology and techniques that are employed to extract the different aspects of our ever-changing real world. The paper traces its history and looks at qualitative research from the researcher's point of view because I think that any reading on qualitative research inherently focuses on the qualities that a researcher must imbibe in order to stay afloat in his work. The themes of reliability, validity and ethics have been discussed under different headings keeping in mind the issues they are related to, according to me. As a researcher, I realize that they are highly important in order to give a credible shape to a research. A corpus of qualitative research has thereby been erected that would help a researcher in guiding him throughout his research work.

****

References

- Bailey, Carol. 2007. *A Guide to Qualitative Field Research.* (2nd Ed.) U.S.A.: Sage.
- Bogdan, R. C. and Taylor, S.J. 1984. *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings.* (2nd Ed.) New York: John Wiley.
- Bryman, A. and R. Burgess (Eds.) 1999. *Qualitative Research* (Vol. I), London; Sage Publications.
- Cohen, Manion and Morrison 2000. *Research Methods in Education.* Routledge Falmer Press.
- Creswell, J.W. 2007. *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among Research Traditions.* New Delhi: Sage Publication.
- Denzin, N. K. and Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) 2000. *Handbook of Qualitative Research.* (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage Publication.
- Eisner, E. W. 1998. *The Enlightened Eye: Qualitative Enquiry and the Educational Practice.* New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

- Holliday, A. 2007. *Doing and Writing Qualitative Research*, Sage Publications.
- Kvale, S. and Brinkmann. 2009. *Interviews: Learning the Craft of Qualitative Research Interviewing.* (2nd Ed.) U.S.A.: Sage.
- Kirk, J. and Miller, M.L. 1987. *Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research.* U.S.A.: Sage Publication.
- Srivastava, V.K. (Ed.) 2004. *Methodology and Fieldwork,* New Delhi: Oxford University Press.
- Walker and Evers, 1986. *Educational Research, Methodology and Measurement: An International Handbook.* Ed. by John P. Keeves.

This page is intentionally left blank

The Study of Relationship between Happiness Curriculum and Psychological Well-Being of Middle Level School Students

Kiran Richa

Department of Teacher Training and Non-Formal Education, Jamia Millia Islamia
Email: richakiran96@gmail.com
ORCiD ID: http://orcid.org/0009-0009-3311-7049

Abstract

Happiness which has been widely discussed in the Happiness curriculum programme handbook. As far as mortal beings are concerned, it seeks accomplishments from multifaceted living which results in peace, satisfaction and happiness that fully constitute 'Mortal Happiness'. The Triad of Happiness is the main pillar on which the Happiness Curriculum is based on. Happiness curriculum mainly talks about the triads which consist of Sustainable Happiness, Deeper Happiness and Momentary Happiness. Whereas sustainable happiness talks about learning and awareness.

Keywords: Happiness, curriculum, Sustainable, academic, well-bieng.

Introduction

Happiness curriculum was introduced by the Government of National capital Territory of Delhi with the aid of SCERT Delhi in July 2018.It was launched in the presence of prominent personality Dalai lama. This curriculum is connected with Madhyastha darshan (synchrony gospel) suggested by Nagraj. In the year 1999, Nagraj

put forward a model of happiness under which he discussed four types of mortal living in the shape of intermingled material, intellectual, conduct and observational aspects. Such things correlate to the senses, awareness, discovering and feeling. Combining all these jointly created a triad of Happiness which has been widely discussed in the Happiness curriculum programme handbook. As far as mortal beings are concerned, it seeks accomplishments from multifaceted living which results in peace, satisfaction and happiness that fully constitute 'Mortal Happiness'. The Triad of Happiness is the main pillar on which the Happiness Curriculum is based on. Happiness curriculum mainly talks about the triads which consist of Sustainable Happiness, Deeper Happiness and Momentary Happiness. Whereas sustainable happiness talks about learning and awareness. Deeper happiness talks about harmony in feeling and the third one is Momentary happiness which is to be achieved through the senses. Happiness curriculum liberates the student which is mentioned in the NCF 2005 that indicates Education must be viewed as an unfettering process for the students.

Literature Review

Smitha, P. S., (2015), the present study tried to find out specific academic correlation and psycho-social happiness among the educators of teachers at the secondary stage. Here in this study personalise resilience, scheduling, social capability, institutional climate, academic inspiration, and academic achievement are the psycho-social and academic correlates. These qualities are necessary for teacher educators for the better preparation of the future generation.

Adler, A., (2016), found In around 18 schools, approx 8000 students were allotted either a happiness curriculum or a space for curriculum which focused life skills(non-academic) as well as self-awareness and empathy. Present Study winded up that on standardized test student's performance enhanced significantly on account of happiness curriculum.

Panikkar, Jayashree., (2016), found that the multiple correlations showed that the Eysenckian model explained more variance in the PWB scale and subscales than the Five-Factor model. However, when all the nine personality variables (both the Eysenck Ian and the Five-Factor dimensions together) explained 47.1% of variance in the overall

PWB score. Thus, the Eysenckian and the Five-Factor models of personality appear to be implementing each other in explaining psychological well-being.

Kadam, P.G., (2017) Review on the importance of happiness education in a journal, the present study tried to find out the learning outcomes after introducing happiness curriculum that learner will become mindful and attentive, develop critical thinking and reflection, develop social and emotional skills, develop confident and pleasant personality.

Quinlan et al., (2015) examined the effectiveness of a positive psychology intervention in promoting resilience and well-being in middle school students. The intervention involved a 12-week program that focused on cultivating gratitude, positive emotions, and optimism. Results exposed that learners who got involved in the arbitration reported higher levels of resilience and well-being compared to a control group.

Sin and Lyubomirsky (2009) investigated the effectiveness of a happiness curriculum intervention on the well-being and academic performance of high school students. The intervention involved six weekly lessons on the positive psychology domain, such as acknowledgement, kindness, positive thinking. Results showed that the arbitration category reported greater well-being and academic achievement compared to a control group.

Jayaweera and Wijesinghe (2020) evaluated the impact of a happiness curriculum intervention on the well-being of Sri Lankan middle school students. The intervention involved 12 sessions that covered topics such as mindfulness, self-reflection, and gratitude. At the end found that learners who participated in the group of intervention reported greater well-being and life satisfaction compared to a control group.

Lin et al. (2021) examined the impact of a happiness curriculum intervention on the well-being of Taiwanese middle school students during the COVID-19 pandemic. The intervention involved six weekly lessons that focused on developing positive emotions, coping skills, and social support. Outcomes exposed that the conciliated group reported greater well-being and lower levels of anxiety and depression compared to a control group.

Marathe, V. (2021). Researcher studied entitled "Constituent Dimensions of Happiness: An Exploratory Study" The present study has revealed that marital status and age are better predictors of happiness than gender. The study has highlighted the improvement in the position of unmarried women, especially of middle age in terms of happiness and life satisfaction. The reasons behind this can be explored, as also the potential of this group towards contribution to society.

Kaur et al. (2019) examined the impact of the Happiness Curriculum on the well-being of students in Delhi government schools. Results found that learners who got involved in the curriculum reported greater well-being, including greater levels of happiness, life satisfaction, and positive affect, compared to a control group of students who did not participate in the curriculum.

Mohan and Singh (2020) evaluated the impact of the Happiness Curriculum on the well-being of middle school students in a government school in Delhi. The intervention involved weekly sessions that focused on developing positive emotions, mindfulness, and values such as empathy and gratitude. Results indicated that learners who got involved in the intervention reported greater well-being and lower levels of negative affect compared to a control group.

Khatoon and Verma (2021) examined the impact of the Happiness Curriculum on the academic performance and well-being of middle school students in a government school in Delhi. The intervention involved weekly sessions on positive psychology topics such as emotional regulation and self-awareness. Final outcome indicated that students who partaken in the intervention reported greater academic performance and well-being compared to a control group.

Khanna and Peterson (2023) The researchers tried to review the enabling conditions of happiness curriculum through the case study, and they found that the Delhi government and the knowledge partners have clearly seen the need for the curriculum and the impact it has had on students.

Overall, the literature supports the effectiveness of happiness curriculum interventions in promoting the well-being of school students. The interventions typically involve cultivating positive emotions, such as gratitude and kindness, and developing skills for coping with stress and adversity. However, more research is required to determine the enduring effects of happiness curriculum mediation and to recognise the potent approaches for implementing them in school settings. The literature suggests that the Happiness Curriculum in India can have a positive impact on the psychological well-being of middle level school students. The curriculum typically involves activities aimed at promoting positive emotions, mindfulness, and values education. However, more research is needed to determine the continuing effects of the Happiness Curriculum and to identify the most effective approaches for implementing it in Indian schools including Delhi also. Hence, to determine the lasting effects of the similar one. One must first study the relationship between happiness curriculum and psychological well being.

Objectives of the study

To conduct the present study, the researcher formulated the following objectives:

- To study the mindfulness of middle-level school students.
- To study the psychological wellbeing of middle level school students.
- To compare the psychological wellbeing in relation to gender of middle level school students.
- To compare the mindfulness in relation to gender of middle level school students.
- To study the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well being.

Hypotheses

H1: Mindfulness of the middle-level school students will be significantly higher.
H2: Middle-level school students will exhibit significant levels of psychological well-being.
H3: There will be no significant difference in psychological well-being between male and female middle-level school students.

H4: There will be no significant difference in mindfulness levels between male and female middle-level school students.

H5: There will be a significant relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being among middle-level school students.

Methodology

Method Adopted for the Study

The researcher had chosen to use the Descriptive and survey method for the current study after carefully understanding the various components of the study. It is an essential method in descriptive research, which focuses on the relationships or circumstances that currently exist. As well as beliefs, processes, and effects that are already visible or emerging trends. The act of obtaining information about the state of things at the time is referred to as a survey. The term normative is employed because surveys are routinely conducted to determine what is currently considered to be a normal or usual situation or practice. Researchers in education frequently use the normative survey method. It tries to explain and interpret the current circumstances, practices, procedures, trends, effects, attitudes, beliefs, etc.

Selected Variables

The Present study is entitled as "The study of Relationship between Happiness Curriculum and Psychological well-being of Middle level school Students". The Variables of the study are Happiness Curriculum and Psychological well-being. Here, Happiness Curriculum is an Independent Variable and Psychological Wellbeing is a dependent Variable.

Tools used

The success of a research study depends mostly on the nature of the tools and techniques used. Different types of tools are used for collecting various information for different purposes. The tool used determines the quality and quantity of the data. By

keeping in view different objectives of the present study, Researcher manifested to apply the following mentioned tools for the study.

There are Two tools used by the Researcher for the data collection which are as follows:-

(I)   (AS-4FM) Attitude Scale of Four Facets of Mindfulness (Self Developed tool).
(II)   Ryff's Scales of Psychological Well-Being (PWB), 1995 (Standardized Tool).

Construction of Attitude Scale of Four Facets of Mindfulness Scale (AS-4FM)

For collecting data related to Mindfulness based on the Happiness Curriculum, the researcher decided to construct a new Attitude scale of four facets of Mindfulness scale with the help of the Happiness Teacher Coordinator (HTC). The development of the tool was carried out by visiting the school where this happiness curriculum was going on. It had Six progressive stages in developing self-made tools i.e., AS-4FM (Attitude Scale of 4 Facets of Mindfulness): -

Stage 1: After review of relevant literature, and in the light of the objectives of the study, an operational definition of happiness was conceptualized as "Happiness Curriculum is an endeavour to guide the attention of students towards exploring, experiencing, and expressing happiness in not just the momentary but deeper and sustainable forms as well."

Stage 2: Based on the operational definition, a list of 45 items related to mindfulness was prepared for the purpose of developing an instrument to assess the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being of middle level students.
Stage 3: The list of items was examined in terms of relevance to happiness, as well as for duplication and redundancy. This process was being done by visiting the schools in which this Happiness curriculum has been implemented and going on.

Stage 4: The list of 45 items, along with the operational definition was presented to 3 subject experts for their opinion. The criteria for choosing an expert were that one had to be at least a post- graduate in education with work experience in a happiness curriculum project as a researcher or Happiness teacher coordinator (HTC).

Stage 5: A psychometric instrument was thus developed, using a five-point Likert Scale. Draft scale items were developed on the basis of four dimensions. While constructing the statements the investigator was careful to avoid the vague questions. The items were prepared and correspond to five alternative responses namely, Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often and Always.

Stage 6: After this the draft scale was given to the experts in the field for their suggestions. Expert opinions were considered to find out the difficulties of the items. The difficulties in responding to the items and estimate of the limits for responding to the items were noted. This helped the investigator to modify certain statements which were vague. Fourth quartile acceptance was considered, i.e., those items were selected which were accepted by at least 75 percent experts. The final draft scale was prepared by making several corrections and rewrites to the claims and it includes 40 questions, representing different areas of Mindfulness in terms of Happiness Curriculum. At last the self-constructed scale was named the Attitude scale of 4 Facets of Mindfulness which was then administered in the field for the data collection.

The Try out

The draft scale was randomly chosen to the 60 Students at Middle stage with appropriate representation for each and every gender participant. Crystal and Clear stipulations were provided to the participants. Students were instructed to select the choice from the five that best suited their response to each sentence.

Scoring

The replies that were gathered were scored using a scoring key. Scoring was made by giving according to 1,2,3,4 and 5 scores to the responses Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often and Always respectively for statements which are favourable. The Unfavourable statements scores were reversed, Pattern of the scoring items are mentioned below: -

Scoring Pattern for Attitude Scale of Four Facets of Mindfulness Scale

Serial No.	Options	Favourable Score	Unfavourable Score
1.	Never	1	5
2.	Rarely	2	4
3.	Sometimes	3	3
4.	Often	4	2
5.	Always	5	1

Reliability

Reliability is the extent to which a test is dependable, stable, and consistent when given to different people and or administered on different occasions (International Dictionary of Education, 1978). For ensuring the reliability of the tool the Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient method was used. It assesses how uniform the test's components are. For this the sample selected for pilot study was split into two groups by selecting the odd and even statements. The correlation coefficient of the items was calculated using the Pearson product moment correlation also. Cronbach's alpha formula is the better way to measure the internal consistency reliability coefficient. It is to compare an individual's scores on all probable ways of splitting the test into two halves. The reliability coefficient of cronbach's alpha identity consists of following attributes:

Number of items -N
Mean covariance between items- $\overline{c}$
Mean item variance- $\overline{v}$

First all 40 items were selected for Cronbach's Alpha Reliability, it was found 0.557. Then researchers followed SPSS' suggestion and deleted item no.31 from the suggested item. Then it was shown that .724 Reliability which is Acceptable but not very good. Keeping in view of the suggested deleted item option, researcher got deleted item no. 4 from the items after doing the same. Reliability found was about 0. 747.which is quite good than earlier Reliability.

Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.747	38

The final AS-4FM scale achieved Cronbach's alpha value was 0.747 against 38 items. All the values of reliability for each item were above .720 which reveals that the Attitude scale of four Facets of Mindfulness scale shows good reliability.

Validity

The degree to which an empirical measurement accurately represents a certain content area determines the content validity. In the present scale the dimensions provided by the Happiness curriculum handbook created by SCERT Delhi were used to create the items. The items that cover the final scale include all four dimensions. The content validity was established through the review of related literature as well as by discussion with subject experts such as Happiness Teacher Coordinator, Professors who have already worked in this field. Whereas face validity is the subjective opinion on the operationalisation of a content.The current scale's items were developed using the Happiness Curriculum material as a guide and Teacher manual handbook of the Happiness curriculum. The above index's reliability and validity pointed out that the test will yield reliable and valid data for the purpose of present investigation.

Collection of Data

After the selection of the sample and preparation of tools, the next step is the collection of required data from the sample using the different tools. At first the investigator contacted the authority of the selected Government Schools where the Happiness Curriculum was going on. After obtaining permission from the authorities the investigator explained the aims and importance of the study to the students at concerned School, for ensuring their co-operation in the process, and guaranteeing to them the privacy of their answers.The investigator administered the tool among the middle level students in sampled school. The Ryff's Psychological Well Being scale and AS-4FM Scale were given to the students in the classroom. They were handed a pencil and an eraser, and instructed to correctly complete the response on the accompanying response

form. Following receipt of the final response, the respondents' response sheets were gathered.

Data Consolidation

Scoring of the response sheet was done in accordance with the scoring key. The incomplete entries were eliminated during the scoring. For analytical reasons, the pertinent information gathered from the sample was combined. The scoring of different tools was tabulated in a consolidated data sheet. The total sample based on the Demographic details, Mindfulness and Psychological wellbeing were recorded. Subsequently, the individuals' ratings for each statement were recorded. SPSS was used for the majority of the computations and data processing.

Statistical Techniques

The researcher chose a number of statistical approaches for the current investigation based on the nature of the investigation. The essential statistical technique applied in the research includes Karl Pearson product moment correlation, Analysis of variance, the two tailed test of significance of difference between means, independent t-test, Mean, Standard Deviation, Median, and Descriptive Frequency analysis.

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Psychological wellbeing	60	135	218	9602	160.03	16.245	263.897
Mindfulness	60	95	165	7899	131.65	14.642	214.401

Interpretation of Values of Correlation

Values of r	Verbal Description
0	Zero relationship or absolutely no relationship
± 0.0 to ± 0.20	Negligible relationship
± 0.21 to ± 0.40	Low correlation
± 0.41 to 0.60	Moderate or substantial relationship
± 0.61 to ± 0.80	High correlation
± 81 to ± 0.99	Very high on dependable relationship
± 1	Perfect correlation

Delimitations of the Study

The study was subjected to the following limitations.
• The research study was confined to the government middle level school of Delhi only.
• The research study was confined to the students studying from standard 6th to 8th i.e., Middle level of Delhi government school only.
• Sample size of the study will be 60 students only.

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

Data analysis is seen as a crucial stage in the research process. The next stage after gathering data with the aid of the proper tools and methodologies is to analyse and interpret the data to come up with an empirical solution to the problem. Analysing data involves looking at the organised data to search underlying evidence. It comprises breaking down the previously complex elements into more manageable parts and reassembling the parts in a unique way so as to aid in interpretation. From the very beginning to the very end, analysis as a process enters in one way or another, which is in the selection of the problem, in the aim, and in the conclusion from the facts acquired.

Thus, analysis and interpretation aid in creating a meaningful image from the collected raw data. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were used in the quantitative data analysis for the current study. This chapter explains how to analyse and interpret the data that was gathered considering the study's various Objectives. The Objectives were reaffirmed as follows:

Objective 1: To study the mindfulness of middle-level school students.
Objective2: To study the psychological wellbeing of middle level school students.
Objective 3: To compare the psychological wellbeing in relation to gender of middle level School Students.
Objective 4: To compare the mindfulness in relation to gender of middle level school students.
Objective 5: To study the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well being.

Data Analysis

Problem 1: To study the mindfulness-based happiness curriculum of middle-level school students.
H1: Mindfulness of the middle-level school students is significantly higher.

Reporting of the Levels of Mindfulness

To analyse the levels of Mindfulness researcher has used following formula: -
Mean+ Standard Deviation =Value of High level of Mindfulness- (Formula)
For example: 131.65+14.64=146.29 (High Mindfulness level)
Mean-Standard Deviation = Value of Low Level of Mindfulness- (Formula)
For Example: 131.65-14.64=117.00 (Low Mindfulness level)
Values between High and Low Mindfulness= Value of Average Level of Mindfulness
For Example: 117 to 146 (Average Mindfulness level)

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Mindfulness	60	95	165	7899	131.65	14.642

The Whole sample is divided into two groups namely Average to high and below average to low- based on the scoring of the Mindfulness of the individual students; The percentage of middle level students for the mindfulness are as follows in the Table no. 4.1.

Table 4.1: Levels of Mindfulness based on score

Levels of Mindfulness	Frequency	Percentage
Average to High (Above 117)	53	88.33 %
Below Average to Low (Below 117)	7	11.66%
Total	60	100%

From Table No.4.1 Researcher has found that Levels of Mindfulness of the Middle Level School students is Average to High i.e., Above 117. In terms of percentage Researcher has found that 88.33% students have High level of Mindfulness.

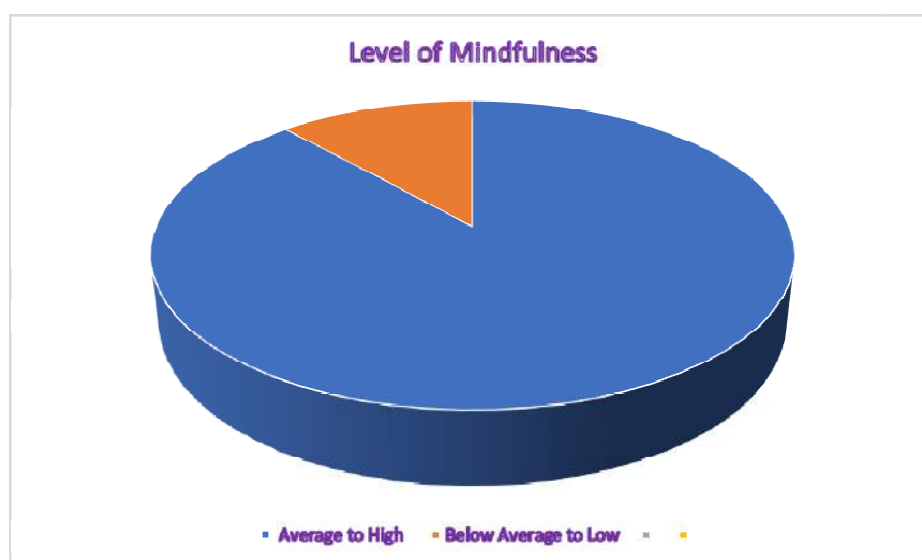Figure 4.1: Percentage of the Level of Mindfulness shown by Pie Chart

Problem 2: To study the psychological wellbeing of middle level school students.

H2: Middle-level school students will exhibit significant levels of psychological well being.

The Researcher has used central tendency for the analysis of psychological well being. The following central tendencies values such as Standard Deviation, Mean, Variance etc. have been calculated through SPSS Software and its value are mentioned in the below: -

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Psychological wellbeing	60	83	135	218	9602	160.03	16.245	263.897

Formula for calculating High wellbeing and Low wellbeing are as follows:

High wellbeing = 1.5 SD + Mean

Low wellbeing = 1.5 SD -Mean

High wellbeing= 1.5 ×16.24+160.03=184.39

Low wellbeing= 1.5 ×16.24-160.03= 135.66

Based on the wellbeing data there are three Levels of wellbeing score categorized in terms of Frequency as per obtained data are as follows: -

Table 4.2: Analysis of the Level of Wellbeing

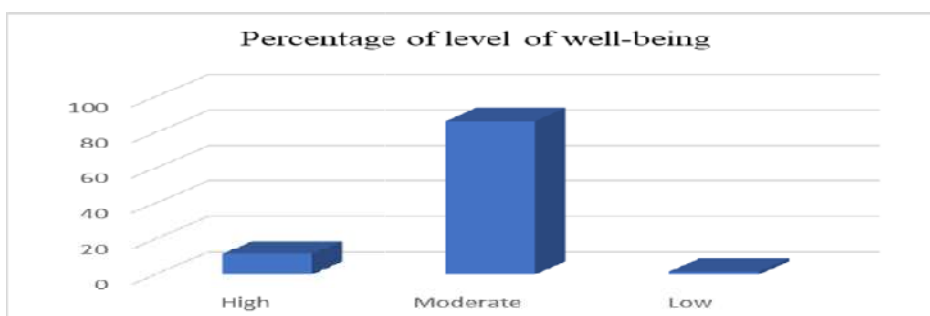| S.no.	Levels of Wellbeing	Frequency	Percentage
1	High	7	11.66 %
2	Moderate	52	86.67 %
3	Low	1	1.67 %
Total		60	100 %

Figure: 4.2 Percentage of Level of Wellbeing

From the Above analysis researcher found that 52 participants have Moderate Level of Wellbeing with 86.67 %. 7 participants that have High Level of Wellbeing with 11.66% and only 1 participant that has Low Level of Wellbeing with 1.67%. Hence, Study found that Middle Level school Students have Moderate level of Wellbeing which shows a positive sign for the same.

Problem 3: To compare the psychological wellbeing in relation to gender of middle level school Students.

H3: There is no significant difference in psychological wellbeing levels in relation to gender of Middle level school students.

Table 4.3: t-Test Analysis

Gender	N	Mean	SD	df	t	p	Remarks
Male	35	160.69	15.94	58	.365	.432	Non-significant
P>0.05							
Female	25	159.12	16.94				

Reporting t-Test Analysis

The result t-Test showed that the mean score of Mindfulness in relation to Male of middle level school (M=160.69, SD=15.94, n=35) and that of Female of middle level school (M=159.12, SD=16.94, n= 25) was statistically not significant at .05 level of significance [t (58) = .365, p>.05)].

Hence, H3 was supported. This shows there is similarity in the level of Wellbeing between male and Female. There is a very minor difference in its mean score and SD because here male and female participants are not equal. Overall, it shows an almost equal level of wellbeing in both genders.

The Problem 4: To compare the mindfulness in relation to gender of middle level school students.

H4: There is no significant difference in mindfulness levels between male and female.

Middle-Level School Students.

Table 4.4: t-Test Analysis							
Gender	N	Mean	SD	Df	T	P	Remarks
Male	35	127.91	14.531	58	2.434	.807	Non-significant P>0.05
Female	25	136.99	13.383				

Reporting t-Test Analysis

The result t-Test showed that the mean score of Mindfulness in relation to Male of middle level school (M=127.91, SD=14.531, n=35) and that of Female of middle level school (M=136.99, SD=13.383, n= 25) was statistically not significant at .05 level of significance [t (58)=2.434, p>.05)].Hence H4 was supported.This shows there is similarity in the level of mindfulness between male and Female.There is very minor difference in it's mean score and SD because here male and female participants are not equal.overall its shows almost equal level of mindfulness in both the gender.

The Problem 5: Study of the relationship between mindfulness and psychological Well Being.

H5: There is a significant relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being among middle-level school students.

Reporting Pearson Correlation

Pearson product Correlation of Psychological wellbeing and Mindfulness was availed to be moderately positive and statistically significant (r =.527, p<.001). Hence, H5 was supported. This indicates that an enhancement in one variable i.e., psychological well being, the other variable i.e., Mindfulness enhances as well. The value itself provides an indication of the strength of the relationship.

Table 4.5: Correlations Analysis

		Psychological well being	Mindfulness
Psychological well being	Pearson Correlation	1	.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations

		Psychological well being	Mindfulness
Psychological well being	Pearson Correlation	1	.527**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	60	60
Mindfulness	Pearson Correlation	.527**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	60	60

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Major Findings

The study of the relationship between mindfulness and psychological well-being has gained significant attention in recent years. Mindfulness, which is frequently taken from Buddhist meditation techniques, is focusing on the current moment without passing judgment, meditation etc. It has been found to have numerous benefits for psychological well-being of the students. The Buddhist Meditation practices has also been taken as an

example and tried to implement this into the Delhi government school in the forms of triad of happiness from class first to Eight for the betterment of the student's well being. The findings of the study were summarised according to the statement of the problem stated by the researcher. Here are some key findings from the analysis of the Study: Researchers found that the Level of Mindfulness among Middle level school students was in the Average to high category as 52 out of 60 participants i.e., 88.33 % laid in this level. Hence, this shows Mindfulness practice can play an important role in supporting the Happiness Curriculum programme by bringing concentration, contentment and positive mindset etc. From the study of Wellbeing researchers found that 88.67% students were having Moderate levels of wellbeing and only 1.67% students were having low levels of wellbeing. Overall, the Wellbeing score shows that the level of well-being is moderate to high which is relevant in terms of the Happiness Curriculum initiative.

I. In Case of Psychological well-being, here again there is similarity between male and female wellbeing as t-Test found non-significant, [t (58) = .365, P>0.05]. Hence Hypothesis was supported.

Conclusion

To conclude, The Study has revealed promising findings with significant educational implications. Mindfulness practices have been associated with reduced stress, improved emotional regulation, enhanced cognitive abilities, and increased self-compassion. These benefits can positively impact students, teachers, and the overall educational environment. It is important to recognize that implementing mindfulness in education requires appropriate training, support from school administrators, and a comprehensive approach that involves teachers, students, and families. Continued research and evaluation are necessary to further understand the benefits, mechanisms, and optimal implementation of mindfulness-based interventions in educational settings.

Overall, the study of mindfulness and psychological well-being provides valuable insights for educators and educational institutions, offering a pathway to enhance the overall educational experience, promote well-being, and support the development of resilient and successful learners.

****

References

- Here is the list of references arranged in APA 7th edition format, in alphabetical order:

- Das, A., & Ravindranath, S. (2022). Happiness curriculum: Theory, practice and way forward. *Dream a Dream*. https://dreamadream.org/financialstype/research-outputs/

- Jovanovic, V., & Jerković, I. (2011). School satisfaction among secondary school students: Relations with school achievement and mental health indicators. *Psihologija, 44*(3), 211–224. https://doi.org/10.2298/PSI1103211J

- Khanna, D., & Peterson, A. (2023). State-led education reform in Delhi, India: A case study of the happiness curriculum. *Center for Universal Education at The Brookings Institution.*

- Kuo, N.-C., Kawaguchi, T., & Yang, Y.-F. (2021). Exploring absolute happiness through experiential education. *Journal of Experiential Education, 44*(4), 346–362. https://doi.org/10.1177/1053825920975141

- National Council of Educational Research and Training. (2005). ***National curriculum framework for school education***. NCERT.

- PTI. (2018, February 7). Delhi government to introduce "happiness curriculum" in its schools. ***Times of India***.

- SCERT. (2022*). Impact of the happiness curriculum: An evaluative study for heads of schools and teachers*. Cell for Human Values and Transformative Learning, State Council of Educational Research and Training, Delhi.

- Suldo, S., Riley, K., & Shaffer, E. (2006). Academic correlates of children and adolescents' life satisfaction. *School Psychology International, 27*(5), 567–582. https://doi.org/10.1177/0143034306073411

- Verkuyten, M., & Thijs, J. (2002). School satisfaction of elementary school children: The role of performance, peer relations, ethnicity, and gender. *Social Indicators Research, 59*, 203–228. https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1016279602893

- Yam, F. C. (2022). The relationship between school satisfaction and psychological well-being of secondary school students: The mediating role of happiness at school. *Journal of Teacher Education and Lifelong Learning, 4*(2), 248–262. https://doi.org/10.51535/tell.1200847

- Yam, F. (2022). The Relationship Between School Satisfaction and Psychological Well-Being of Secondary School Students: The Mediating Role of Happiness at School. Journal of Teacher Education and Lifelong Learning. https://doi.org/10.51535/tell.1200847.

Digital Literacy and Its Role in Preparing Students for the Workforce of the Future

Surbhi Pal

Department of Education, University of Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, India.
Email: surbhipal0507@gmail.com
ORCiD ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3619-5602

Abstract

Digital literacy has become a crucial ability for pupils to succeed in the future profession due to the ever changing technological landscape. The capacity to successfully explore, assess and create utilizing digital tools has become a vital necessity for both personal and professional success as digital technologies continue to revolutionize industries. The study also emphasizes how lifelong learning programs, digital platforms and creative teaching methods may all help to increase digital literacy. In order to guarantee that students are prepared for success in the digital economy, educators and policymakers are given recommendations that emphasize the significance of ongoing skill development, industry-education collaboration and the encouragement of moral online conduct. In the end, the study makes the case that digital literacy is not only a technical ability but also an essential part of educating students for the opportunities and difficulties of the workforce of the future.

Keywords: Digital Literacy, Workforce Preparation, Critical Thinking.

Introduction

The rapid pace of technological progress in this 21st century is drastically changing the way to live, work and communicate. From artificial intelligence and

automation to the widespread application of cloud computing and the use of data analytics in almost every sector of the economy, digital technologies have reshaped most sectors of the global economy. With this change comes the need for new skills on the modern job. The traditional job roles are undergoing a transformation, while the new professions are rising; all these require an excellent command over digital tools and technologies. This is bringing a technological revolution both in terms of challenges and opportunities for students who are set to enter an increasingly digital world of work. It is this very scenario that has propelled the importance of digital literacy into the future job market as a critical competency. Digital literacy is the ability to access, evaluate and create information using a range of digital technologies, from computers to smartphones and the internet. It involves technical skills but also critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration and communication in a digital context. The growing importance of digital literacy is based on the fact that nearly every profession nowadays depends on some form of digital technology, whether it's software tools, digital communication platforms, or data analysis methods.

Even as the digital literacies increase in significance, many of its students do not master those essential skills even after leaving school or universities. Such a scenario would lead to a competency gap between those skills the student learns from school or college and the needs of employers in a digital economy. The role that schools and universities played in this static world will need adjustment. Without strong roots in digital literacy, students face becoming underprepared for work or even becoming unemployed in extreme cases. This makes employability and even successful working careers almost impossible to reach. Beyond the technological aspect, even health workers, finance practitioners, education providers, or artists now need at least some form of digital savvy. For instance, healthcare professionals need to access electronic medical records and telemedicine platforms, while financial analysts rely on data analytics tools to analyze market trends. In education, teachers and students use digital platforms for remote learning and artists and designers use software for digital creation and collaboration. Consequently, digital literacy has emerged to be not only a niche skill but an empowering universal skill that students must acquire cutting across the disciplines to stay competitive in the job market.

This paper discusses the role of digital literacy in preparing students for the workforce of the future. It delves into the definition, importance and scope of digital literacy and explores how these skills are fast becoming a prerequisite for career success.

The paper also looks at how educational institutions can integrate digital literacy into curricula to ensure that the students are well-equipped to navigate the demands of a technology-driven workforce. The paper does address the challenges of developing digital literacy, including digital divide and technological change occurring at a rate that even the experts could hardly be able to predict, making recommendations for educators, policymakers and other stakeholders to establish a digitally literate generation. In a nutshell, this research points out that digital literacy plays a central role in closing the gaps between education and employment: ensuring that students are able to thrive in the jobs of the future.

Understanding Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is something different from the basic ability to use technology. It comprises a wide set of capabilities to interact with, create and share content in digital environments. With digital technologies now forming an integral part of daily lives, the concept of digital literacy has shifted from being narrowly defined as minimal computer skills to broad competence that extends into thinking critically, communicating effectively and using technology appropriately both ethically and productively. The section examines in detail what constitutes digital literacy in relation to its history and relevance in student preparation for working lives.

Components of Digital Literacy

Digital literacy is a multifaceted concept encompassing several interconnected components that collectively enable individuals to navigate and engage effectively with digital environments. These components are essential for fostering meaningful participation in today's technology-driven world, where digital tools and platforms influence nearly every aspect of personal, professional and societal life. By understanding and mastering the core elements of digital literacy—information literacy, technical literacy, media literacy, communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving and ethical and responsible use—people are thus empowered to access opportunities, make informed decisions and contribute constructively to the digital ecosystem.

Information literacy lies at the heart of digital literacy and enables an individual to search for, evaluate and use information effectively from different digital sources. In

the internet age where there is a glut of information which may contradict each other or not be credible, the ability to use information properly is critical. It is therefore, important to understand how to look for information in databases, how to critically assess online content and how to ethically utilize digital resources. Developing information literacy is designed to enable the recognition between credible and non-credible sources, avoidance of misinformation pitfall and effective usage of information to facilitate learning, decision-making and creative thinking. The present age of growing complexity and huge volumes of digital information increase the importance of such skill for both academic and professional success, as Head has noted in 2013 and Choi & Rasmussen in 2009.

Another is **technical literacy**, or being literate in technical information; this means a mastery over digital tools, devices and software to use them correctly. Technical literacy isn't limited to just general information devices, such as computers, smart phones, or tablets, but instead should encompass the ability to effectively operate specialized applications that people need to use. The rapid nature of technological progress is quite a challenge to remain updated in terms of newer and advanced tools and technologies as it becomes available. As Dede (2010) and Selwyn (2012) have noted, individuals need to keep abreast of the latest digital tools to be competitive in the job market and to be able to fully participate in digital communities. In addition, technical literacy means that individuals can use technology not only for productivity but also for creativity and innovation.

Media literacy is equally important. It is the ability to critically analyze and evaluate digital content, especially in media-rich environments. Media literacy enables individuals to recognize biases, identify misinformation and understand how algorithms affect the content they consume. In a world dominated by social media and digital platforms, these skills are crucial for navigating issues like fake news and the manipulation of public opinion. According to Levinson (2018), media literacy is not only about consuming but also about critically engaging with the content, thus leading to informed decision-making and responsible sharing of content..

Other important aspects of digital literacy include **communication and collaboration** in terms of how one should appropriately engage within these digital environments. Whether it is through an email or instant messaging, video conferencing, or even social media, tools that allow people to communicate are ever present within everyday life. Effective utilization of these tools personally and professionally becomes an essential issue as more work shifts towards remote and hybrid models. Digital tools facilitate easy

collaboration so that people can work together regardless of how far they are because teamwork and innovation are promoted while efficiency is enhanced. Researchers such as Ala-Mutka (2011) emphasize the growing relevance of digital communication skills at work and everywhere, since effective virtual interaction is rapidly becoming important.

Critical thinking and problem-solving are also basic elements of digital literacy because they can help people solve more complex issues in digital realms. They involve analyzing problems, thinking critically, and using digital tools to come up with a solution. Nowadays, since coding, data analytics, and artificial intelligence have become significant technologies, the ability to apply advanced digital techniques to solve a problem has become a highly valued skill in the employment market. Saavedra & Opfer (2012) argue that it's not just technical; however, it is more of conceptual and requires a mixture of analytical thinking and creativity while solving complex problems.

Finally, responsible **ethical use of digital technology** would constitute a basic element of digital literacy. This involves the recognition of issues about online privacy and digital security and of the various moral implications arising from how one would act within digital spaces. This will include knowledge of the problems associated with plagiarism, cyberbullying and personal data misuse. Promoting ethical digital behavior fosters respect, responsibility and accountability in online interactions. Teaching digital citizenship, as argued by Jones & Mitchell (2016), is pivotal to preparing individuals to prepare them for the challenges of an increasingly interconnected world. Fostering a sense of digital responsibility amongst students, educators and institutions could help them identify their rights and obligations in the digital ecosystem.

It is within this context that digital literacy is constructed by interplays between information literacy, technical literacy, media literacy, communication and collaboration, critical thinking and problem-solving and ethical responsibility use. Collectively, these enable one to interact in digital spaces confidently, effectively and responsibly. And as technology keeps changing our world, they are not a matter of choice anymore but become important determinants for individual and societal success. Digital literacy, therefore, provides an assurance that individuals not only acquire skills to navigate their way through the mess of the digital age but also are in a position to contribute meaningfully to its opportunities and challenges.

The Evolution of Digital Literacy

The concept of digital literacy is much more contemporary as this term was first popularized several years ago. In other words, the term that came initially referred to fundamental know-how about how computers should be used and internet-based sources accessed (Gilster, 1997). Then, the usage widened progressively with the help of increasing use of internet and portable devices and social network websites while communicating with any other related information. Presently, digital literacy is considered an essential lifelong learning process, which covers developing competencies in a huge range of digital tools, platforms and behaviors.

This is the reflection of increased technological integration in all walks of life and shifting towards a more inclusive concept of digital literacy. No longer do people need to be merely computer operators, but also understand the role of technology in society, economy and culture (Eisenberg & Johnson, 2012). With the emergence of new technologies in the form of artificial intelligence, machine learning and blockchain, digital literacy must also extend to knowledge about these emerging tools and their potential impact in various industries (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

Digital Literacy in the Context of Education and the Workforce

In the context of education, digital literacy is not only mastering technology but also how technology can be an aid to learning and problem-solving. Students need to know not only how to use digital tools but also to leverage them in innovative ways to foster creativity, critical thinking and collaboration (Rheingold, 2012). For instance, in digital-equipped classrooms for collaborative projects, students get to practice teamwork with cloud tools for document sharing and video-conferencing and thus manage digital communication effectively. From a workforce perspective, digital literacy has become crucial. The World Economic Forum (2020) identifies the digital skills as a major driver for future employability. As automation and AI continue to transform industries, employees must learn to work alongside these technologies, adapt to new digital tools and use data-driven decision-making in their roles. This shift makes digital literacy a critical element in preparing students for the future workforce, ensuring they can not only survive but thrive in an increasingly complex, technology-driven job market (OECD, 2021).

This calls for education systems to provide students with relevant competencies. There have been findings that digitally literate students are more likely to succeed in higher

education as well as the labor force (Binkley et al., 2012; UNESCO, 2018). On the contrary, lack of digital literacy gives rise to several barriers in entry in career fields, thereby perpetuating inequalities in society and economy (Selwyn, 2016).

Challenges and Gaps in Digital Literacy Education

Digital literacy education remains crucial, but not surprisingly it has been under-resourced, in many instances sporadically taught and very many schools do not possess trained teachers or appropriate means for delivering such a syllabus effectively (Rosen, 2017). As technology changes so quickly, it makes curricula fast-moving to the extent of often rendering curricula useless quickly after implementation. There is also a digital divide related to the quality of access for students who have higher quality technology compared to students without access, especially in less privileged or rural settings (Van Dijk, 2020). These gaps have amplified educational inequalities and diminished opportunities for students to achieve skills for success in a digital economy.

To overcome these issues, the governments and institutions have to give importance to the integration of digital literacy within the curricula, ensure regular training for teachers and technology availability for all students with no discrimination (Selwyn, 2016). This would contribute to filling the gap in competencies between students at present and those demanded within the digital economy.

Role of Digital Literacy in Workforce Preparation

Today's economy evolves rapidly, so the skills of digital literacy help the student adapt to the requirements of modern workplaces. Since technological development worldwide is growing by the day, the need for skilled professionals with comprehensive knowledge of digital tools, platforms and processes is crucial. Digital literacy equips the student with not only technical but also problem-solving, communication and critical thinking skills in terms of navigating a technology-driven workplace. This section explores the significance of digital literacy in workforce preparation with reference to its impact on employability, productivity and career advancement.

Enhancing Employability

One of the key reasons digital literacy is crucial in workforce preparation is that it directly impacts employability. The World Economic Forum (2020) reported that most

jobs in various sectors today require digital skills, from simple digital literacy to more complex skills like coding, data analysis and the use of specialized software. Employers increasingly expect candidates to possess these skills, regardless of the industry they are entering. For example, in fields like marketing, finance and healthcare, the ability to use digital tools is no longer optional; it is a basic requirement for the job. Additionally, digital literacy increases a student's adaptability to new technologies in the workplace. New tools and software are coming up every day and the employer wants to hire people who can easily learn and implement new systems to improve efficiency and innovation (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). This adaptability is crucial in a world where technologies are always changing. Without good digital literacy, employees may find themselves not being able to keep pace with these changes in technology, limiting their career prospects and overall job performance.

For instance, a digital marketing professional today must be adept at using analytics platforms, social media tools and content management systems to perform their role. Similarly, in healthcare, practitioners must be proficient in using electronic medical records (EMRs) and telehealth platforms (Hollander & Carr, 2020). These examples demonstrate how digital literacy is directly tied to employability in virtually every sector.

Improving Productivity and Efficiency

Digital literacy will also aid in increasing work efficiency rather than just focusing on a job. Such workers using digital skills help their managers to use technological equipment more wisely to reduce the repetition of manual tasks, solve issues in easy ways and make processes more efficient. Now, almost all industries replaced traditional works with digital and that gave a huge lift in production. For example, the manufacturing sector can utilize remote monitoring and control of processes by machine learning and automation systems for smooth operation and minimal human intervention (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014). Another area where digital literacy becomes a good facilitator for workers in their organizations and within global teams is through their ability to collaborate more efficiently. Tools such as cloud computing, project management software, collaborative platform Google Workspace, or Microsoft Teams have completely changed how human beings interact and get on with one another. With digital literacy, all workers can get through them: share documents in real-time, manage complex projects, have virtual meetings, regardless of any kind of geographic location. These collaborative capabilities

help bring about innovation, speed of work and team cohesiveness, all factors that enhance better organizational performance (Ala-Mutka, 2011).

In fact, as organizations strive to work more efficiently, those workers with digital literacy are in a better position to handle more complex tasks involving more problem-solving and technical expertise. For instance, within the finance sector, experts make use of advanced data analytics to process and interpret large data sets that help in making informed decisions and, therefore, more accurate forecasting. The skills to operate such systems are only attainable with a solid understanding of the digital tools, which can be seen as how critical digital literacy is in achieving higher individual and organizational performance.

Facilitating Career Growth and Advancement

Beyond initial employment, digital literacy is also integral to career growth and advancement. As employees gain experience and take on more responsibility, their ability to effectively use digital tools can determine their success in higher-level roles. In many industries, digital skills are necessary for leadership positions, where decision-makers are increasingly relying on data and digital platforms to guide their strategies and manage teams.

As in the financial sector, it is the analysts who will use digital tools for the analysis of data and modelling of finances who are given more significant roles, sometimes handling big projects or a team. Similarly, in the education, health and engineering sectors, people who are competent in digital technologies are more likely to move into jobs that require them to innovate and implement digital solutions within their organizations.

Career progression in the modern workforce often depends on one's ability to integrate and leverage digital technologies to drive organisational success (Saavedra & Opfer, 2012). Another significant aspect of digital literacy is its contribution to an employee's ability to continue learning in their careers.

Engaging with online courses, webinars and other digital resources gives the employee the opportunity to constantly learn, be up-to-date on new industry trends and maintain relevance in a job market where competition is at an all-time high. The key strategy for advancement in careers nowadays has been through lifelong learning through digital tools (OECD, 2021).

Digital Literacy Across Different Sectors

While digital literacy is critical across all industries, its importance varies depending on the sector. In high-tech industries, such as software development, IT and data science, advanced digital literacy, including programming skills and knowledge of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and blockchain, is a must. In these fields, workers need to be highly proficient in digital tools to develop and implement technological solutions (Brynjolfsson & McAfee, 2014).

However, digital literacy is not limited to traditional technology-based industries. For instance, in the health industry, the use of telemedicine and EHR has made it imperative for healthcare professionals to have a basic understanding of digital tools. This ensures that they can provide patient care efficiently while also navigating complex regulatory frameworks and data protection requirements (Hollander & Carr, 2020). Similarly, the education sector has seen a significant move toward digital learning environments. Educators who can seamlessly merge digital tools into their classrooms have become in greater demand for the sector (OECD, 2021). In finance, manufacturing and logistics sectors, digital literacy has emerged as a significant improvement enhancer and enabler for remote work. For instance, financial analysts require specific software to analyze vast datasets; in the manufacturing industry, employees use digital systems to track production lines and manage inventory. These industries are largely adopting digital technologies and thus, employees should be equipped with the required digital skills to perform their jobs competently and effectively (World Economic Forum, 2020).

Bridging the Digital Divide

One of the challenges in workforce preparation is the digital divide, or the gap between those who have access to digital technologies and those who do not. The digital divide is often correlated with socio-economic status, geographic location and education levels. Students from lower-income backgrounds or rural areas may have limited access to the latest digital tools and platforms, which can hinder their ability to develop the necessary skills to succeed in the workforce (Van Dijk, 2020).

This is crucial in ensuring that all students are on an equal footing as far as readiness for the digital economy is concerned. Educational institutions, governments and businesses must collaborate to offer equal access to digital technologies and ensure that all students

get a chance to develop skills needed in the modern workplace. This includes investing in digital infrastructure, offering affordable access to technology and providing digital literacy training programs to underserved communities (Selwyn, 2016).

Integrating Digital Literacy into Education Systems

Preparing students for the digital economy is a role for educational institutions. However, most of the time, there exists a gap between the competencies that students gain from traditional classrooms and the competencies that employers require in the digital age. Digital literacy is thus very important to integrate into the curriculum.

Curriculum Design and Pedagogy

Curriculum design should place an emphasis on digital literacy across disciplines and not just in the technology or computer science classroom. The humanities and social sciences students should be trained in the use of digital research tools, while the students in the STEM disciplines should have experience with hands-on programming, data analysis and solving digital problems. Project-based learning and experiential learning will also help in the development of students to apply the tools digitally in real life.

Professional Development for Educators

To effectively teach digital literacy, educators must be well-versed in digital tools and pedagogies. Professional development programs should be implemented to ensure that teachers can integrate technology into their teaching practices. This includes training in the use of educational technology, understanding digital citizenship and promoting safe online behaviours.

Bridging the Digital Divide

One of the major challenges to ensuring equal access to digital literacy is the digital divide, which refers to the gap between those who have access to technology and those who do not. Students in underserved communities may lack access to reliable internet, devices, or digital resources. Policymakers must address this issue by expanding access to technology and providing equitable opportunities for all students to develop digital literacy skills.

Challenges in Promoting Digital Literacy

Rapid Technological Advancements

This poses a challenge in the face of rapidly changing pace of technological innovations for the educators and learners alike. Because new tools and platforms spring up with each passing day, curricula are ever-changing for the designers to keep the students learning relevant, up-to-date skills and knowledge at all times.

Cybersecurity and Digital Ethics

As students become more and more digitally literate, they also need to understand the ethical implications of their digital behaviors. Data privacy, online security and digital citizenship should be part of their digital literacy curriculum. Finally, students need to learn how to deal with misinformation, cyberbullying and digital addiction.

Recommendations for Policymakers and Educators

- Curricular Reform: Digital literacy is to be integrated into all subjects, not just the technology-focused disciplines. For instance, digital tools and critical thinking exercises can be infused into history, science, literature and the arts.
- Digital Literacy Standards: Implement clear digital standards and performance at every single level with the assurance of students proceeding through a scaffold approach to developing mastery in digitals skills.
- Investment in Technology Access: Governments and educational institutions should invest in providing students with the necessary digital infrastructure, including affordable devices, high-speed internet and software.
- Collaboration with Industry: Collaboration between academic institutions and industries will make sure that curricula meet the skills requirements of the employers, creating smooth career transitions for students into the work force.

7. Conclusion

Digital literacy has become the most vital tool for those students hoping to make it through the modern working world. In fact, with the growing dependence of everything

in modern life on technology, it's no longer a luxury but a necessity in shaping both individual opportunities and the broad economic landscape. Educational institutions are a must in ensuring that students are prepared for the digital skills that will exist in the future workforce. Digital literacy, within the curriculum, is essential to ensure that the technical, analytical and problem-solving skills required by employers in a technology-driven economy can be learned by students. In conjunction with such an endeavor, strong teacher preparation programs must be introduced that give teachers the competencies and confidence they require to implement digital education delivery successfully. The same kind of endeavor must be implemented to eliminate gaps in accessing technology, such as discrepancies in terms of availability and connectivity. In addition, a digitally literate generation is better prepared to respond to new challenges, innovate solutions and meaningfully contribute to the global economy. By emphasizing digital literacy, educational institutions are preparing students for success in the workplace and informed, involved citizens who can navigate the complex world that is changing fast. These investments in education are part of a commitment to create resilience, inclusivity and progress for no one to be left behind in the digital age. This ultimately translates into the integration of digital literacy in the classroom, no longer a reaction to progress but a strategic and ethical necessity to give people skills they need to succeed in the workforce of the future while promoting social progress more broadly.

****

References:

- Ala-Mutka, K. (2011). *The state of digital literacy in Europe*. JRC Technical Reports.
- Binkley, M., Erstad, O., Herman, J., Raizen, S., & Ripley, M. (2012). *Defining 21st Century Skills*. Springer.
- Brynjolfsson, E., & McAfee, A. (2014). *The Second Machine Age: Work, Progress and Prosperity in a Time of Brilliant Technologies*. W. W. Norton & Company.
- Buckingham, D. (2007). *Media Education: Literacy, Learning and Contemporary Culture*. Polity.
- Choi, S., & Rasmussen, K. L. (2009). *A taxonomy of internet information-seeking and search behaviors: A critical review*. Journal of Documentation, 65(1), 9–22.
- Dede, C. (2010). *Comparing frameworks for 21st century skills*. In *21st Century Skills: Rethinking How Students Learn* (pp. 51–76). Springer.
- Eisenberg, M. B., & Johnson, D. (2012). *The digital divide and the information society*. In *The Information Society* (Vol. 28, Issue 3).

- Gilster, P. (1997). *Digital Literacy*. Wiley.
- Head, A. J. (2013). *Learning the ropes: How freshmen conduct research in the digital age*. First-Year Experience Journal, 25(2), 65–83.
- Hollander, J. E., & Carr, B. G. (2020). *Virtually Perfect? Telemedicine for Covid-19*. The New England Journal of Medicine, 382(18), 1679–1681.
- Jones, L. M., & Mitchell, K. J. (2016). *Cyberbullying: A review of the literature*. In *Cyberbullying Prevention and Response: Expert Perspectives* (pp. 7–24). Routledge.
- Levinson, P. (2018). *The media and the digital age*. Harvard University Press.
- OECD. (2021). *The Future of Education and Skills 2030*. OECD Publishing.
- Rheingold, H. (2012). *Net Smart: How to Thrive Online*. MIT Press.
- Rosen, L. D. (2017). *The Distracted Mind: Ancient Brains in a High-Tech World*. MIT Press.
- Saavedra, A. R., & Opfer, V. D. (2012). *Teaching and learning 21st century skills: Lessons from the learning sciences*. International Academy of Education.
- Selwyn, N. (2012). *Education and technology: Key issues and debates*. Continuum.
- Selwyn, N. (2016). *Digital Technology and Education: A Critical Introduction*. Polity Press.
- UNESCO. (2018). *Digital Literacy in Education*. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- Van Dijk, J. (2012). *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media*. SAGE Publications..
- World Economic Forum. (2020). *The Future of Jobs Report 2020*. World Economic Forum.

Constructivism Revistted: Implications for 21st Century Learning Environments

Sumit Kumar Singh Chauhan

Department of Education, University of Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh, India.
Email: sumitchauhan833@gmail.com
ORCiD ID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-3406-5826

Abstract

This paper revisits constructivism theories to explore their relevance and application in contemporary educational settings, particularly those integrating digital and blended learning models. The constructivism principles, which advocate for active learning, social interaction and learner autonomy, have long been the cornerstone of learner-centred pedagogy. However, with the proliferation of digital technologies in education, traditional constructivist frameworks need to be re-examined and adapted to align with the characteristics of modern learning environments. This paper critically analyses the foundational tenets of constructivism and their applicability in the digital era. It discusses how digital tools can be leveraged to enhance learner engagement, collaboration and reflective practices. It proposes an updated framework incorporating digital modalities to foster meaningful learning experiences.

Keywords: constructivism, digital learning, blended learning, learner engagement, technology-enhanced learning.

Introduction

The constructivist theory has profoundly influenced educational practices by promoting an active student-centred approach wherein learners develop knowledge through interactions with their environment. Originating from the works of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, constructivism emphasises the learner's active role in creating understanding based on prior experiences and social interactions. Piaget's cognitive constructivism concerns internal learning processes and stages of cognitive development, whereas Vygotsky's social constructivism emphasises the role of social interaction and cultural contexts in shaping cognitive growth. Many misconceptions exist about constructivist teaching in its place. A prevalent misconception about constructivist teaching over the past few decades is that there is no body of knowledge pertaining to it and that teachers do not need to be subject-matter experts. As Baines and Stanley (2000) assert, 'with constructivism, the teacher is supposed to set up the learning environment, know student preferences, guide student investigations and then get out of the way' (p. 330). The educational landscape has been transformed by the introduction and widespread adoption of digital technologies and blended learning models. These new modalities present both opportunities and challenges for applying constructivist theory in contemporary learning environments. Digital tools enable more personalised and self-directed learning experiences while also allowing for virtual collaboration across geographical boundaries. However, the shift to digital and blended learning models also requires rethinking traditional constructivist principles to accommodate new forms of interaction, collaboration and content delivery.

This paper critically examines how constructivist principles can be reinterpreted to support learning in digital and blended learning contexts. It looks into how digital tools can be used to increase learner autonomy, social interaction and multimodal learning. It also addresses the implications for instructional design and pedagogical practices. By proposing an updated constructivist framework for 21st-century learning environments, this paper aims to provide insights for educators, instructional designers and researchers in re-envisioning learner-centred pedagogies for the digital age.

Revisiting Constructivist Theory in the Digital Era

Constructivism asserts that learners construct new ideas and understandings based on their existing knowledge and experiences. This active process of learning, where knowledge is built rather than passively received, is at the core of constructivist

pedagogy. One of the most common ways in which educational theorists have misunderstood constructivism is to equate it with student-centred teaching approaches. Baines and Stanley (2000) write that 'textbooks tell us that constructivism is student-centred and is on the opposite side of the continuum from subject-centred or teacher-centred instruction' (p. 327).

Piaget's cognitive constructivism focuses on how individuals internally process information and develop cognitively through different stages. Piaget posited that learners pass through specific developmental stages and at each stage they acquire new abilities to understand complex concepts. Vygotsky's social constructivism on the other hand places a stronger emphasis on the role of social interactions and cultural context in learning. Vygotsky believed that conversing and interacting with people who possess greater knowledge, like peers and teachers, is how knowledge is co-constructed. According to Vygotsky's "Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)," students can advance their comprehension and problem-solving skills by engaging in guided interactions that are just a little bit above their current capabilities. In 1978, Vygotsky proposed the "Zone of Proximal Development," which clarifies how human learning, development and knowledge are all intertwined with the particular social and cultural environment in which people live and grow. Since mental activity, he maintained, takes place in a social and cultural context, thought will operate differently in diverse historical situations. Cognition thus is shaped by the interactions among social actors, the contexts in which they act and the form their activities assume. (Kincheloe, 1999, p. 9)

In the context of traditional classrooms, constructivist practices often involve collaborative group work, problem-based learning and inquiry-based activities, providing opportunities for learners to explore concepts independently and through social interactions. However, the transition to digital and blended learning models necessitates rethinking these practices to accommodate new forms of learner engagement and knowledge construction.

Digital and Blended Learning: New Educational Dynamics

Digital and blended learning environments offer a range of benefits, such as flexibility in how and when learners learn, access to diverse resources and opportunities for real-time or asynchronous interactions. In blended learning, face-to-face instruction is supplemented or replaced by digital tools, which provide multimedia resources, interactive activities and platforms for online communication and collaboration. This model promotes personalised learning by allowing learners to interact with content that matches their learning preferences and pace.

However, the transition to digital and blended learning environments creates challenges for implementing constructivist principles. For example, while digital tools can facilitate independent exploration and self-paced learning, they can also cause cognitive overload if not carefully designed and implemented. Similarly, while virtual collaboration tools enable peer interaction across distances, maintaining engagement and social presence in online spaces can be difficult, especially if learners are not familiar with digital communication norms and practices.

Adapting Constructivist Theory for Modern Learning Environments

To effectively apply constructivist theory in digital and blended learning contexts, educators and instructional designers need to adapt traditional constructivist practices to address the unique affordances and constraints of digital environments. The following are key adaptations of constructivist principles for modern learning environments:

1. Promoting Learner Autonomy through Digital Technologies

Digital tools empower learners to take control of their learning by enabling access to content, exploration of topics and independent knowledge creation. Constructivist pedagogy in digital environments should offer structured yet flexible learning pathways that encourage learner autonomy while ensuring instructor support is available when needed (Kay et al., 2019). Adaptive learning platforms, which tailor content and feedback based on individual performance, are effective for supporting self-directed learning (Johnson et al., 2020). These platforms personalise learning experiences, ensuring learners engage with content appropriate for their skill level and needs. Tools such as e-portfolios and learning management systems (LMS) help learners track progress, reflect on experiences and set personal goals, fostering autonomy and metacognition (Chen et al., 2018).

2. Facilitating Social Interaction and Collaboration

Constructivist theory emphasises the role of social interaction in learning. Digital platforms such as discussion boards, collaborative documents and video conferencing tools facilitate interactions beyond physical classroom constraints. Effective collaboration requires structured activities, clear guidelines and active facilitation by instructors to ensure meaningful engagement (Vygotsky, 1978; Anderson & Kanuka, 2021). Group projects, peer reviews and collaborative problem-solving tasks foster interaction in digital environments. Combining synchronous and asynchronous communication tools

accommodates diverse schedules and preferences, enhancing participation in discussions and group work (Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

3. Utilising Multi-modal Resources for Conceptual Understanding

Digital environments provide access to multi-modal resources like videos, simulations, interactive diagrams and virtual reality (VR). These resources support diverse learning styles and deepen understanding of complex concepts compared to traditional text-based resources (Mayer, 2021). Interactive simulations allow learners to manipulate variables and observe outcomes, promoting critical thinking and exploration (Sung et al., 2019). Virtual labs offer safe environments for experimentation, fostering self-paced learning and immediate feedback. Consistent with constructivist principles, these resources should encourage active engagement and critical inquiry rather than passive consumption (Piaget, 1952).

4. Encouraging Reflective Practice and Metacognition

Reflective practice is essential for connecting new knowledge to prior understanding. Digital tools such as e-portfolios, blogs and online journals enable learners to document learning journeys, reflect on experiences and receive feedback from peers and instructors (Moon, 2004). Instructors can facilitate reflective practice by providing prompts that encourage learners to evaluate their experiences critically, set improvement goals and identify effective strategies (Boud et al., 2013). Peer feedback offers additional perspectives, helping learners refine their understanding and enhance metacognitive skills (Chen et al., 2018).

Implications for Instructional Design and Pedagogical Practices

The integration of constructivist principles in digital and blended learning environments has profound implications for instructional design and pedagogical practices. Constructivism emphasises active learning, student agency and collaboration, making it particularly relevant for modern learning contexts. Below are key considerations for educators and instructional designers, expanded and analysed through the lens of research and practice.

1. Designing Learner-Centric Environments

Digital platforms provide unique opportunities to tailor learning experiences to the needs of individual students. By leveraging these platforms, educators can create differentiated instruction that aligns with learners' skill levels, preferences and goals. One approach is through the application of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles, which focus on creating accessible and inclusive educational experiences. UDL emphasises providing multiple means of representation, engagement and expression to accommodate diverse learners (Meyer et al., 2014). For example, in a digital setting, instructors can offer content in various formats—videos, text, audio and interactive simulations—to cater to different learning preferences. Additionally, tools like adaptive learning platforms can adjust the difficulty of tasks or offer additional scaffolding based on real-time student performance, thereby personalising the learning journey (Rose & Meyer, 2002).

Practical implementation of learner-centric design also involves student autonomy. Research shows that giving students control over aspects of their learning, such as choosing projects or setting learning goals, increases motivation and engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). However, this autonomy should be supported by structured guidance to prevent students from becoming overwhelmed or disengaged (Kirschner et al., 2006). For example, in a constructivist digital classroom, instructors might use a learning management system (LMS) to offer curated resources while guiding learners to explore topics of personal interest. By aligning digital learning environments with constructivist principles and UDL frameworks, educators can ensure that students have equitable opportunities to engage meaningfully with content and develop lifelong learning skills.

2. Building a Community of Inquiry

In constructivist learning, the sense of community plays a pivotal role in fostering meaningful engagement and deep learning. The Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework is particularly useful for designing online and blended learning environments. CoI emphasises three interdependent elements: social presence, cognitive presence and teaching presence (Garrison et al., 2000).

Social Presence: Social presence involves fostering an environment where learners feel connected and can interact meaningfully with peers. In digital environments, this can be achieved through synchronous discussions, group projects and social media integration. Research highlights that collaborative tools, such as discussion boards or shared documents, enhance student participation and create opportunities for co-construction of knowledge (Hrastinski, 2009). For instance, a constructivist-orientated instructor might

design weekly peer review sessions where students critique and build upon each other's work.

Cognitive Presence: Cognitive presence refers to the extent to which learners can construct and confirm meaning through sustained reflection and discourse. This can be facilitated by creating challenging and authentic learning tasks that encourage inquiry and problem-solving. For example, a project-based approach, where students address real-world problems relevant to their field of study, can stimulate critical thinking and application of knowledge (Jonassen, 1999). Educators can further enhance cognitive presence by incorporating scaffolding techniques, such as guiding questions or checkpoints, to support learners through complex tasks (Vygotsky, 1978).

Teaching Presence: Teaching presence is the design, facilitation and direction of learning processes to achieve meaningful educational outcomes. Instructors can establish teaching presence by providing clear objectives, timely feedback and ongoing support (Anderson et al., 2001). For instance, using video conferencing tools for regular check-ins or recording personalised feedback for assignments ensures that students feel supported and valued.

The CoI framework underscores the importance of balancing these three presences. A constructivist digital classroom designed with CoI principles encourages students to engage actively, think critically and collaborate effectively, resulting in richer learning experiences.

3. Using Learning Analytics to Support Constructivist Learning

The increasing availability of learning analytics in digital environments offers powerful tools for supporting constructivist teaching. Learning analytics involves the collection and analysis of data on student engagement, performance and behaviours to enhance learning outcomes (Siemens, 2013). In a constructivist framework, learning analytics should be applied not merely for evaluation but to facilitate formative assessment and adaptive learning. Formative assessment, which provides ongoing feedback to learners, aligns with constructivist principles by encouraging self-reflection and continuous improvement (Black & Wiliam, 1998). For instance, instructors can use data from quizzes or discussion participation to identify students who may need additional support or to tailor instruction to better meet their needs.

One key application is the use of analytics dashboards to visualise student progress. Research indicates that when students have access to such data, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning and make informed decisions about how to

improve (Verbert et al., 2013). For example, a dashboard that tracks time spent on activities, completion rates and quiz scores can help students identify areas where they need to focus more effort. Another important use of analytics is in identifying patterns of engagement and predicting at-risk students. Tools that monitor activity in LMS platforms can alert instructors to students who are falling behind or disengaged, allowing for timely interventions. In a constructivist setting, these interventions should be designed to guide students back into active participation, such as through one-on-one coaching or peer mentoring programs. However, the ethical use of learning analytics is crucial. Instructors and institutions must ensure that data collection respects students' privacy and that insights are used constructively to support learning rather than for punitive purposes (Slade & Prinsloo, 2013). By integrating learning analytics thoughtfully, educators can create adaptive, responsive and student-centred digital environments that align with constructivist principles.

Challenges and Future Directions

Adapting constructivist theory for digital and blended learning environments presents several challenges, including digital equity and the risk of cognitive overload. To address these issues, future research should explore how emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, virtual reality and gamification can be integrated into constructivist frameworks to create more immersive and engaging learning experiences. Furthermore, empirical research is needed to assess the efficacy of constructivist approaches in digital learning environments, particularly in terms of outcomes such as critical thinking, collaboration and problem-solving abilities.

Challenges of Digital and Blended Learning Environments

Digital and blended learning environments have revolutionised education by integrating technology into teaching and learning processes. However, the implementation of constructivist approaches within these contexts presents unique challenges. Addressing these challenges effectively requires thoughtful instructional design, adequate resource allocation and a commitment to inclusivity. This paper explores four primary challenges in digital and blended learning environments: digital equity and access, cognitive overload and information management, maintaining engagement and motivation and designing for diverse learning styles and preferences.

1. Digital Equity and Access

A significant challenge in digital and blended learning is ensuring equitable access to technology and resources. Learners from diverse socio-economic backgrounds often experience disparities in their ability to access reliable internet, suitable devices, or conducive learning environments (Van Dijk, 2020). These disparities, collectively referred to as the "digital divide," can result in unequal learning outcomes, disproportionately affecting students from marginalised communities. For instance, a student without a functional laptop or high-speed internet may struggle to engage in interactive online sessions or access multimedia content, limiting their ability to participate fully in constructivist activities that require collaboration and exploration.

To bridge this gap, educational institutions need to invest in infrastructure and provide adequate support. Strategies such as distributing devices, subsidising internet costs and offering access to learning hubs with stable connectivity can mitigate these barriers (Koltay, 2021). Schools and governments must also prioritise digital literacy programs to empower learners and their families to utilise digital tools effectively. Addressing digital equity is not only a matter of access but also a step toward fostering inclusive learning environments where all students can thrive regardless of their socio-economic status.

2. Cognitive Overload and Information Management

Digital learning environments often expose learners to vast amounts of information, leading to cognitive overload. This occurs when the volume or complexity of information exceeds an individual's capacity to process it effectively, thereby impeding learning (Sweller, Ayres, & Kalyuga, 2011). In constructivist settings, where students are encouraged to engage actively with multi-modal content and build their understanding, excessive cognitive demands can undermine the learning process.

For example, a student navigating a poorly structured course with dense text, videos and interactive simulations may find it overwhelming to synthesise information. Such overload hinders the deep reflection and knowledge construction that are central to constructivist learning (Mayer, 2014). To address this, instructional designers must adopt evidence-based strategies to reduce cognitive load. Techniques include chunking content into manageable segments, providing clear instructions and using scaffolding to guide learners through complex tasks. Additionally, opportunities for reflection and application—such as discussion forums and low-stakes assessments—can help learners consolidate their understanding without feeling overwhelmed (Morrison et al., 2019). Moreover, employing tools like learning analytics can help instructors identify areas where students struggle and tailor interventions to support their needs. By designing for cognitive manageability, educators can create learning environments that encourage meaningful engagement without overwhelming students.

3. Maintaining Engagement and Motivation

Engagement and motivation are critical factors for success in digital and blended learning, yet these can be difficult to sustain, particularly in asynchronous or self-paced contexts. The lack of face-to-face interaction often results in diminished social presence, leaving students feeling isolated or disengaged (Hrastinski, 2009). In turn, this isolation can reduce intrinsic motivation and hinder active participation in constructivist activities.

To foster engagement, instructors must adopt strategies that promote interaction and collaboration. Incorporating gamification elements, such as badges, leaderboards and challenges, can make learning more engaging by tapping into students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations (Deterding et al., 2011). Regular check-ins through synchronous video calls or personalised feedback can help maintain a sense of connection and accountability. Additionally, designing interactive content, such as simulations, case studies and problem-solving exercises, allows learners to engage actively with the material. Building a strong sense of community is another vital component. Social constructivist theory emphasises the importance of collaboration and dialogue in learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Creating opportunities for peer interaction, such as group projects and discussion forums, helps students feel part of a learning community. Platforms like Slack or Microsoft Teams can facilitate real-time collaboration and reduce the isolation often experienced in online settings. Finally, leveraging multimedia tools and storytelling techniques can make content more engaging and relatable, further motivating learners to stay committed.

4. Designing for Diverse Learning Styles and Preferences

Digital learning environments offer flexibility and personalisation but also demand careful attention to diversity in learners' needs, styles and preferences. Traditional one-size-fits-all approaches are inadequate for accommodating the unique characteristics of each learner, particularly in constructivist settings where active engagement is paramount.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles provide a robust framework for addressing this challenge. UDL advocates for multiple means of representation, engagement and expression, enabling learners to interact with content in ways that suit their preferences and abilities (Meyer, Rose, & Gordon, 2014). For instance, providing course materials in varied formats—such as text, audio, video and interactive simulations—can cater to auditory, visual and kinaesthetic learners alike. Additionally,

offering alternative assessment methods, such as written essays, multimedia presentations, or practical demonstrations, allows students to demonstrate their understanding in ways that align with their strengths. Another critical consideration is accessibility. Digital content must adhere to accessibility standards, such as the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG), to ensure inclusivity for learners with disabilities (World Wide Web). Consortium, 2018). Features like captions for videos, screen-reader-compatible documents and adjustable text sizes are essential for creating an equitable learning experience. Moreover, personalized learning paths enabled by adaptive technologies can further enhance inclusivity by tailoring content delivery based on learners' prior knowledge, pacing preferences and goals. By embracing diversity and inclusion in instructional design, educators can create digital environments that empower all learners to construct knowledge effectively and meaningfully.

Future Directions for Constructivist Theory in Digital Learning

The ongoing evolution of digital technologies presents significant opportunities for enhancing constructivist learning environments. Technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), virtual reality (VR), augmented reality (AR) and gamification is reshaping how knowledge is constructed, promoting deeper engagement and individualised learning. These technologies align with constructivist principles by fostering active participation, problem-solving and collaboration. This paper explores future directions for integrating these technologies into constructivist frameworks and the potential research needed to optimise their application.

1. Artificial Intelligence and Personalized Learning

Artificial intelligence (AI) holds transformative potential for constructivist learning by enabling highly personalised and adaptive educational experiences. Intelligent Tutoring Systems (ITS) and adaptive learning platforms, for instance, use algorithms to analyse learners' behaviours and provide tailored feedback and support (Baker et al., 2019). These systems adjust the difficulty of tasks in real-time, ensuring learners construct knowledge at a pace suited to their individual abilities and preferences.

Personalised AI-driven learning can enhance autonomy, a cornerstone of constructivist theory. Learners are empowered to take control of their educational journey, exploring content that resonates with their interests and needs while receiving individualised guidance (Luckin et al., 2016). For example, platforms like Carnegie Learning's MATHia adapt to students' strengths and weaknesses, facilitating mastery through scaffolding—an essential constructivist strategy. Future research could explore

how AI can better integrate with constructivist principles, particularly in supporting collaborative learning and fostering higher-order thinking skills. However, challenges remain in the ethical implementation of AI, including data privacy, bias in algorithms and ensuring equitable access to these technologies (Holmes et al., 2021). Addressing these issues is crucial for leveraging AI effectively in constructivist learning environments.

2. Virtual and Augmented Reality for Experiential Learning

Virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) offer immersive environments that enhance experiential learning—a key tenet of constructivism. These technologies provide learners with opportunities to engage in realistic simulations, explore abstract concepts and participate in role-playing activities that deepen understanding. For instance, VR simulations in science education enable learners to conduct virtual experiments in hazardous or inaccessible environments, such as exploring chemical reactions in a controlled virtual lab (Makransky et al., 2020).

AR complements this by overlaying digital information onto physical contexts, bridging the gap between theoretical concepts and real-world applications (Dunleavy & Dede, 2014). AR has been utilised in medical education to develop interactive anatomy lessons that allow students to manipulate 3D models of human organs in real time. These technologies align with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), offering scaffolded experiences that help learners achieve tasks they could not accomplish independently. Future research could examine the long-term impacts of VR and AR on knowledge retention and skill acquisition, particularly in STEM fields. Additionally, exploring how these technologies can support collaborative learning experiences where multiple learners interact in a shared virtual or augmented space would further align with constructivist ideals.

3. Gamification and Game-Based Learning

Gamification and game-based learning are increasingly recognised for their ability to foster motivation and engagement in educational settings. Gamification incorporates game-like elements, such as points, badges and leaderboards, into learning activities, while game-based learning uses actual games to teach specific skills or concepts (Dichev & Dicheva, 2017). Both approaches resonate with constructivist principles, encouraging active participation, collaboration and problem-solving.

For example, Minecraft Education Edition allows students to explore historical sites, build architectural models and solve mathematical problems collaboratively,

blending learning objectives with interactive gameplay. Research has shown that gamified learning environments can increase intrinsic motivation and improve learning outcomes, particularly for younger learners (Hamari et al., 2016). Despite its promise, gamification must be implemented thoughtfully to avoid superficial engagement, where learners focus on rewards rather than mastering content. Combining gamification with constructivist strategies, such as reflective activities and peer collaboration, can ensure that learning remains meaningful (Kapp, 2012). Further studies should explore how different game mechanics align with constructivist frameworks and how they can be customised for diverse learners and disciplines.

4. Learning Analytics for Formative Assessment and Feedback

Learning analytics involves collecting and analysing behaviour data on learners' interactions with digital platforms to gain insights into their behaviours, engagement and outcomes. This data-driven approach can inform instructional design and support formative assessment, aligning with constructivist principles of individualised and responsive teaching (Siemens, 2013).

For instance, learning analytics can identify patterns in how students engage with course materials, enabling educators to pinpoint areas where learners struggle and provide targeted interventions. Platforms like Canvas and Moodle integrate learning analytics dashboards, allowing teachers to track student progress and adjust instructional strategies accordingly. These insights can also be shared with learners, fostering self-regulation and metacognition—critical elements of constructivist learning (Ifenthaler & Yau, 2020). However, leveraging learning analytics effectively requires educators to be trained in interpreting data and applying it to instructional design. Ethical considerations, such as data security and student privacy, must also be prioritised (Prinsloo & Slade, 2016). Future research could focus on developing user-friendly tools that integrate learning analytics seamlessly into constructivist environments and explore their impact on learner autonomy and outcomes.

Conclusion

Constructivist theory, with its emphasis on active learning, social interaction and learner autonomy, is still a useful framework for guiding educational practices in the twenty-first century. However, the integration of digital and blended learning models requires a re-examination and adaptation of traditional constructivist principles to align

with the characteristics of modern learning environments. Constructivist theory can be revitalised by leveraging digital tools to promote learner autonomy, facilitate social interaction, utilise multi-modal resources and support reflective practice, resulting in more engaging, effective and learner-centred educational experiences.

The future of constructivism in digital and blended learning contexts looks very promising, with emerging technologies providing new opportunities to improve learner engagement, collaboration and knowledge construction. However, achieving this potential will necessitate ongoing research, innovation and a dedication to creating inclusive, equitable and meaningful learning experiences. As educational technologies evolve, so must constructivist theory, which provides a strong and adaptable framework for supporting lifelong learning in an increasingly digital world.

****

References

- Anderson, T. (2008). *The Theory and Practice of Online Learning*. AU Press.
- Anderson, T., & Kanuka, H. (2021). *E-learning in the 21st century: A framework for research and practice* (3rd ed.). Routledge.
- Baines, L.A. and Stanley, G. *We Want to See the Teacher: Constructivism and the Rage against Expertise.* Kappa Delta Pi, vol. 82, no. 4, 2000, pp. 327-330.
- Baker, R. S., Wang, Y., & Wineinger, R. (2019). Educational data mining and learning analytics: Applications to constructivist education. *International Journal of Artificial Intelligence in Education, 29*(3), 367-384.
- Boud, D., Keogh, R., & Walker, D. (2013). *Reflection: Turning experience into learning*. Routledge.
- Chen, C. M., Wu, C. H., & Chen, T. C. (2018). The use of e-portfolios to support reflective learning in online education. *Educational Technology & Society, 21*(3), 1–12.
- Deterding, S., Dixon, D., Khaled, R., & Nacke, L. (2011). From game design elements to gamefulness: Defining "gamification." *Proceedings of the 15th International Academic MindTrek Conference: Envisioning Future Media Environments*, 9–15.
- Dewey, J. (1938). *Experience and Education*. Kappa Delta Pi.
- Dewey, J. (1990). *The School and Society: The Child and the Curriculum,* University of Chicago Press, Chicago.
- Dichev, C., & Dicheva, D. (2017). Gamifying education: What is known, what is believed and what remains uncertain. *International Journal of Educational Technology in Higher Education, 14*(1), 9. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41239-017-0042-5
- Doolittle, P. E., & Hicks, D. (2003). *Constructivism as a Theoretical Foundation for the Use of Technology in Social Studies*. Theory & Research in Social Education, 31(1), 72-104.

- Dunleavy, M., & Dede, C. (2014). Augmented reality teaching and learning. *Handbook of Research on Educational Communications and Technology*, 735-745. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-3185-5_59

- Garrison, D. R., & Vaughan, N. D. (2008). *Blended learning in higher education: Framework, principles and guidelines*. Jossey-Bass.

- Garrison, D. R. anderson, T., & Archer, W. (2000). Critical inquiry in a text-based environment: Computer conferencing in higher education. *The Internet and Higher Education, 2*(2-3), 87-105. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1096-7516(00)00016-6

- Hamari, J., Koivisto, J., & Sarsa, H. (2016). Does gamification work? A literature review of empirical studies on gamification. *Proceedings of the Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, 3025–3034. https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2014.377

- Holmes, W., Bialik, M., & Fadel, C. (2021). *Artificial intelligence in education: Promises and implications for teaching and learning.* Center for Curriculum Redesign.

- Hrastinski, S. (2009). A theory of online learning as online participation. *Computers & Education, 52*(1), 78–82.

- Ifenthaler, D., & Yau, J. Y. K. (2020). Learning analytics for formative feedback in constructivist learning environments. *Educational Technology Research and Development, 68*(1), 167-183. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11423-019-09647-y

- Johnson, G. M., Davies, M. A., & Wardlow, C. (2020). Adaptive learning technologies and self-directed learning: A constructivist perspective. *Journal of Educational Technology Research, 17*(4), 56–73.

- Jonassen, D. H., Peck, K. L., & Wilson, B. G. (1999). *Learning with Technology: A Constructivist Perspective*. Prentice Hall. https://www.scirp.org/reference/referencespapers?referenceid=198698

- Kapp, K. M. (2012). *The gamification of learning and instruction: Game-based methods and strategies for training and education.* Wiley.

- Kay, D., LeSage, A., & Tan, H. (2019). Supporting learner autonomy in digital education: The role of adaptive technologies. *Digital Learning Review, 12*(2), 45–60.

- Kincheloe, J.L., Steinberg, S.R., & Villaverde, L. (Eds.). (1999). *Rethinking Intelligence: Confronting Psychological Assumptions About Teaching and Learning (1st ed.).* Routledge. *https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203905210*

- Koltay, T. (2021). Digital literacy in higher education: Strengths and weaknesses. *Education and Information Technologies, 26*(1), 411–425.

- Kozma, R. B. (2003). T*echnology and Classroom Practices: An International Study.* Journal of Research on Technology in Education, 36(1), 1-14.

- Laurillard, D. (2013). *Teaching as Design Science: Building Pedagogical Patterns for Learning and Technology. Routledge.*

- Luckin, R., Holmes, W., Griffiths, M., & Forcier, L. B. (2016). Intelligence unleashed: An argument for AI in education. *Pearson Education*.

- Makransky, G., Terkildsen, T. S., & Mayer, R. E. (2020). Adding immersive virtual reality to a science lab simulation causes more presence but less learning. *Learning and Instruction, 60*, 225-236. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.learninstruc.2018.12.007

- Mayer, R. E. (2021). *Multimedia learning* (3rd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Meyer, A., Rose, D. H., & Gordon, D. (2014). *Universal design for learning: Theory and practice.* CAST Professional Publishing.
- Moon, J. A. (2004). *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning: Theory and practice*. Routledge.
- Morrison, G. R., Ross, S. M., Kalman, H. K., & Kemp, J. E. (2019). *Designing effective instruction* (7th ed.). Wiley.
- Piaget, J. (1952). *The origins of intelligence in children*. International Universities Press.
- Piaget, J. (1971). *Psychology and Epistemology: Towards a Theory of Knowledge*. Penguin Books.
- Prinsloo, P., & Slade, S. (2016). Student privacy self-management: Implications for learning analytics. *Learning, Media and Technology, 41*(1), 28-42. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439884.2015.1108148
- *Shah, R. K. (2019). Effective Constructivist Teaching Learning in the Classroom. Shanlax International Journal of Education, 7(4), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v7i4.600*
- Siemens, G. (2005). *Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age.* International Journal of Instructional Technology and Distance Learning.
- Siemens, G. (2013). Learning analytics: The emergence of a discipline. *American Behavioral Scientist, 57*(10), 1380-1400. https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213498851
- Sung, Y. T., Chang, K. E., & Liu, T. C. (2019). The role of digital simulations in constructivist learning environments. *Computers & Education, 135*, 1–16.
- Sweller, J., Ayres, P., & Kalyuga, S. (2011). *Cognitive load theory*. Springer.
- Van Dijk, J. (2020). *The digital divide*. Polity Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- World Wide Web Consortium. (2018). Web content accessibility guidelines (WCAG) 2.1. Retrieved from https://www.w3.org/WAI/standards-guidelines/wcag/

Research Article

The Debate of Textese: Education and Language Change

Pallavi

Azim Premji Univeristy
Email ID: pallavie869@gmail.com

Abstract

The use of Textese (or SMS language) seems to be increasingly carried over from messaging through mobile phones to the day to day use of English. On one hand is its popularity which is apparent in the increasing occurrences of abbreviated and non-standard forms of language in newspapers and magazine articles, and on the other, are the complaints of teachers and parents that students' language is getting deteriorated due to Textese. Research is being done by linguists in the west to explore the impacts that Textese has on literacy acquisition but no significant research has been encountered in the Indian scenario. Inevitably, the teachers here are being guided by their personal, intuitive views on the issue. Recognizing that teachers' perceptions regarding Textese being 'good' or 'bad' have determinate influence upon classroom practices the research reviewed in this paper establishes the need of documenting and analyzing these perceptions systematically.The research was conducted in three phases. Phase one analyzed a collection of sixty text messages as the data in order to clarify the nature and characteristics of Textese. Phase two and phase three, on the other hand, reported on the perceptions of various stakeholders- students, teachers, and language experts regarding the use of Textese in classroom contexts using a structured questionnaire and semi-structured interviews as tools of data collection (respectively).The research concluded by stating that the debate of Textese is a genuine and brisk area of contention within the Indian scenario.

Key words*: Textese, Text messages, Standard language, and literacy acquisition*

Introduction

Mobile phones seem to have become an inextricable part of modern lifestyle. Its subsequent impacts on the contours of human life-health, psychology and the way humans relate to each other are being studied by researchers in various contexts. One of the impacts of mobile phones which remain a significant area of concern

for many researchers throughout the world is its impact on Language. The present research started with a general observation of the increasing use of Textese- the non-standard and truncated language used typically in informal text messages, in various other written contexts such as newspapers, magazines, advertisements, pamphlets as well as in spoken conversations. It was noted that the augmenting trend of Textese is being generally seen as indicating the arrival of a significant language change.

A study of previous research showed that the change is being seen as a degenerative threat towards the regular use of language by many, and it is teachers (with their argumentthat students are losing control on grammar as a result of their electronic chatting)who form the greater proportions of this community (Spatafora, 2008). Researchers, such as Lee(2002)and Humphrys (2007) argue that extensive use of Textese while text messaging has led students to become habitual to such a 'sloppy' form of language. As a result, students cease to notice the non-standard abbreviations and irregular syntax of Textese when it gets carried over to their formal writings (Lee, 2002). Ross (2008) posits that there is a significant change in students' overall quality of work since the advent of Textese. She states that students want to get everything written 'as fast as possible and are becoming increasingly disinterested in the consuming steps of writing process- drafting, revising and editing the text' (p. 4). Baron (2002) uses the term 'whateverism' to describe the attitude that a continuous use of Textese leads to and argued that it may permanently harm our linguistic capabilities.

However, there are also scholars who view such changes as ineluctable in the process of evolution of language, and owing to its flexibility, consider Textese as being especially relevant for classroom contexts. Researcher O'Connor (2005), for instance, asserts that such technologies are resulting in the creation of 'a new generation of teenage writers who are accustomed to translating their every thought and feeling into words. They write more than any generation has since the days when telephone calls were rare and the mailman rounded more than once a day' (para.7). Dansieh (2011) and Crystal (2001) propose that Textese facilitates literacy acquisition by engaging learners meaningfully in the acts of reading and writing. In his book titled 'Txtng: The Gr8 Db8', Crystal (2008) refutes the popular view that SMS language can have negative impacts on student's language and literacy and argues, 'I do not see how texting could be a significant factor when discussing children who have real problems with literacy. If you have difficulty with reading and writing, you are hardly going to be predisposed to use a technology that demands sophisticated abilities in reading and writing. And if you do start to text, I would expect the additional experience of writing to be a help, rather than a hindrance'. (p. 157)

Hence, many researchers and teachers deprecate the use of Textese in classroom context, while others seem to sanction it. This study organized these two sets of perceptions into two disparate schools of thought prevalent in the area.

Further, it has been noted that despite the excessive research which is being done to inquire into the impacts of Textese on literacy acquisition in western context, no conclusive results has been found. The area, hence, remains internationally contended. However, an overview done in the field indicatedthat no such research or debate is being organized in the Indian context (Pallavi, 2015). This research, therefore, attempted to see whether the debate is really non-existent and irrelevant in the Indian scenario. It is argued that educators cannot afford to remain passive on the issue since they either approve Textese by accepting it when it occurs in students' assignments or disapprove it by marking it as incorrect use of grammar.Since there is a lack of research done specifically in the Indian context, the study attempted to problematizethe issue and then obtain the views of students, teachers and language experts regarding the debate on the use of Textese in the Indian classrooms.

Indeed, a thirdschool of thought associated with the issue, stresses upon the need of continuing the debate for the role it plays in furthering ones understanding, while one takes a non-judgmental standpoint. This school of thought argues for exploring the issue in various contexts with the aim of understanding it profoundly. The research, contending a similar vantage point, did not seek to attain a definitive conclusion on the debate but rather stressed on the need of systematically reporting and objectively analyzing the popular perceptions of various stakeholders associated with the field of education. The attempt was to analyze and evaluate Textese for its own value rather than in comparison to the Standard form of language.

The primary questions that this research addressed were as follows:
- What is Textese?
- What are the different types of messages and how do they affect the use of language?
- How is Textese produced and interpreted?
- What is the perception of teachers, students and language experts regarding the use of Textese in written assignments and examinations?

Methodology

Before beginning to explore the popular perceptions of various stakeholders on the issue, it was considered important to clearly understand what SMS language or Textese is. Since the research sought to assess Textese for its worth, rather than using the Standard form of language as a yardstick to compare Textese with, it began by analyzing a collection of text messages to arrive at a comprehensive understanding of Textese and various facets related to the use of the language.

In the first phase of the study, the researcher collected sixtytext messages from the students of education department studying at the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, India. These messages were analyzed qualitatively in order to arrive at various categories of messages and to studyfurther how language is manipulated within each of these categories.

Once an understanding was gained as to what Textese is and what the various factors are which influence it, the research proceeded to gain an insight into the perceptions of students regarding Textese. The preliminary analysis of messages which was done in the first phase worked as the theoretical background andguided the subsequent collection of data from the students of English proficiency course studying at ILLL (Institute Of Life Long Learning), University of Delhi, during the second phase of the study.This group of students was characterized by a varied background since students from disparate fields of study (sciences, humanities and commerce) who intended to improve their skills at English language, comprised the group.The tool which was used to collect the data for this phase of the research was a self-report kind structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of both closed ended as well as open ended questions. Responses of thirty students were randomly selected for analysis by the researcher.These responses were subjected to qualitative as well as quantitative analysis. Students' responses to closed-ended questions were analyzed quantitatively, while those given in response to open-ended questions were analyzed qualitatively.

Although the questionnaire yielded quantitative as well as qualitative data, the inability of a structured questionnaire as an appropriate tool for providing any scope to probe further into the acquired data remained a major limitation. To overcome this limitation and to gain an in-depth understanding of the exact reasons which guide the popular perceptions of people, the third phase of the study was organized.

In the third phase of the study individual and personal (face to face) interviews were conducted to obtain the relevant data. The interviews were semi- structured in

nature. The six participants who were interviewed were selected purposely by the researcher, with a view to obtain data that was varied in nature and was broad enough to embrace most of the relevant units which could be analyzed for the purpose of the research. However, since the sample size is small, it cannot be expected to represent the population of students, teachers or the language experts of the country.The collected data was reported elaborately and analyzed qualitatively.

The significance of this phase of the study lies in the opportunity that it providedto attain a clearer understanding on the issue in question. The analysis of the responses in Phase twohad led the researcher, as stated above, to certain hypotheses explaining the beliefs and logic that guided popular perceptions related to the issue. The data yielded by this phase of the study goes a step further and provides the researcher an opportunity to ascertain or negate those speculations by testing them against the attempts of participants to rationalize their beliefs and perceptions. However, it must be noted that this research work was not an attempt to provide definitive conclusions to the debates that surrounds the use of Textese in formal contexts. It rather attempted to explore and understand varied perceptions held by people, the interactions of which gave rise to the debate.

Further, it is apparent that this research followed the design of an action research. Each phase in this research led to the next, validating or negating the speculations that were drawn by the researcher on the basis of the previous phase that the research went through.

Findings and results

The study hadbegun by analyzing text messages in order to arrive at an understanding on how regular form of language is being manipulated within these messages. In order to approach the problem systematically, messages were classified into disparate categories during the first phase of the study and an in-depth understanding of why, when and where is Textese mostly employed as well as various factors which affect the use of Textese was gained. The analysis led to the following fourbroad categories of messages that were developed primarily on the basis of the relationship shared between the sender and the receiver of the message:

- **Formal messages**

Formal messages are generally shared between people whose conversations with each other are characterized by hierarchical power structures or distant relationship in an institutionalized setting. Conversations that take place via message between boss and her subordinates, a teacher and a student, or between colleagues who share a distant relationship are some of the situations in which such messages are shared. This type of message exchange is usually done for the purpose of sharing information. The use of language in these messages closely resembles the standard language which is acceptable for official purpose or in formal conversations.

- **Business messages**

Messages sent by companies with the aim of promotion and marketing of their products constitute this category of messages. These messages are typed at the source and are sent off to multiple receivers at the same time. Unlike formal messages, these messages consist of many acronyms and abbreviations and intend to deliver as much information as possible within a limited space. The details of the business constitute the content of these messages.

- **Forwarded messages**

This category of messages consists of jokes, jingles and quotes. Forwarded from one receiver to another, this category is most frequently used by the youth. Manipulation of English language is done quite frequently in these messages for the purpose of brevity. These messages are generally exchanged between people who share an informal relationship. However, greetings on various occasions can be sent through forwarded messages between people who share formal relationship as well.

This category of messages has come to define an entirely new form of relationships in the youth which exchange such messages quite frequently. Youngsters use forwarded messages to "stay in touch" with friends or with whom they seldom meet. These messages in such cases indicate that the sender has not forgotten the receiver and is interested in retaining the acquaintance.

- **Informal messages**

Informal messages are generally shared between people whose relationships are not defined by a hierarchical distribution of power between them; they might rather share an intimate relationship with one another. From a short two message chat to long chats consisting of several messages, informal conversations held via messages follow the

widest range of structures, can be written for disparate purposes and manipulate language at various levels.Informal messages are most prone to manipulations of language and hence most relevant for this study.

The research being reviewed herestudied the changes that are brought in English language while typing informal messages in details and reported that the operation of encoding a message in Textese by the composer of the message (and later, its interpretation)may involve unconscious mental processes of selection and substitution at various levels.

Dropping of helping verbs, grammatical subject, definite articles and various other parts of the sentence (of Standard English) that are not considered "important" or are "obvious"from the context, result froma process of selection.Hence, the message "I am in a meeting. I cannot pick the phone. Can you message me?" can be conveyed successfully by typing "In meeting.can'tpick.can u msg?"Apparently, words that are semantically most important in a sentence and letters that are phonetically most prominent in a word and are essential to the meaningful interpretation of the message are 'selected' while typing in Textese.

Further, the process of substitution seems to play another important role while encoding a message in Textese. Spellings such as "L8r" for "later", "4" in the place of "for", "u" for the standard "you" and "mondaz' instead of "Mondays" illustrate the point at the level on spellings. The substitution of consonant clusters with a numeral or a single letter is done on the basis of the phonetic proximity of the replacing numeral or the letter with the original word or the consonant cluster which it replaces. Ideas and sentences can be similarly replaced in order to save time or space while typing messages in Textese.

As the regular form of language undergoes the operations such as those described above, what yields is a kind of code which the message receiver has to decipher in order to reach at the underlying message that was in the mind of the person who typed the message. Context plays a key role in ascribing meaning during this process.

The second and the third phase of this research explored the various perceptions that relate to the use of Textese specifically in classroom contexts. The findings of these phases are summarized below- perceptions that supported the use of Textese in the classroom context were broadly classified into two categories.

1.Students have a limited period of time at their disposal during examination; they will be able to write more if they are allowed to use Textese.

2.**Using Textese will save students from "hard work" of writing more**.

There were two other reasons that were given in favor of Textese in response to the questionnaire; according to these responses, Textese "increases writing skills" and "makes it (writing skills) effective". Both of these statements were not stated clearly and therefore could not be interpreted accurately by the researcher.

However, most of the respondents argued that SMS language should not be used in examinations. The reasons which were given in the support of this argument were broadly classified into following categories-

1. **Textese cannot be comprehended easily by many.**
2. **Words written in Texteseare liable to multiple interpretations.**
3. **Since Texteseis a deviation from the regular form of language it cannot become the medium to gauge students' competence in the language.**
4. **Allowing the use of Textese will deteriorate the language English.**

Hence, the presence of several and contesting viewpoints held by people, deploring the use of Textese or supporting it, indicates that the issue is not vapid in the context. The assumption that the debate is irrelevant or absent from the Indian scenario is apparently negated by the findings of this research.

Further, the perceptions of students, teachers, and language experts that were reported during the second and the third phase of the study were juxtaposed to the findings of the first phase of the study. It was found that although the arguments and the people that deplore the use of Textese outnumber those who support it, it cannot be assumed that Textese effects students' language ability negatively. Most of the respondents had argued that Textese is encouraging improper spellings and grammar among students. However, the analysis of text messages which was carried out during the first phase of the research indicated that the use of Textese is inherently linked to the Standard form of language. Textese, as depicted by the first phase of the study, is the result of operations such as selection and substitutionthat are carried out on a message which is originally perceived by the message composer, specifically, in the proper form of language. It is only when a message composer has a strong grasp on the proper form of language that she can identify the units which are most significant and essential to be typed for proper interpretation of the intended message. Textese cannot be successfully employed if the users are not conversant with at least the spoken form of the language. Hence,it was argued that unwarranted allegations such as the one stated above, should be cautiously examined as they might not be the true representative of the reality. All in all,

the present research work intendedto explore the case of Textese as a debate in the Indian context. In

Conclusion, it was posited that the debate of Textese is a genuine and brisk area of contention within the Indian scenario and the possible implications of Textese for literacy acquisition must be subjected to further research.

<p align="center">* * * * * * *</p>

References

- Baron, S. (2008). *Always on: Language in an online and mobile world*. Oxford University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2001). *Language and the internet*. Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (2008). *Txtng: The gr8 db8*. Oxford University Press.
- Dansieh, S. (2011). SMS texting and its potential impacts on students' written communication skills. *Academia.edu*. http://www.academia.edu/4045625/SMS_Texting_and_Its_Potential_Impacts_on_Students_Written_Communication_Skills
- Humphrys, J. (2007, February 4). I h8 txt msgs: How texting is wrecking our language. *Mail Online*. http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-483511/I-h8-txt-msgs-How-texting-wrecking-language.html#ixzz33DFXk2Wv
- Lee, J. (2002). *I think, therefore IM*. Oxford University Press.
- O'Connor, A. (n.d.). Instant messaging: Friend or foe of student writing? *New Horizons for Learning*. http://education.jhu.edu/PD/newhorizons/strategies/topics/literacy/articles/instant-messaging.html
- Pallavi. (2014). Education and impacts of technology: The debate of Textese. In V. Kapur (Ed.), *Discourses on education* (pp. 25-43). The Book Line.
- Ross, K. (2007, November 1). Teachers say text messages r ruining kids' riting skills. *FindArticles*. http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_qa5369/is_200711/ai_n21298339/
- Spatafora, N. (2008). *IM learning 2 write? A study on how instant messaging shapes students' writing*. Queen's University.

This page is intentionally left blank

Cover & back page design and alter through using canva