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Editorial

At this day and age Open and Distance Learning (ODL) system has emerged as a beacon of hope for countless. It was recognised as an ‘instrument of democratization of education and to make it a lifelong process’ by National Policy on Education 1986 (revised in 1992). A great faith was reposed in its ability to reach out to diverse citizenry by virtue of its flexibility and innovativeness. Three decades later this faith gets strengthened when National Education Policy 2020 values ODL and online education as ‘a natural path to increase access to quality higher education’. It aims to make ODL programmes equivalent to the highest quality in-class programmes available and achieve global standards of quality.

Nearly coinciding with the moment when the Open and Distance Learning (ODL) was being visualized as a powerful mode of spreading education, in 1987, the Indian Journal of Distance Education was launched as a platform for exchange of ideas on distance education.

The year 2020 exerted an unprecedented challenge in the form of a dreaded pandemic Covid-19 in front of the entire world. It immobilised every aspect of life by forcing people to isolate themselves in their enclosures for months. The thirteenth edition of the Indian Journal of Distance Education comes in this backdrop.

The current edition carries papers on the issues related to distance education as well as significant deliberations emanating from other academic disciplines. A couple of papers in the beginning address the issues of education of marginalised and vulnerable sections of society and map how distance education stands out for serving them. I have argued in my paper that people with disabilities have the right to education through which they can not only support themselves but also attain empowerment and thus become a significant constituency of society. While mainstream education may act as a barrier in their path of progress, distance education can act as a tool of empowerment for people with disabilities. Darshana Sharma explains the contours of marginalization and empowerment and discusses the role of distance education in empowering the marginalized in the society. Furthering the discourse on distance education, Kuljeet Kaur stresses upon the strengthening already existing support services in open and distance learning institutions.

Whereas Ram Mehar in his paper studies the role of social media in open learning education at college level and university level and gives a vivid account

of various platforms being used or having the potential of effectively being used, Ravinder Kaur reflects upon the problems of tackling the challenges of creation and circulation of rumours and fake news. It proposes that the higher education institutes should impart social media usage ethics among people.

School education is ideally an integral part of higher education. Both are on the same continuum. We can prefer to be indifferent about the reciprocity of school and higher education at our own risk. Some of the papers delve deep into the pedagogical processes at school level and provide insights for higher education to act upon. In Indian schools the educational practice is still based on limited 'lesson plans' aimed at achieving measurable behaviours. Mamta Garg and Arun Bansal have tried to pinpoint these deficiencies as indicated by researchers worldwide and recommended the modifications which are required to make lesson plans apt for changing the school scenario. Ashwni Kumar and Kuldeep Kaur have analysed the effects of the Multimedia Method of Instruction on reading motivation of the students having dyslexia.

Secondary education serves as a link between the elementary and higher education, which in turn, helps in developing a reservoir of intellectual human resource. Hence it necessitates a deeper probe into the problem of exclusion of children from secondary education in rural Punjab and the paper projects a few fundamental structural issues that require redressal. Kuldip Puri, Mamta Garg, Kuldeep Kaur and Satwinder Pal Kaur have studied the phenomena of exclusion of a large number of students from secondary education every year.

With the times changing, the world is becoming competitive, and life has started moving at a fast pace. As a result, stress has become an integral part of our lives. The term 'stress', which was once used in context of adults, is now being experienced by children from an early age, as they are faced with the ordeal to deal with it in their daily lives to live up to the expectations of parents and society. Kanan Kapil, Opendarjeet Kaur Fatma Gausiya and *Hem* Raj focus on the academic stress and classroom environment among secondary school students. Another dimension of stress induced by rampant privatization of education is highlighted in the context of nursing education. Reena Chaudhary and Amrita argue that the privatisation of nursing education has proved to be a bane for the quality of nursing workforce which has raised widespread concerns about the employability of the nurses both at national and international levels. Their paper attempts to figure out the reasons for deteriorating quality of nursing education as it has developed through the years in India.

Inculcation of social sensibilities and progressive values among students that sustain the societies rests upon the project of education. Critiquing the cultural ills too is the obligation of education and academia. Sugandha Kohli Kaang in her paper argues that it is exceedingly difficult for women especially if they are married to maintain a balance between domestic and professional fronts. Women struggle hard to overcome the patriarchal mindset prevailing in the corporate world. Despite excelling in academics as their profession women face discrimination. Rajesh Jaiswal, with reference to an outstanding literary text, espouses that regressive cultural discourses sustained by dominant social structures of gender, caste, economy, and ethnicity defy democracy and prevent people from seeing the oppressive relations of domination and control. Paper calls for an interrogation of these hegemonic religious-cultural issues precipitating inequality, unfreedom, and a resistance to effect ratification and social change.

I express my gratitude to all the contributors. I would wish to place my deep appreciation for the entire editorial and publishing team for bringing out the present volume. I feel pleasure in presenting it to the world of academics.

Madhurima Verma
Editor-in-Chief

Distance Education and People with Disabilities

Madhurima Verma

Abstract

Distance education assisted by using of ICT can provide significant opportunities to people with disabilities to access higher education. People with disabilities have right to education through which they can not only support themselves but also attain empowerment and thus become functional element of society. While mainstream education may act as barrier in their path of progress, distance education can act as a tool of empowerment for people with disabilities. Thus, using the approach of the social model, the paper suggests and recommends how through distance education people with disabilities can overcome the barriers and attain a successful future for them.

Introduction

Education became the hope for emancipation and enlightenment of the marginalized. The inclusion of students with disabilities in elementary and secondary education has not automatically transferred to their inclusion in higher education. Elementary & secondary education and higher education are two quite separate entities in admission, curriculum, governance, finance and policy. The context of disability becomes different in the higher education system. India is a democratic nation; it has followed the tenets of justice and equal opportunities and has made certain efforts to formulate plans and programmes accordingly. India is signatory to almost all the conventions and declarations of United Nations. In the disability sector also, India is trying to keep pace with the developed world and has introduced innovative policies and programmes for the education of students with disabilities.

An attempt is made to present an overview of disability in the context of higher education particularly in India. Distance education is an approach that takes education to many learners who are separated by time and space from those who are teaching. It is a mode that has a high potential for transcending barriers that are caused by distance, time, and age thus facilitating lifelong learning. Through distance education, the learner enjoys a high degree of autonomy in deciding what, when and how to learn. In addition, it provides distinct advantages for many students with disabilities by offering access to educational opportunities that may not be present at most conventional universities. The paper will discuss the

policies and provisions being made available for the students with disabilities in higher education, particularly in India. It also discusses the details of a study conducted to uncover the major issues of students with disabilities in higher education in India.

Understanding Disability

Disability is a multifaceted complex concept to define. In the context of health experiences, a disability is any restriction or lack of ability to perform an activity in manner or within the range considered normal for a human being. According to Webster's Dictionary, legally disability is a permanent injury to the body for which the person should or should not be compensated. Disability is characterized by excesses or deficiencies of customarily expected activity performance and behaviour, and these may be temporary or permanent, reversible, or irreversible and progressive or regressive. Disability may arise as a direct consequence of impairment or as a response by the individual, particularly psychologically to a physical sensory or other impairment. Disability represents objectifications of impairment and as such it reflects disturbances at the level of the person.

According to Reynolds and Janzen (2007) *"Disability is a condition caused by an accident, trauma, genetics or disease that may limit a person's mobility, hearing, vision, speech or mental function"* (p.735). Recently, the term *"Differently Abled"* has been more in use. It is basically to remind that to be disabled in some respects is not to be disabled in all respects. But there is a resistance for this term as it makes able-bodied unsympathetic towards the struggles disabled face. WHO defines disability as "any restriction or lack (resulting from any impairment) of ability to perform an activity in the manner or within the range considered normal for a human being".

Models of disability

Models of disability provide a framework for understanding the way in which people with impairments experience disability. They also provide a reference for society as laws, regulations and structures are developed that impact on the lives of disabled people. There are two main models that have influenced modern thinking about disability: the medical model and the social model.

In the medical model, individuals with certain physical, intellectual, psychological, and mental conditions (impairment) are regarded as pathologic or abnormal; it is simply the abnormality conditions themselves that are the cause of

all restrictions of activities. According to medical model, disability lies in the individuals, with restrictions of activity. Faced with the line of thinking, individuals would feel pressured to work on their 'restrictions' bearing the burden of adjustment to their environment through cures, treatment or rehabilitation (United Nation Convention of Persons with Disability, 2006). The World Report on Disability, 2011 documents the transition from the 'sick-individual', cure-focused 'medical model' of disability to a human-rights-based 'social model' whereby individuals are viewed as being disabled by the infrastructural, institutional, and communication barriers constructed by society rather than by their own bodies and minds. This perspective, now widely adopted in both developed and developing countries, provides people with disabilities with equal rights as citizens, and simultaneously places responsibility upon the state and other parties to realize these rights.

According to the Rights given under the PWD Act, (2016) "person with disability" means a person with a long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairment which, in interaction with barriers, hinders his/her full and effective participation in society equally with others. In the RPWD Act, 2016, the types of disability have been expanded from 7 to 21 conditions and it now also includes cerebral palsy, dwarfism, muscular dystrophy, acid attack victims, hard of hearing, speech and language disability, specific learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders, chronic neurological disorders such as multiple sclerosis and Parkinson's disease, blood disorders such as haemophilia, thalassemia, and sickle cell anaemia, and multiple disabilities.

Education and People with disabilities in India

Education is critical to expanding the life prospects of people with disabilities. However, illiteracy rates both for all PWD and for school-age disabled children remain much higher than the general population. According to Census (2011), 61% of the disabled children in the age group of 5-19 years are attending educational institution and 57% of them are male children. The Census 2011 showed that, at all India level, among the total disabled persons, 45% are illiterates. 13% have matric/ secondary education but are not graduates and 5% are graduates and above. Nearly 8.5% among the disabled literates are graduates. Among the male disabled persons, 38% are illiterates. 16% of the disabled male population has matric/ secondary education but are not graduates and 6% are graduates and above. About 9% among the male disabled literates are graduates. Among the female disabled persons, 55% are illiterates. 9% of the disabled female

population has matric/ secondary education and only 3% of them are graduates and above. About 7.7% among the female disabled literates are graduates.

The educational level of disabled persons is better in urban areas compared to rural areas, both for males and females. In urban areas, among the disabled who are literates, 15% of them are graduates, while in rural areas only 5% of them are graduates.

According to Miles (2000), rudimentary attempts to educate students with disabilities were made in India long before such attempts were made in Europe. He cites, for example, that specially adapted curricula were used 2000 years earlier as evidenced by children's toys that were excavated in diggings in *Taxila*. Also, the ancient "gurukul" system of education that existed in India for centuries was sensitive to the unique cultural, social, and economic needs of the students and their families and imparted life skills education recognizing the potential within each student (Singh, 2001).

It is argued that providing for persons with disability was based on the theory of Karma and a way towards a better life in the next birth. Whatever the motivation, the fact remains that even as far back as 187 BC mention has been made of mental retardation (Garba Upanishad), Patanjali included disabled persons for yoga therapy, and in the 4th and 5th century BC. During the Maurya Dynasty, Kautilya passed an edict banning both verbal and behavioural abuse of persons with disabilities recognizing their right to property and employment. The Panchatantra, the ancient Indian collection of animal fables from around 1000 BC and is perhaps the first book on special education. A few residential institutions were established by the members of the royalty at different locations as an act of dharma, a duty (Miles, 1997).

During the colonial period and after, special schools were established mostly in urban areas and were expensive. The formal education of children with disabilities began in India in 1869 when Jane Leupot, with the support of the Church Missionary Society, started a school for "blind students" in Benares (Miles, 1997). Miles also reported that the first formal school for children with intellectual and physical disabilities was established in the eastern part of India in Kurseong in 1918.

The education of children with disabilities in segregated settings continued well after India gained independence from Colonial rule in 1947, with various non-government organizations assuming increasing responsibility for their

education. By 1966, there were 115 schools for students with a visual impairment, 70 schools for students with a hearing impairment, 25 schools for students with an orthopaedic disability and 27 schools for students with an intellectual disability (Aggarwal, 1994). According to Pandey & Advani (1997), by 1991 there were about 1200 special schools for students with various types of disabilities in India.

The first school for special education was begun in North India in 1826 by Raja Kali Shankar Ghosal who started a facility for the visually handicapped in Varanasi. Some of them area Special School for the visually handicapped in Ambala, Punjab; the first institute for the deaf and blind in Mumbai made possible with the introduction of Braille in India in 1886; a special school in Kurseong in Bengal for the intellectually disabled (1918 and in Travancore in Kerala (1931); a separate school for “idiots“ in Chennai making a clear distinction between the intellectually disabled and the mentally ill in 1936, in Ranchi in 1939; and in 1941 a school for the intellectually disabled as a direct outcome of The Children’s Act and in 1944 another special school for intellectually disabled children started by Mrs Jai Vakil from her own residence in Mumbai. A major contribution was made about this time in 1954 by Srinivasan who began the very first special class in a mainstream school and was the precursor of the concept of integration in education.

India has a rich cultural legacy for inclusive education as India has always been and is still today an inclusive society in the sense that a very wide variety of cultural and religious beliefs exist side by side. Even today, small rural schools provide education for all children under one roof, little realizing that they are following a system of education newly rediscovered in the West termed “Inclusive Education”. One of the major initiatives from the Government of India to promote "integrated education" is the program of Integrated Education of Disabled Children (IEDC). In 1974, the Ministry of Welfare, Central Government of India, initiated the IEDC program to promote the integration of students with mild to moderate disabilities into regular schools. The program was also designed to promote the retention of children with disabilities in the regular school system. Children were to be provided with financial support for books, stationery, school uniforms, transportation, special equipment and aids. The state governments were provided with 50 percent of the financial assistance to implement this program in regular schools. However, the program met with little success. Mani (1988) reported that by 1979-80, only 1881 children from 81 schools all over the country had benefited from this program. Due to its shortcomings, the IEDC program was revised in 1992. Under the revised scheme, 100 percent assistance became

available to schools involved in the "integration" of students with disabilities. Various non-government organizations are now fully funded to implement the program. According to the most recent estimates, the IEDC is being implemented in 26 States and Union Territories, serving more than 53000 students enrolled in 14905 schools (Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2000). In this regard, Kerala has shown remarkable success.

In 1987, the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), in association with UNICEF and the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) developed the Project for Integrated Education for the Disabled (PIED). PIED adopted a "Composite Area Approach" that converted all regular schools within a specified area, referred to as a block, into integrated schools. These schools had to share resources such as specialized equipment, instructional materials, and special education teachers. This project produced several positive results. Jangira and Ahuja (1993) reported that as a result of improved program planning and better management skills now made available to the teachers, the capacity of various states to implement integration programs was enhanced. Both regular schoolteachers and students became more receptive toward students with disabilities (Azad, 1996). About 13000 children with disabilities received educational services in regular schools (Azad, 1996). More than 9000 teachers received training to work with disabled students in integrated settings (Azad, 1996). The success of the PIED project led to an increased commitment by the Department of Education to integrate students with disabilities (Jangira & Ahuja, 1993).

In 1996, the Government of India enacted the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act (PWD Act) of 1995 (Ministry of Law Justice and Company Affairs, 1996). The Act provided for both preventive and promotional aspects of rehabilitation. It covered such aspects as education, employment, non-discrimination, prevention and early detection, social security, research and manpower development, and affirmative action. Seven categories of disability were covered in the legislation, namely "blindness," "low vision," "leprosy cured," "hearing impairment," "locomotor disability," "mental retardation" and "mental illness." The PWD Act required the Central, State, and Union Territory Governments to ensure that all children with disabilities had access to a "free and appropriate" education until the age of 18 years. It also called upon these three tiers of Government to promote "integrated education." The Act outlined a comprehensive education scheme to provide transportation facilities, remove architectural barriers, supply free books and other

study materials, grant scholarships, restructure curriculum, and modify the examinations system for the benefit of children with special needs. Baquer & Sharma (1997) considered the passage of the PWD Act as a landmark step in the history of rehabilitation services in India. They stated that: *“In a country like India the numbers of disabled are so large, their problems so complex, available resources so scarce and social attitudes so damaging, it is only legislation which can eventually bring about a substantial change in a uniform manner. Although legislation cannot alone radically change the fabric of a society in a short span of time, it can nevertheless, increase accessibility of the disabled to education and employment, to public buildings and shopping centres, to means of transport and communication. (p. 274)”*

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act (2016) replaced the Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunity Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995. The number of disabilities recognized under the act has been increased from 7 (recognized under the Old Act) to 21. Responsibility has been cast upon the appropriate governments to take effective measures to ensure that the persons with disabilities enjoy their rights equally with others.

The Act focuses on multiple aspects such as education, skill development, employment, recreation, rehabilitation, health, and social security of person with disability. The act provides every child with benchmark disability between the age group of 6 and 18 years right to free education. Government funded educational institutions as well as the government recognized institutions will have to provide inclusive education to the children with disabilities. For persons with benchmark disabilities a reservation of not less than 5% in higher education.

If fully implemented, this Act has the potential to change the educational status of more than 30 million children with disabilities who currently do not have access to any form of education. However, providing education to such a vast number of children with disabilities in the world's second most populated country will require a number of challenges and issues to be addressed at both the macro and micro levels of Indian society.

Students with Disabilities in Mainstream higher educational Institutions

Education for students with disabilities has long been an issue of concern in India. An individual with a disability studying in mainstream educational institutions experiences many difficulties. Students with disabilities not only face challenges in higher education in terms of gaining physical access to buildings, but

also in relation to much wider access issues concerning the curriculum adaptation and accommodation, teaching, learning and assessment. Arivanandham (2007) highlighted that visually impaired students face difficulty in following lectures and classroom instructions. Speed of delivery of lectures and following black board writing are the major problems. High cost and non-availability of aids and appliances are reasons for such problems. Securing reader services is also another problem. Non-availability of computer-based services compound this problem. Problem for organizing scribes for writing examinations is even more difficult than finding readers. Assessing library is an area of difficulty, made worse by lack of books in Braille and audio books. Chataika (2010) revealed that the students with disabilities in higher education continue to face attitudinal, physical, and institutional barriers but they also can develop coping mechanisms that help them reach their educational goals. A positive attitude and self-advocacy skills were the most important factors in determining the success of students with disabilities in higher education. Based on the most conservative estimate for the disabled youth population in the country (NSSO, 2003), just 1.2% of the 3.6 lakh disabled youth are in the Universities and Colleges. It brings the stark reality into an established truth that India's higher educational system is not accessible to 98.8% of its disabled youth.

Fuller et al. (2008) show that disabled students were particularly likely to be studying creative arts and design subjects and to be under represented in vocational courses such as medicine, teaching and nursing, where professional bodies impose fitness to practice standards and disabled students' degree outcomes were generally poorer than those of non-disabled students. According to Hasanuzzaman and Khan (2011), higher bureaucratized system with multiple controls and regulations by Central and State Government and statutory bodies, outdated programmes with inflexible structure, inadequate infrastructural facilities, lack of trained manpower, funds, training facilities, techniques and research for the disabled and high unit cost of higher education, particularly of professional education are the causes for the limited accessibility of higher education for individuals with disabilities. Mistry (2012) reported that the students with disabilities do not have easy accessibility to classrooms, libraries, and academic and administrative buildings in their respective universities. They are also not provided with any kind of learning resources including assistive technology.

How to Address these Issues?

Most people with disabilities have low levels of education because their parents are unable to afford to develop their potential. This is mainly due to cultural barriers whereby disabled people are not sent to school as they are considered incapable, a burden, a sign of bad luck or misfortune and it is regarded as shameful to have a disabled child. Most of them end up being confined at home. This is truer in case of girls with disabilities. Boys with disabilities are still allowed to go to school. This is possible only in a flexible education system that assimilates the needs of a diverse range of learners and adapts itself to meet these needs. Distance education is one such system that can cater to large section of people including people with disabilities.

Distance education may not have replaced on-campus education, but its flexibility makes it an attractive alternative for learners who are not able or do not want to participate in on-campus education. Distance learning is therefore an important element of lifelong learning. Distance education is a non-formal education which combines the new communication and education technologies in order to cater to a large section of the community. It is very wide. It has not only proved cost-effective but also has the right potential to reach out the large segment of the unreached marginalized and the needy. Open and distance learning has grown within a more general expansion of education. Since 1960, there has been rapid expansion of social and educational sectors in both the developed and developing countries. Distance education and open learning present a different picture of endurance and sustenance which proves that it has been enriching human life since its emergence.

Paist (1995) noted that flexibility in the location, scheduling, and delivery of distance education programs can provide disabled students with what may be their first real access to higher education. Similarly, Ommerborn (1998) in an extensive review of distance education programs worldwide for students with disabilities noted similar findings, emphasizing that in addition to improving access, it is equally important to ensure that students with disabilities receive the support they require to ensure success in their studies. Disability-specific services are an important contributor to success in post-secondary education for students. Studies show that post-secondary students with disabilities who receive appropriate support services persist in their studies and graduate at the same rates as their non-disabled counterparts (Horn & Berkold, 1999). For more than two decades, in both Canada and the United States, students with disabilities have been

attending post-secondary institutions in increasing numbers, and disability related support services have emerged (Hill, 1996). In the US, services for students with disabilities are mandated by legislation, and programs for ensuring access and success and students with disabilities are commonplace. For example, the DO-IT Project at the University of Washington (<http://www.washington.edu/doit>) is an exemplary program of support for students with disabilities. Moreover, this program has fostered research into the application of Universal Instructional Design (Burgstahler, 2001), an instructional design model that enhances access to and success in both distance and classroom-based learning.

Suggestions

There is a range of suggestions that can be undertaken to improve accessibility of higher education for people with disabilities through distance education. In India, many children with disabilities belong to families that are below/close to the poverty line. Disability may be compounded by poverty because it leads to barriers to education and skill development. Because of economic hardship, families may find difficult to provide educational facilities including expensive assistive device and it becomes challenging for poor families. Government is providing fee concessions to students with disability in higher education. These institutions can develop student bank for students with disabilities. Whenever possible, printed information should be provided in the alternative format preferred by the student (that is, Braille, audio tape, large print, electronic text, MP3, DAISY etc.). When choosing between possible alternative formats or methods of delivery, consideration should be given to the fact that methods which are adequate for short, simple, or less important communications may not be equally effective or appropriate for longer, more complex, or more critical material. For example, use of a telephone relay service may be an acceptable method for a faculty member to respond to a brief question from a hearing-impaired student during his/her office hours, but would not be appropriate as a means of permitting that same student to participate in a class discussion in a course conducted by teleconference.

The study material in distance education should be made available in audio, video and text components via existing and emerging technologies. Access includes the audio, video, multimedia and text components of Web sites, electronic chat rooms, e-mail, instructional software, CD-ROM, DVD, laser disc, video tape, audio tape, electronic text and print materials. There should be a panel

of scribe and students who are ready to support the students with disabilities in reading, writing, and listening to their study material.

Conclusions

The Central and State governments have formulated programs and policies over the years, offering schemes and facilities to People with disabilities in order to enable them to enter mainstream society. However, despite the presence of these policies, outreach remains inadequate, and the educational needs of many People with disabilities is not met.

The flexible structure of distance education supports the accessible education approach. It is believed that distance education institution can play an important role in providing access to higher education to people with disabilities. The inherent flexibility of time and place in distance education institution allows for accommodation of individual needs and requests in education. Considering that people with disabilities have certain personal preferences and needs, distance education institution should be regarded as a preferred option for higher education for those individuals.

The support services offered by distance education institutions to people with disabilities vary; however, there are general categories that do emerge from the variety of services offered. These categories include assistive technologies, alternative learning materials etc. The technological opportunities offered by the world of the 21st century directly concern the field of distance education. Distance education institutions should take up these responsibilities and come to the rescue of people with disabilities.

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Empowering the Marginalized: Role of Distance Education

Darshana Sharma

Abstract

Marginalization is known to limit the fundamental needs of belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence. It obscures the individual from realizing his full potential. The need of egalitarian society is to provide social inclusion of all individuals. For social inclusion empowerment of the marginalized is a necessity and the role of education is instrumental in their social mobility. In the backdrop of socioeconomic and demographic constraints faced by the marginalized section this paper attempts to explicate the role of Directorate of Distance Education, University of Jammu in providing educational opportunities parallel to conventional education system. It discusses with the help of the profile of the students using secondary data that distance education provides for flexible and innovative methods, learner centred approaches and the use of ICT in learner support services help in widening the access. It promotes a culture of learning based on equality and social justice.

Introduction

The development of a country depends upon its system of education. It has been established that education is the significant factor in human progress and social change. Education is a potent tool for the empowerment of individual. It helps in developing confidence in individuals about their own capacities, develops ability to think critically, provides information, knowledge, and skills for economic development, ensures equal participation in development processes and above all enhances the inner strength-intellectual, political, social, and economic against oppression, discrimination, and exclusion. In this paper, an attempt has been made to explain the concept of marginalization, empowerment, role of education in the empowering the marginalized with special reference to distance education.

Marginalization and Marginalized Groups

Marginalization is a process whereby something or someone is pushed to the edge of a group and accorded lesser importance. Marginalization is predominantly a social phenomenon by which a minority or sub-group is

excluded, and their needs or desires are ignored. This limits their opportunities and means for survival.

Merriam-Webster's dictionary definition of the term, marginalize, is "to relegate to an unimportant or powerless position within a society or group". Gurung and Kollmair (2005) mention that the concept of marginality is generally used to analyse socio-economic, political, cultural spheres, where disadvantaged people struggle to gain access to resources and full participation in social life. The marginalized suffer from discrimination and subordination. Thus, marginalization is a complex phenomenon linked to social status. The marginalized don't form a part of mainstream society, as the privileged groups do. Owing to the 'outside' or the 'peripheral' location they do not enjoy the same benefits as the ones located in the mainstream do. The marginalized are in fact characterized by the least or minimal access to the socio-economic resources available. Consequently, the excluded are not able to fully participate in economic, social, and civic life, and their inadequate access to material and non-material resources, exclude them from enjoying a quality of life and standard of living that is regarded as acceptable in society they live in.

In the Indian society, women face double the discrimination as besides being members of specific disadvantaged class, caste, or ethnic group, they also face all the additional discriminations associated with the feminine gender. They have little control on the resources and on many important decisions related to their lives. The gender discrimination gap starts at birth. Per every 100 boys born nationally, 93 girls are born (The global gender gap report, 2018). 95% women are employed in the unorganized sector or are in unpaid work (Deloitte report, 2019). Women earn 65% of what their male colleagues earn for performing the same work (The global gender gap report, 2018). Of India's 158 largest companies, women hold only 15% of the board seats. Only 6% of board chairs are women. In 2018, women held only 20% of all senior roles at management levels (<https://catalyst.org>). A large population of self-employed women workers are also engaged in out-sourced manufacturing work, typically characterized by low earnings, long hours of work and lack of any form of social protection. Indian women do the most unpaid care and domestic work of any country globally except Kazakhstan. Women in India currently spend up to 352 minutes per day on domestic work, 577% more than men. Women suffer from 'time poverty'. They experience such acute time pressure- anxiety that there is little freedom to choose how to allocate one's time, with little or no room for leisure and tending to their own well-being. There is wage penalty imposed upon those women that do the

unpaid work. Anganwadi and ASHA workers, professions dominated by women do not even command minimum wage (Sanghera, 2019). Scheduled Caste women have been affected even more severely. They are discriminated against not only because of their sex but also because of religious, social and cultural structures which have given them the lowest position in the social hierarchy. These women face problems of extremely low levels of literacy and education, heavy dependence on wage labour, discrimination in employment and wages, heavy concentration in unskilled, low paid and sometimes hazardous manual jobs, violence, and sexual exploitation. Just like scheduled caste women, the Scheduled Tribe women also, in general, face severe levels of discrimination, low levels of education, higher dropouts, discrimination in employment and wages, low paid etc (Bhatia,2017). In education, in almost every level, ratio of male is higher than female, except M.Phil. Post-graduate and certificate courses (AISHE report,2018-19).

Children belonging to specific castes, ethnic groups or tribes and religious groups face discrimination in different social institutions such as family, schools, and neighbourhood, at workplaces, or places of worship. The Scheduled Castes constitute distinct caste groups with specific cultural, occupational, and religious characteristics. About 90% of the Scheduled Castes live in rural areas and they constitute 15% of the population of India. The Scheduled Castes are backward, it is due to their rural nature, illiteracy, dependence on agricultural labour, or other occupations with low earnings, and due to injustice, exploitation, and oppression they have been suffering from others for centuries. They occupy a low position in the Hindu social structure. Their representation in government services is inadequate. They are inadequately represented in the fields of trade, commerce and industry. They suffer from social and physical isolation from the rest of the community and there is a general lack of educational development amongst the major section of this community. Scheduled tribes have suffered from isolation, exclusion, and underdevelopment due to their different ethnic identity from the mainstream Indian society. Due to them having a distinct culture, language, social organization, and economy, they are considerably deprived and have remained uneducated for generations. The tribal population of the country as per 2011 census is 10.43 crores, constituting 8.6% of the total population, 89.97% of them live in rural areas and 10.03% live in urban areas. They face problems like extreme poverty, low levels of education, poor health, and lower access to health care services. Most of these community members belong to the poorest strata of the society. Children living in conflict-affected areas, refugees and displaced

persons, nomads, residents of rural areas, children living in urban slums, etc. are disadvantaged due to poor economic status.

Marginalization threatens the four fundamental needs, which are belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful existence. The learning environment provided to marginalized children is often characterized by poor infrastructure, lack of basic amenities and less than adequate number of teachers. Such schools account for a poor learning environment and have a negative impact on the motivational and aspiration levels of the students. Poor learning environment affects the self-identity and feeling of self-worth of marginalized children in a negative way. This forces the children to drop out of the formal scheme of education.

Empowerment Explained

Empowerment is the enhancement of the political, social, economic strength of the individuals and communities. Empowerment can be viewed as means of creating a social environment in which one can make decisions and make choices either individually or collectively for social transformation. The empowerment strengthens the inborn ability by way of acquiring knowledge, power, and experience (Hashemi, Schuler and Riley, 1996). Empowerment is the process of enabling an individual to think, act and control work in an independent way. It is the process by which an individual can gain control over his destiny and the circumstances of his life. Empowerment allows individuals to realize their potentialities to the full, to improve their political and social participation and have faith in their own capabilities. Thus, empowerment means a psychological sense of personal control or personal influence and is concerned with social development, political power, financial autonomy, and legal rights.

Education and Empowerment

The significant role that education plays in promoting and sustaining both individual and national development is very well known. It is not only considered a basic human right but is also recognized to impact a number of individual, social, economic and life outcomes. Education can be described as a great force that can bring desirable social changes and human development. Education is a tool for social mobility. No one can underestimate the immense range of rich benefits including economic and health that result from increased education. Education has been identified as a vital source of raising consciousness to fight against all sorts of discrimination, inequalities, and oppression in human relations.

Better education enables individuals to make informed choices on matters pertaining to health, nutrition, and family welfare. Elementary education leads to improvement in healthcare and life expectancy and reduction in fertility. Higher education represents an important form of investment by providing and enhancing the skills, knowledge and attributes needed by high level professional, technical and managerial workers. In developing countries, education has an additional role in changing the mindset and thinking of a person, in improving ignorance, superstitions, exploitations, social justice etc.

With this background the paper attempts to highlight the role of distance education system in empowering the marginalized groups in India. The paper further assesses the role of Directorate of Distance Education, University of Jammu in terms of providing access to education to the marginalized and thereby empowering them for socio-economic development, political awakening and decision making in personal matters. By examining the profile of the learners, it is intended to assess the extent of the outreach of the DDE programmes to the marginalized population. The data has been collected from the secondary sources i.e., Annual Reports of the DDE.

Role of Distance Education in Empowerment of the Marginalized

The National Policy of Education 1986 stressed the need of liberalization of education to liberate marginalized sections of the society. The policy recommended the use of distance education media in a massive way to reach those unreached. Distance education provides the marginalized with new avenues of getting education. The characteristic of distance education has helped in equity and equal opportunities in higher education among the diverse social groups. Distance education is inclusive and encourages marginalized groups of society to come into the fold of higher education. It is flexible in terms of time, pace, place, age and gives hope and fresh life to thousands of learners who are victim of traditional educational system. Since 1980's distance education methodologies have been extensively used to provide educational opportunities to the marginalized groups. One of the major reasons for establishing the distance education system is to provide more opportunities to large sections of the society irrespective of age, gender, social, economic, and cultural status and reach disadvantaged groups who otherwise are not having access to higher education due to the variety of barriers (Spencer, 1995) Now, India has a vast network of distance education. In 2019, there were 14 state open universities, one National Open university, IGNOU and 103 dual mode institutions offering distance

education programs to the diverse clientele (UGC-DEB, 2019). Distance enrolment constitutes 10.62% of the total enrolment in higher education- of which 44.12% are female students.

Table1: Enrolment in Universities and its Constituent Unit through Regular and Distance Mode

Level	Regular Enrolment	Distance Enrolment
Ph.D	146420	53
M.Phil.	18649	0
Post-Graduate	890404	999087
Under-Graduate	2127421	2700212
PG Diploma	50740	99391
Diploma	132803	130194
Certificate	16473	42818
Integrated	131817	313
Total	3514727	3972068

Source: AISHE 2018-19 Report

Directorate of Distance Education, University of Jammu: Empowering the Marginalized

The University of Jammu accredited as ‘A+’ grade university by National Assessment and Accreditation Council of India came into existence vide ‘Kashmir and Jammu University Act 1969’ following bifurcation of the erstwhile University of Jammu and Kashmir. The University offers several academic and professional programmes leading to post-graduate, M.Phil., Ph.D. degrees, post-graduate diplomas, certificate and graduate degrees through its various teaching departments, centres, affiliated colleges, centre for adult, continuing education and extension and directorate of distance education.

The Directorate of Distance Education was established in 1976 in the University of Jammu to provide quality education with minimum expenditure and make available opportunities of higher education to those (i) who discontinue their education in the formal system on account of social and economic constraint, (ii) who live in far-flung and inaccessible areas of the Jammu region, (iii) who do not get admission in regular colleges and university teaching departments, (iv) in-service personnel, and (v) the ones wanting to pursue education as a lifelong activity. The nomenclature of Institute of Correspondence Education was changed to the Directorate of Distance Education on 12 October 1996. At present, the directorate is offering several undergraduate and post-graduate programmes. The

directorate has set up study centres to provide information, administrative and academic support services to the undergraduate students of the DDE. The students are delivered study material of their respective courses through study centres and they submit their assignments to the study centres. The study centres organize contact cum counselling classes, conduct practical in courses involving practical work, evaluate assignments and provide library facilities. The system is flexible in terms of providing educational opportunities to the doorsteps of the learners. An analysis of the enrolment trend is presented in the following paragraphs.

Enrolment of Women: In the Directorate, there is no separate reservation for the female candidates in various programmes offered by it. The criteria followed for admission to different programmes is educational qualifications and experience. The women percentage in different programmes is presented in table 2.

Table 2: Male-female enrolment in all the programmes of the DDE w.e.f. session 2017-18 to 2019-20

Year	Male	Male%	Female	Female%
2017-18	3913	32.51	8122	67.49
2018-19	3602	32.78	7386	67.22
2019-20	2489	28.49	6246	71.51

Source: DDE, Annual Report, 2019

It is evident from the table 2 that female enrolment in different programmes of the DDE taken together was 67.49% during the session 2017-2018, 67.22% during the session 2018-19 and 71.51% during the session 2019-20.

Enrolment of Socially Backward Categories: There is no reservation for learners belonging to SC, ST and OBC categories in different programmes except B.Ed. in which there are fixed number of seats. The percentage of socially backward candidates in different programmes is given in table 3.

Table 3: Enrolment by category-wise SC, ST, OBC and General Candidates in programmes of the DDE w.e.f. session 2017-18 to 2019-2020

Year	SC/ST/OBC	Percentage	General	Percentage
2017-18	3637	30.22	8398	69.78
2018-19	3507	31.92	7481	68.08
2019-20	2684	30.73	6051	69.27

Source: DDE, Annual Report, 2019

A perusal of table 3 reveals that SC, ST and OBC enrolment in different programmes of the DDE taken together was 30.22% during the session 2017-2018, 31.92% during the session 2018-19 and 30.73% during the session 2019-20.

Enrolment of candidates with rural background: There is no reservation for those residing in rural areas. Since the selection is not based on entrance test and interview, the rural candidates who are mostly found weak in speaking or writing English are not put to any disadvantage. The rural percentage in different programmes is presented in table 4.

Table 4: Rural-urban enrolment in the programmes of the DDE w.e.f. session 2017-18 to 2019-2020

Year	Rural	Rural %	Urban	Urban %
2017-18	8083	67.16	3952	32.84
2018-19	7574	68.93	3414	31.07
2019-20	6731	77.06	2004	22.94

Source: DDE, Annual Report, 2019

A perusal of table 4 reveals that rural enrolment in different programmes of the DDE taken together was 67.61% during the session 2017-2018, 68.93% during the session 2018-19 and 77.06% during the session 2019-20.

Table 5: Male -female cumulative enrolment (w.e.f. session 2017-18 to 2019-20) in each programme of the DDE

Programme	Total Enrolment	Male	Male %	Female	Female%
M.A. Political Science	2410	810	33.61	1600	66.39
M.A. English	2023	269	13.20	1754	86.70
M.A. Hindi	4616	315	6.82	4301	93.18
M.A. Sociology	4314	738	17.11	3576	82.89
M.A. Urdu	2652	1516	57.16	1136	42.84
M.A. Economics	594	138	23.23	456	76.77
M.A. Dogri	991	185	18.67	806	81.33
M.Com.	3949	1207	30.56	2742	69.44
PGDBM	450	224	49.78	226	50.22
B.A./B.Com.	9384	4500	47.95	4884	52.05
B.Ed.	375	102	27.2	273	72.8

Source: DDE, Annual Report, 2019

It is evident from the table 5 that cumulative enrolment (i.e. 2017-18 to 2019-20) of the female learners was 66.39% in M.A. Political Science; 86.70% in M.A. English; 93.18% in M.A. Hindi; 82.89% in M.A. Sociology; 42.84% in M.A. Urdu; 76.77% in M.A. Economics; 81.33% in M.A. Dogri; 69.44% in M. Com; 50.22% in PGDBM; 52.05% in B.A/B.Com and 72.8% in B.Ed.

Table 6: Category-Wise cumulative enrolment (w.e.f. session 2017-18 to 2019-20) of SC, ST, OBC and General Candidates in each programme of the DDE

Programme	Total Enrolment	SC/ST/ OBC	%age	General	%age
M.A. Political Science	2410	766	31.78	1644	68.22
M.A. English	2023	540	26.69	1483	73.31
M.A. Hindi	4616	1338	28.99	3278	71.01
M.A. Sociology	4314	1519	35.21	2795	64.79
M.A. Urdu	2652	1145	43.17	1507	56.83
M.A. Economics	594	169	28.45	425	71.55
M.A. Dogri	991	335	33.80	656	66.20
M.Com.	3949	675	17.09	3274	82.91
PGDBM	450	107	23.78	343	76.22
B.A./B.Com.	9384	3125	33.30	6259	66.70
B.Ed.	375	109	29.07	266	70.93

Source: DDE, Annual Report, 2019

It is evident from table 6 that enrolment (i.e. 2017-18 to 2019-20) of SC, ST and OBC learners taken together was 31.78% in M.A. Political Science; 26.69% in M.A. English; 28.99% in M.A. Hindi; 25.21% in M.A. Sociology; 43.17% in M.A. Urdu; 28.45% in M.A. Economics; 33.80% in M.A. Dogri; 17.09% in M.Com; 23.78% in PGDBM; 33.30% in B.A/B.Com and 29.07% in B.Ed.

It is evident from table 7 that cumulative enrolment (i.e., 2017-18 to 2019-20) of rural learners was 85.98% in M.A. Political Science; 74.34% in M.A. English; 73.35% in M.A. Hindi; 82.75% in M.A. Sociology; 94.23% in M.A. Urdu; 75.08% in M.A. Economics; 88.60% in M.A. Dogri; 51.28% in M. Com; 59.33% in PGDBM; 58.38% in B. A /B.Com and 70.13% in B.Ed.

Table 7: Rural-urban cumulative enrolment (w.e.f. session 2017-18 to 2019-20) in each programme of the DDE

Programme	Total Enrolment	Rural	Rural%	Urban	Urban%
M.A. Political Science	2410	2072	85.98	338	14.02
M.A. English	2023	1504	74.34	519	25.66
M.A. Hindi	4616	3386	73.35	1230	26.65
M.A. Sociology	4314	3570	82.75	744	17.25
M.A. Urdu	2652	2499	94.23	153	5.77
M.A. Economics	594	446	75.08	148	24.92
M.A. Dogri	991	878	88.60	113	11.40
M.Com.	3949	2025	51.28	1924	48.72
PGDBM	450	267	59.33	183	40.67
B.A./B.Com.	9384	5478	58.38	3906	41.62
B.Ed.	375	263	70.13	112	29.87

Source: DDE, Annual Report, 2019

Findings

- It is encouraging to note that the directorate is far ahead of achieving the gender equality in educational opportunities. The percentage of female enrolment in all the programmes of the DDE in each session (2017 to 2019) is more than male enrolment. Moreover, cumulative female enrolment (w.e.f. 2017 to 2019) in each programme of the DDE is more than 50% except in M.A. Urdu.
- It is found that the representation of SC, ST and OBC categories in all the programmes of the DDE in each session (2017 to 2019) and cumulative enrolment of SC, ST and OBC categories (w.e.f. 2017-2018 to 2019-2020 taken together) is more than what is prescribed for reservation by the government under the reserved categories (i.e., 15% SC, ST and OBC taken together).
- All the programmes of the DDE are more popular among the rural population than the urban one. More and more rural learners are getting enrolled to the programmes of DDE because of flexibility and cost effectiveness of the system.

Conclusion

Education is a powerful agent of social change. It brings economic growth and employment, modernizes individuals, and adds to the quality of life. India has a vast setup of conventional higher education. But due to socio-economic and demographic constraints, it is not accessible to marginalized groups. Distance education has emerged as an effective and parallel system with the objective of providing education outside the structure of conventional education system. It is playing a prominent role to provide educational opportunities to the marginalized by taking education to their doorsteps. In accordance with the objectives of distance education, Directorate of Distance Education system of the DDE, University of Jammu is successful in reaching the disadvantaged and building a culture of learning based on equality and social justice. More flexible and innovative approaches, learner centeredness, use of ICT in learner support services and vocational and need based programmes can go a long way in increasing the popularity of the system among the disadvantaged sections of the society and thus promoting social inclusion by widening access.

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Role of Social Media in Open Learning Education

Ram Mehar

Abstract

ICT is progressively recognized as the strongest change in this digital revolution. In the recent years, advances in ICT have foreshowed a major transformation in human communication, giving rise to new trends of media for social communication. Situated as one of the latest of several waves of digital media, social media have introduced new communication patterns, diversified communication content and format, created new forms of expression, fostered freedom, and stimulated a wide participation which has widened the scope of knowledge sharing and collaboration and allowed citizens from diverse walks of life to have an opportunity to affect changes, convey their views and challenge social norms, thus promoting democracy. Social media are interactive computer-mediated technologies that facilitate the creation or sharing of information, ideas, career interests and other forms of expression via virtual communities and networks. As we all know that with the revolution of social media, it becomes easier to catch anybody at any time, but the users should know how to utilize the social media efficiently to keep his/her personality in a proper discipline. In open learning education social media plays a vital role where Students now a day arrange online conferences, workshops to talk regarding the projects. Students can also share lectures of different universities available on You-tube and can clarify their concepts to enhance their grades or academic achievement. Thus, this is evident to study the role of social media in open learning education where students are not fortunate to attend the formal education at various levels either at higher level, college level or at university level.

Introduction

Technology advancements have been a blessing to human beings; and today, computers, and mobile devices have become a part of our daily lives. The internet is also a part of the technology that many of us have come to appreciate. Basically, in this day and age, it is the internet that makes the world go around. The Internet and especially social media applications like Facebook, YouTube, and a lot of others, are obviously ‘overtaking the world’ and will be considered as “a global consumer phenomenon” (Camilia, Ibrahim, & Dalhatu, 2013). Social

media usage is one of the most common activities among children, adolescents, and emerging adults nowadays. It offers today's youth a portal for entertainment and communication and it is becoming one of the main platforms for accessing information and news. This aggressive adoption of social media among the younger generation could be attributed to their up-to-date knowledge of and comfort with the latest technology and the convenient accessibility to these social networking tools (Vorderer, Kromer, & Schneider, 2016). Social media, for instance, is a part of the internet that has created a greater avenue for people to interact across the globe and has affected the all the spheres of education. Social media has been playing a vital role in open learning education.

Open learning is an innovative movement in education that emerged within the 1970s and evolved into fields of practice and study. The term open learning generally refers to all those learning activities that either enhance or promote learning opportunities within formal system of education or broaden learning opportunities beyond formal educational systems. Open learning education is not only limited to classroom teaching methods, approaches used for interactive learning, formats in work-related education, shaping the behaviour through training, the cultures, ecologies of learning communities, and thus the development and use of open educational resources. The more comprehensive definition of open learning is that whose central focus is usually placed on the "needs of the learner as perceived by the learner." Case studies show that open learning education is an innovative way that can be used both within and across academic disciplines, professions, social sectors and national boundaries, and even in business and industry, educational institutions, collaborative efforts between institutions, and schooling for young learners.

Open Learning Education as a Concept

- Education for all free or very low-cost school, college or university education available to everyone within a specific jurisdiction, usually funded primarily through the state.
- Open access to programs that cause full, recognized qualifications. Most of the courses are offered by the national open universities.
- Open access to courses or programs that are not for formal credit, although it's going to be possible to accumulate badges or certificates for successful completion. MOOCs are a good example.

- Open educational resources that instructors or learners can use for free of charge. MIT's Open Courseware, which provides free online downloads of MIT's video recorded lectures and support material, is one example.
- Open textbooks, online textbooks that are free for college kids to use.
- Open research, whereby research papers are made available online for free downloading.
- Open data, that is, data hospitable anyone to use, reuse, and redistribute, subject only, at most, to the need to attribute and share.

Open learning as a pedagogics is developed on the work of Celestin Freinet in France and Maria Montessori in Italy, among others. Open learning is meant to permit pupils self-determined, independent, and interest-guided learning. A prominent example is the language experience approach to teaching initial literacy (Brügelmann & Brinkmann 2011). The approach is meant to confront to three challenges:

- (i) The vast differences in experiences, interests, and competencies between children of the same age.
- (ii) The constructivist learning environment demands active participation by the learner himself in problem-solving process.
- (iii) The mandatory condition of student participation in decisions stipulated by the UN Convention on the Rights of the students.

Social Media

Social media refers to websites and applications that are designed to permit people to share content quickly, efficiently, and in real-time. Many people define social media as apps on their smartphones or tablets, but the reality is, this communication tool started with computers. This misconception stems from the very fact that the majority social media users access their tools via apps. The ability to share photos, opinions, events, etc in real-time has transformed the way we live (Hudson, 2019).

Social media plays an important role in reaching out the masses with the help of social networking sites that reduces the gap between teacher, student, and the content to be delivered. Social media is a term that has been common for quite a while. The Oxford dictionary characterizes the term as "sites and applications that empower clients to make and offer content or to take an interest in social system administration". Social media is an attentive piece of the new age society.

The best way to define social media will be to separate it from newspapers and the audio-visual medium of television or radio. It is a group of online communication channels devoted to information, connection, substance, and coordinated effort. Sites and applications committed to discussions, micro-blogging, social system administration, social bookmarking, social 'curation' and wikis are among the distinctive social media. Social media has been advancing rapidly, offering new and significant approaches to individuals around the globe. Presently, social media is developing into an indispensable part of our daily lives. The social system administration is presently a genuine worldwide sensation.

Web technological developments have prompted fundamental improvements in how we connect, communicate, learn, and develop awareness. For much of the connected world, it permeates nearly every aspect of our existence from shopping and banking to communication and education among many other pursuits (Tariq, Mehboob, Khan, & Ullah, 2012). Global internet users generally grew rapidly between 2005 and 2014 (Freund & Weinhold, 2002). In 2015, there were 6.5 billion internet users around the world and in 2014 they became 7.2 billion (Singh, & Sachan, 2017). The internet and especially social media applications like Facebook, YouTube, and lots of others, are obviously "overtaking the world" and will be considered "a global consumer phenomenon" (Camilia, Ibrahim, & Dalhatu, 2013). According to Grossman (2010) if Facebook were a country it would be the third largest country after China and India and twice as big as the United States of America.

According to Facebook statistics "more than 30 billion pieces of content (web links, news stories, blog posts, notes, and photo albums) are shared each month" and each day on Facebook people install 20 million applications. On YouTube, 10 hours of content is uploaded to the video sharing platform every minute. According to State of Media Social Media Survey Report Nielsen, 2012. As for Facebook use, India is the second largest user in the world, just behind the United States. There are 45,796,460 Facebook clients in India, which is equivalent to 3.90percent of the aggregate populace and 56.54 per cent of the aggregate online populace. India is the second largest base of LinkedIn. India has an aggregate 13,352,622 clients which is equivalent to 1.14% of aggregate populace, and 16.48% of the online populace. India is additionally the second biggest client for Google+, and as for Twitter 16 million Indians are dynamic. When talking of the present state of social media in India, we need to likewise talk about two other overwhelming social media destinations: Orkut and Ibibio, which have 15.5 million and 5 million clients, respectively.

Social Networking

The evolving world of internet communication widely referred to as social networking has sparked a unique transformation of almost every aspect of life which has deeply impacted content, ideas and processes of human mental faculties which is bound to enhance common acceptance, inspire movements, and ignite change. Social networks operate through net-structured groups like blogs, podcasts, tags, file swapping and offer students radically new ways to research, create, and learn. Social networking is a software-based global facility that allows people to come together around an idea or topic of interest as a team. An institution can use blog software to bring together anyone associated or concerned about the activities or welfare of the institution. Online social networking triggers a chain of internet-based applications that build on some ideological and technological basis to achieve common goals and includes much more than Facebook and Twitter. Use of technology to connect people, enabling them to collaborate with each other, and forming virtual communities is what social networking is about. Here are some interesting facts about the social media in India: India has over 12.5 crore internet users. The average usage of internet is 26 minutes a day currently, 87.1 billion users are accessing the internet on their cell phones and strategies are in place to further push the numbers.

It is not surprising that social media usage is one among the foremost common activities among children, adolescents, and emerging adults nowadays. It offers today's youth a portal for entertainment and communication and it is becoming one of the main platforms for accessing information and news. Social media can be used as an instrument to solve the challenges faced in open learning.

Role of Social Media in Open Learning Education

Social media in education basically refers to the practice of using different social media platforms to enhance the academic performance of the students. 'Social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and that allows the creation and exchange of User Generated Content. (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).' Studies have confirmed that interest in social networking for educational purposes is increasing day by day. Social networking and online collaboration tools are substantially changing the educational experience of students, improving student motivation and engagement, helping students develop a more social / collaborative approach to learning and create a connection to real-life learning. Social media is often seen as the key driver of communications and even that of marketing. A

growing number of educational institutions, teachers and students have started utilizing social media in the classroom to supplement the learning process. Social media is a tool that teachers can use to make their classroom more engaging, relevant, and culturally diverse and which can effectively and carefully become a vital part of the educational environment. Social media acts as two-sided sword which has positive as well as negative impact on the students' academic performances. Social media can be further effective when educators may be able to connect learners with defined nodal links of knowledge, which might share their areas of interests or encourage students to contribute and share with a larger audience.

Today, many schools in India & education institutions in India are adapting these developments into their frameworks and depending on group assets and systems to improve the life of students. The utilization of social media in education helps students, teachers, and parents for getting more valuable information while connecting with learning groups and other educational systems. Social network sites & websites provide with lots of chances to improve their techniques of learning & teaching to students and schools, respectively. Through these networks, one can join social media modules or plugins that empower sharing and collaboration. In the same way students can also be benefitted from online tutorial exercise through You Tube. Online courses are also offered by colleges in India as well as abroad through Skype and a full cluster of assets that are shared through social interactions and communities.

There are various social networking sites and applications which can be used by the teacher and student to make the open learning more fruitful and successful. The following list consists of the viable social media for teachers which can be used in open learning education (Popular Social Media for Teachers and Learners (Chesser, 2013).

- *The Connected Educator*: It is a site for connecting with other educators is connected. It gives educators several avenues with which to seek out other like-minded educators. A Visual Mapping Engine narrows down certain criteria allowing educators to save lots of valuable time and energy.
- *Edmodo*: Edmodo acts as a playground for teaching and learning with an area for posts, calendars, and general communication for teachers and students. Linking to students becomes simpler and more efficient also as simpler when students enjoy the presentation of it. It makes easy for the students to share valuable apps.

- *TedEd*: TedEd offers a variety of TED Talks with brief, often-animated clips of topics such as science, technology, social studies, literature, language, art, fitness, psychology, business, and economics. With communities and clubs, the site also makes it effortless for collaboration.
- *Google+*: In addition to fantastic graphics and themes, Google+ takes teachers to its students with circles that make interactive communication management an art. Students might get to know more a few particular lessons because they didn't quite catch on the primary time. It pulls them into a circle of their own with just the proper tools to attach them to their path to understanding and learning.
- *Facebook*: The good part about Facebook is that everybody is thereon. Students love connecting with their friends and family with Facebook so telling them to see out the page where you post only is sensible. However, it is vital to remain professional and have a separate personal account.
- *Twitter*: Twitter acts as a reminder to students that they have to finish an assignment for a specific maturity or that they have an exam arising soon so study this or that. Teachers sometimes even use it for inspiration by sending out a famous quote.
- *Instagram*: Students love Instagram for many reasons but mainly for the photos and effects available to them. Teachers can create assignments that tap into the necessity to Instagram like photo essays where students take photos, upload, and add captions or students can even create campaigns for certain organizations or just for a lesson.
- *Vimeo*: If you would like to share videos on Facebook or Twitter, use Vimeo. But there's an entire lot more teachers can use it for uploading and storing video then utilizing it as a tool to show students more about creating video. Vimeo teaches lessons and tutorials for you at Vimeo Video School.
- *Word Press*: With numerous themes to settle on from, WordPress has become a well-liked way for teachers to line up an internet of communication and lessons with their students. Chalkboard is an academic theme that prepares students for learning and helps teachers outline goals and objectives while still providing great visuals. Teachers also can use it to inspire students to write down more by having them create their own blogs and meet the WordPress Challenges.

- *Blogger*: Like Word Press, Blogger connects teachers to students using unique themes also as diary-style writing. With access to teachers' posted links, lessons, and thoughts students become more successful and cosier with the teacher when learning online.
- *Skype*: Skype can be used for communicating everywhere, anywhere, wherever. This means students not only connect with teachers, but teachers encourage students to broaden their view of the planet. Set up virtual connections by contacting other teachers then connect the scholars to every other. Also, Skype features a whole portal dedicated to educators who can use it to show various lessons already found out by the Skype team.
- *Pinterest*: The celebrated platform for pinning favourite pics is often an excellent teaching and learning tool. It also encourages quick collaboration between teachers on all kinds of subjects and interests. Teachers can find out a Pinterest page for one particular class or a series of classes with Pins that specialise in themes or subtopics important to the lesson at hand.
- *YouTube*: Educators of any level can click on the education category within YouTube and find several subcategories like university, science, business, and engineering. YouTube even features a special section dedicated to show and the way to teach with it. But albeit teachers never visited that section, they might teach using all the good videos available consistent with subjects or searches.
- *Teacher Tube*: If YouTube does not make the cut, Teacher Tube can be tried. It is dedicated to all or any kinds of education, from the fundamentals to more complicated work. Interestingly, the tabs for docs and audio are several more useful resources within it. However, it is the thought of Teacher Tube and its tools that make it so useful because teachers can use it to speak with students and there's no doubt that this is within an educational format.
- *Academia.edu*: Academia.edu draws a crowd of over five million visitors for academics whose principal goal is to share research papers. Academics can monitor the effect of their research and keep tabs on the research of the opposite academics that they follow. It's an excellent tool for anyone needing data and knowledge on various subjects and interests.
- *LinkedIn*: While acting as a professional social forum for employers to connect with applicants or search for potential employees, LinkedIn is used for so much more than that. Having students post professional resumes

there then contacting them about the work market and therefore the business world around them keeps them in-tuned with reality and the endless possibilities through a targeted education.

- *Lab Roots*: Using Lab Roots, a social networking site for scientists, engineers, and technical professionals, you can access millions of documents and hundreds of scientific news feeds. Besides the plethora of information, it helps stay connected with colleagues and peers. Pulling students into the mix provides them with a cutting edge feeling and insight into the useful tools and information.
- *Research Gate*: Ijad Madisch has created ResearchGate, like Lab Roots which brings together scientists for collaboration. The distinction really lies with the project and the developers who are scientists working to give the devoted researchers worldwide attention.
- *LabforCulture.org*: Not a science lab, LabforCulture.org provides artists with a place to start blogging or an art group, and to connect and share information. LabforCulture.org, which is mostly made up of Europeans, also highlights art news, events, and exhibitions, and helps artists find jobs and learn more about funding their projects. This can be used by teachers for motivation and to help students get a feel for the work of other artists.
- *Culture Inside*: Culture Inside, which focuses on the gallery idea, creates space for online galleries and physical galleries. It might just be an artist's dream if used correctly. With a teacher's guidance students can also take advantage of their creativity. There is also a feature called lightbox, connecting artists and helping to promote artwork in the lightboxes of other artists.
- *Goonoo*: Goonoo began as a solution to the problem many artists and musicians have. They do not make the money they deserve. Sharing and streaming music through GogoYoko keeps users listening and needing more, so teachers can make the same use of it. GogoYoko also assists musicians and artists in the sale and promotion of their music.
- *Sgrouples*: For Privacy issues, Sgrouples promotes itself as a networking site that allows users to have ultimate control over who belongs to what party. It should show how we and our "tiny" community fit together. Most importantly, nobody's information is shared on the web, so remaining private really means everything shared, stays within that community.

- *Daily Motion*: Daily Motion, a French video sharing platform, brings an edge to social media by providing users with a "news" stream from the latest videos. Teachers can use it to keep up to date on weird and insightful social networking, but also to upload their own videos or share some of the information. Unique videos available through Daily Motion.
- *Rebel Mouse*: The New York Times, Mashable, Wired, and Time magazine, among others, allude to Rebel Mouse as the best tool to coordinate any individual use of all social media networks. Although also used by publishers or larger organisations, Rebel Mouse puts together the various networks for a single individual and provides a voice that suits the agenda of an instructor.
- *Hootsuite*: Hootsuite, another powerful social networking company, makes it easier to access various forms of social media and determine how important one media use is over another. Sometimes getting caught up in the social media craze can be overwhelming so using Hootsuite helps make sense all the media at the same time.
- *Google Docs*: It is a popular technology with teachers and students. Students and teachers can use these tools to collaborate on assignments, projects, newsletters among other things. It allows more than one person to work concurrently on a given text. Google docs can promote the teamwork.
- *Sakshat*: A one-stop training centre, it is an ideal platform for learners to communicate in real time or asynchronously with instructors, mentors and peer groups. The networking resources offered include, email, weblogging, webcasting, online chat, discussion forum. Other facilities include career counselling and a platform for uploading content and quiz by teachers. Students can explore knowledge repository available on the net in the form of e-books, e-journals, digital repository, digital library etc. Most of the sources are open-source material.
- *Quora*: Quora is a question-and-answer website where questions are asked, answered, edited, and organized by its community of users. The company was founded in June 2009, and on 21 June 2010, the website was made publicly available. Quora aggregates questions and answers to topics.
- *English Companion*: This is a platform where students can ask questions and get help. It is a community dedicated to helping enjoy work, in other words a cafe without walls.

- *The Epic Ed. Community*: The epic network is built to empower educators such as administrators, students, instructional technology facilitators and leading technology officers as they make the digital transformation in their schools and districts.
- *Khan Academy*: Educational organization created in 2006 provides a free, world-class education for anyone, anywhere. The organization produces micro lectures in the form of videos. The website of the company contains, in addition to micro tutorials, practical activities and information for educators. All resources are available to anyone around the world, free of charge.
- *Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)*: MOOCs are online courses accessible to anyone with a computer and access to the Internet. People call these courses "massive" because their enrolment is open to more students than traditional educational institutions could allow-meaning hundreds (even thousands) of students could participate in a particular MOOC. Today, several universities and colleges have joined organizations dedicated to providing high quality education through MOOCs.
- *edX*: A non-profit education alliance that grew out of a collaboration between MIT and Harvard in 2012 (Stanford joined the initiative in 2013, and now several dozen universities and colleges from around the world have, too). ed X offers students tuition-free opportunities to enrol in courses on a variety of subjects from instructors across the globe. Students register, attend, and complete their classes online. edX released the source code for its online learning platform in 2013, so programmers would be able to download and help improve it. Others could even use this to build their own educational platforms.

Positive Impacts of Social Media

In today's world, teens unite with each other and with the world through computerized innovation. Children today do not socialize in shopping centres any longer, rather, they "hang out" on the web. Social system administration could be unsafe for adolescents when the content is found harmful or when security is in question. But when utilized legitimately, the destinations can have a positive impact on teenagers. Here are nine focuses ought to exploit and know:

- (i) *It instructs*: In view of the "offering" choice, social systems give teenagers an opportunity to send useful features and articles to one

another. It likewise connects them with their educators, mentors, and scholarly specialists effortlessly and works together with their companions on school ventures.

- (ii) *Collaborative Learning:* On social media, students exchange lot of information. So, why not use this platform to encourage collaborative learning. Yes, many institutions worldwide encourage students to create foreign alliances using social media to take on some project tasks. By doing this, they get engaged with each other and learn how to manage projects and coordinate with teams sitting globally along with cross cultural sensitivities. Likewise, the use of social media has made communicating with peers or teachers on class-related subjects simpler and quicker. Using social media also familiarizes students with a new working culture of handling work through online interactions that are especially important in the business environment today. It teaches them how to build a strong presence online by developing their communication skills.
- (iii) *Sharing of information by Students:* Students are continuously hooked on to the internet through their smart phones and hence rapidly transmit information to their connections. We also share valuable information apart from just exchanging views and opinions. This information is a lot more than just interesting videos or snapshots and cover useful stuff related to their studies. They exchange helpful information for classes and examinations.
- (iv) *Social Media Marketing for Educators:* For educational institutions, social media is a great marketing tool to reach out to the prospective students. This new media has led education professionals to build a strong marketing strategy to increase brand awareness. Colleges all over the world are extensively carrying out social media strategies to tap students. We communicate with subject matter experts through social media. Teachers soon establish themselves as experts in particular fields and subjects through blogging and SlideShare. Students gain useful content by following these experts online. This empowers institutions and establishes its brand equity in the academic world. Academic Institutions are communicating with students via YouTube and Facebook. Such platforms can be used to relay news from campus, make announcements and provide useful

information to students. This builds engagement between the College and students which helps in building trust by addressing many student related issues through community interactions.

- (v) *Helps to Foster Research:* Social media offers collaborative opportunities to foster research initiatives. Extracting Secondary Data is one of the best platforms. You should run survey pools to collect samples and find out views about a particular subject from general people and other experts. Operating on joint assignments and projects, social media can help academic researchers collect and generate useful content.
- (vi) *Continue teaching from anywhere and everywhere:* Sometimes, it is difficult to address queries of students during classroom sessions. This makes it further difficult for students to clear their doubts. Professors, however, should exploit social media technologies to extend hours of teaching outside classroom. They can set up Facebook Live sessions or Twitter discussions to cover uncleared doubts of their students. As a matter of fact, professors can allocate dedicated time slots for online discussions to answer any question or to work with a student. Through Facebook sessions, Faculty can connect with large audiences at one go which otherwise is not possible in one class. Professors may like to continue engagement with their students even when they are travelling and not taking sessions. They can even stream lectures while commuting to prevent any class cancellation. If during the actual time of class, the instructor is unavailable, he may use YouTube to record a lecture beforehand.
- (vii) *Take Advantage of Blogs to create Virtual Library:* Setting up a personal blog or website gives professors a lot of freedom to build intellectual credibility. They can upload their academic work and other important lectures and videos that will enable students to take relevant inputs as their study reference material.
- (viii) *It hurries correspondence:* No requirement for snail speed telegrams to convey the desired information. With one click, one's message reaches the expected destination. If it is a critical moment, social media is very helpful, and people can get the consideration of the individual they wish to contact immediately.

- (ix) *It fabricates, connects over boundaries:* With the help of social media, youngsters can meet new companions from ranges far off. Speaking with people from distinctive societies can help teenagers become smarter socially.
- (x) *It fortifies connections:* Communicating online is easier and faster. For all intents and purposes, talking with an acquaintance permits high schoolers to take in more about one another, thus, reinforcing the trust between two gatherings. It likewise scaffolds separation. Through social media, young people can stay in touch and reconnect with companions from their past (Jue, Jackie & Mary, 2010).
- (xi) *It makes learning a more social experience:* Helping students share ideas, opinions and give and receive feedback facilitates the kind of social interaction that can really inspire learners. Social media allows for easier communication among a wide variety of learners, each with their own histories, cultures, and experience. This is great to share a wide array of viewpoints. At the same time, the fact that all these learners share the same learning goals can promote a strong sense of community and can be an incredibly supportive environment to a learner.
- (xii) *More opportunities:* Social media platforms are also natural opportunities to build and interact with students; curating sets of links that they have found interesting, sharing their ideas through forums, posting inspiring photos. Media allows people, or groups, to build and share content. The content is automatically shared to users worldwide, using recommendation algorithms. A global audience, outside the normal network of students, increases the opportunity for valuable input that includes diverse viewpoints.

Unfavourable Impacts of Social Media

Our day to day lives spin around engineering and many of us can't envision a day without logging on the web or utilizing our cellular telephones. The social system administration has turned into a standard way of life for the public with sites like Facebook, Twitter, Myspace, and a lot of people holding a special and imperative part in our everyday lives. The thought behind the social system administration is to empower us to have better contact with loved ones, promote strongholds, specialists or items and interface with new individuals.

Administration of the social system has indeed achieved many positive things. However, is it also influencing us contrarily? Here is a rundown of some negative perspectives that accompany dynamic social systems administration conduct.

- (i) *Dependence on Social Media:* Even though no sickness or issue has yet been associated with the social system administration habit, still various practices connected with over-the-top utilization of social media have of late turned into a matter that needs examination and exploration. That said, utilizing social media exorbitantly to a point where it meddles with other day to day exercises is not acceptable. For example, always checking Facebook notices or "stalking" individuals' Facebook profiles for days on end. Anyway, if you use three hours a day perusing arbitrary tweets from outsiders means you are dependent on Twitter. What about five hours? One can contend that it was simply news-perusing to stay overhauled, correct? Yet could the endless hours we use on social media be the reason behind behavioural issue. Is it true that we are making ourselves debilitated through social system administration without being mindful of it?
- (ii) *Consistent comparison with others:* Let us be honest, we all take a gander at one another's social system administration destinations, respecting garments, lifestyles and even connections. More than regularly longing that our lives were as extraordinary as others! Anyhow when it descends to it, individuals for the most part tend to impart just the sparkling highlights of their lives, forgetting the dull ones deliberately. We typically do not share or post about exhausting nights spent at home, rough connections or money related dependability. Inspire of all that no serious thought is given about when individuals begin contrasting their lives with others and rather wind up sounding hopeless, which can now and again prompt low respect toward oneself, and misery.
- (iii) *Individual Vs Professional Presentation:* A fundamental inquiry that regularly appears in our personalities while imparting individual data on social locales is the way we adjust our individual and expert lives online? When would it be advisable for me to draw a line?
- (iv) *Becoming Companions online:* While social system management helps us to unite with new people, it has also affected how individuals become campaneros. As opposed to contacts in person, individuals

these days are happy to span through a perpetual rundown of measured bits of individual data, or interface through remarks, or even visit with different individuals at the same time. We are exchanging a lot of personal connections with an exceptionally shallow manifestation of cooperation. Numerous individuals who are close companions on Facebook are not able to engage in a personal discussion affably. And then there are individuals who instead of offering their musings and issues to their "genuine" companions, invest unending time over the web.

The study of social networks within a learning domain encompasses the processes of social learning and opens learning that occurs when a self-selecting group of people who have a common interest in a topic collaborates in sharing ideas or finding solutions. Social networks, according to researchers, improve communication skills, enhance participation and social engagement, strengthen peer support, and ensure collaborative educational realization. There are still many segments of society which have not yet realized the great potential lying in the social networking sites in terms of education. Despite the publications and studies done in the countries including America and Europe, still a lot needs to be done in the developing countries and particularly in India. It has been repeatedly said that India is one of the most youthful nations on the planet, may be the most youthful – half of Indians are under the age of 25 and 65% of us are under 35. It implies that there are more potential social media clients in India than are at any other place on the planet. To comprehend better where we stand, all we need to do is to see the information on the four top social media sites-Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, and Google+ to make open learning education more fruitful.

Conclusion

Social networks are applications which support enthusiasm for sharing interests, collaborations, resource sharing, communication, and interactions in a common space. The evidence is growing that the use of SNSs in education can be useful in blended learning. The teachers can communicate instantly and directly with the students and compare notes on education techniques, curriculum, and teaching methodology and so on. Teachers, professors, and academics routinely used blogs to write about the world of education and invite comments from all over the world. The impact of social media is changing radically the way education is traditionally delivered. Students should develop the cognitive and intuitive ability to analyse how much time they spent with social media. It is up to

the students to decide what really matters in their life and how much of this virtual life translates to real life. Despite those concerns, however, the faculty believes a social media sites offer value in teaching. An overwhelming majority say they believe that film, podcast, and wikis remain useful teaching tools, and a majority indicate that social media sites can be valuable tools for collaborative learning (Tandale & Raman, 2016). When social media networks develop in education systems, there will emerge several useful and beneficial resources that can make learning a more enriching experience. Students today at every level are actively engaged with social media. When you miss social media use, you push a lot of potential audience away. Using it in educational institutions can prove to be a highly effective measure. Social media opportunities for academic institutions are various. For example, the above are only a couple. Social media sites offer great opportunities for communication between peers and teachers. Using social media, teachers can increase their students ' participation in studies and education, develop technical skills, create a strong sense of cooperation in the classroom and build on good communication skills of students (Jain, 2020).

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Role of Student Support Services in Open Learning Institutions: A Case Study

Kuljeet Kaur Brar

Abstract

Though distance learning is already a fact of life for most universities as it does fulfil the requirement of a student population which is so diverse and ever-increasing component of higher education. Knowing the intrinsic problems of the distance education and overcoming them is a critical component. Hence moving ahead from distance education to open learning for implementing these programs on a larger scale was possible only by improving upon the existing student support services. In the present scenario wherein, technology has taken rapid advancements in terms of communication, the effectiveness of the distance learning programs can greatly be enhanced by evaluating the present support services offered by different universities. So, in the present article the student support services of University School of Open Learning (USOL), Panjab University, Chandigarh has been discussed with the primary objective of strengthening the support services for enhancing the already existing services.

Keywords: Open Learning, Student support services, distance education.

Introduction

Traditional Indian education boasts of the Vedas, the Puranas, the Ayurveda, the Arthasashtra and many more and is a marvel of the Indian intellect. In the system of Gurukula (ancient Indian system of dispersing knowledge), the adolescent boys stayed in the house of the teacher (guru) to gain knowledge over a stipulated time-period. The Brahmacharya (celibacy) state was observed till a certain age while women and lower caste people had no access to education in the Middle Ages. The reform movement spread by the Sufi, Bhakti, Jain, and Buddhist religions reduced the pain of the oppressed segments of the society and educational reforms gained eminence in the nineteenth century.

It has been observed over the past three decades that the distance education and open learning systems have developed a distinct identity and ethos of their own and are now an integral part of the education system in India. There is a gradual, and at times reluctant, acceptance of the inevitable growth and

development of the distance education as a system capable of standing on its own without being regarded as a weaker cousin of the conventional system of education. It is also felt that there should be official parity of esteem between the conventional system of education and distance education and that the two systems should reinforce and strengthen each other to make the higher education system more vibrant and to equip it to respond to future challenges effectively. The emergence of open learning is linked to the issue of access to education. Open universities were initiated to cope with demands for places in institutions of higher learning. The issue is somewhat different for open schools. Unlike university education, school instruction is a basic right. School instruction is seen as a necessary requirement for improving the quality of life since it has been related directly to population growth, health practices, and economic activity and productivity. Thus, open schools emerged from concern about how to provide a minimum level of education to all. The situation varied from one country to another, but four distinctive features are common:

- Reaching out with education to the disadvantaged population groups in dispersed locations where conventional schools are not viable.
- Providing a choice to students (and their parents) for what they want to learn.
- Providing education to those who cannot attend conventional schools for a variety of social and economic reasons, as well as to those who missed out and are now “over age”.

Open school students are independent learners, self-propelled and self-motivated and these open schools often depend on multi-media instruction. Student support services are an important component of any open school and there are studies which indicate that a good student support system in terms of the facilities extended by the open schools promotes learning as an easier process.

Objectives of the study

The main objectives of the paper are as follows:

1. To study need and significance of student support services.
2. To analyse the existing support services of USOL.
3. To make recommendations and suggestions to the decision makers for their consideration in implementation.

Significance of Student Support Services

The term student support services have been used in a variety of ways. For some, it has been limited in describing the learning resources needed by the students to complete course requirements. It however has a much broader meaning in the present context, and it includes many forms of assistance that are intended to remove the barriers to promote academic excellence. Examples of such support services are pre-admission, counselling, academic advising, financial aid, learning skills, instructions and much more.

A study carried out by Biswas (1999) on the study centres of IGNOU revealed that there was an increase in the student's preference for attending the counselling sessions, consulting library, and collecting information on using audio-visual aids. Cooper (2000) pinpointed that less emphasis has been given to the problems of providing library services to support distance education programs and this factor needs to be looked with greater importance.

Arif and Mahmood (2008) worked on the off-campus postgraduate students' perception about the distance library support services at Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU), Pakistan and found that majority of the respondents were dissatisfied with the virtual reference services, online database services, library membership facility and the borrowing of library material, though, they were satisfied with the location and the physical set up of the libraries. The study also revealed that there were no significant differences between the opinions of males and females.

Bentley et al. (2010) evaluated the impact of distance learning support systems on the learning experience of MBA students in global context with the help of a primary questionnaire which indicated certain areas which could be improved. After the implementation of the changes in the programme support system, the satisfaction amongst the students showed marked improvement. Sandhya et al. (2011) worked on the student support services in distance learning in Sri Lanka and observed the need to improve the overall quality of the prospectus to maximize its effect. Moreover, the release of the final examination results is of importance in registering for subsequent levels of study.

Husni (2018) explored the contribution of student support in increasing student persistence by employing mixed methods approach. Student persistence in this study refers to continuation of enrolment within four consecutive semesters. The high number of non-enrolment students had decreased the retention rates in

the Indonesia Open University. Prior studies revealed that student support had a pivotal role in enhancing student persistence. This study used sequential explanatory design by collecting the quantitative data from surveying 153 students and then followed by semi-structured interviews with 13 purposefully selected participants. In the quantitative phase, the results of the study revealed that student support had important contribution to student persistence. Meanwhile, the qualitative findings supported the survey results that student support had a pivotal role in influencing student persistence. Moreover, this study suggested the improvement of student support at the level of affective, cognitive, and systemic to enhance student persistence.

Component of the Student Support Services

Another important component of the student support services of the open school is the use of the electronic media. As mentioned earlier, electronic media have long been used to augment conventional education. In open learning, this use is integral. The level of technology intervention, however, varies widely. Initially, many countries, including China, India, Pakistan, and Indonesia, have successfully used radio and television for education. The one-way communication of radio and television is being increasingly supplemented and, in some cases, replaced by the more effective interactive technologies like audio- and videoconferencing, teleconferencing, interactive television, computer-managed learning, and intelligent tutoring systems. The level at which technology is used is guided by the rate of technological advancement within the country, as well as by other considerations, including the number of students and their spread over a geographical area.

Support services are the facilities provided to the students by the study centers of open schools and these have the following components:

- The prospectus
- Counselling/Admission procedure
- Orientation
- Study material
- Audio-Visual aids
- Personal contact programme
- Library facility
- Practical classes

University School of Open Learning

The University School of Open Learning (Formerly known as Department of Correspondence Studies), Panjab University was established in 1971. The objective was to take university-based education beyond the four walls of the University. It continues to do so and fulfils a prime social responsibility of providing education at the doorstep for those who are unable to access formal education. Started as a Directorate, it is now a full-fledged USOL with due representation on all University bodies. Supported by a well-qualified, research-oriented faculty and efficient staff, the USOL offers 28 courses i.e., undergraduate, postgraduate, diploma and professional courses, some innovative and socially relevant courses such as certificate course in Vivekananda studies, diploma in human rights and a post graduate diploma in computer application and post graduate diploma in Guidance and Counselling have been recently introduced.

The method of instruction includes printed study material in self-learning mode, personal contact programme, response sheets, assignments, video, and audio- cassette lessons on selected topics, dissertations/projects in selected courses and counselling of students on a one-to-one basis, organizing regional and national seminars and special lecture series. To cater to the masses, for most courses, the printed study material is provided in English, Hindi, and Punjabi. In addition, the USOL offers a variety of student support services. These include a well-equipped library, postal library facilities, an educational media centre, a computer lab and subsidized hostel facility for outstation students. The USOL also involves the students in co-curricular activities and brings them together on a common platform despite their diverse locations.

Students support services at USOL

Interaction between students and teachers is critical for effective learning. Student support services are therefore suitably designed to overcome the negative effects of isolation and lack of regular contact between the distance learner and teacher and, in doing so, different forms and channels of interaction are created.

- **Counselling services:** At the institutional level, pre-entry counselling is provided to the students at the university campus and at various study centres. The students admitted to various courses are also provided a detailed counselling schedule with information such as the venue for their counselling and the names of the counsellors. The academic counsellors are provided training to orient them in subject specialization as the methods of

teaching-learning process in ODL systems. The counsellors and staff local study centres provide information relating to admission requirements, fees courses on offer student support services, examination, and evaluation system, etc.

- Assignments and students' feedback: Many students are involved in distance and open learning, which poses insurmountable difficulties in providing feedback to students through tutor comments on assignments. Yet many ODL institutions are in the process of making assignments compulsory in select programmes so as to ensure necessary feedback to students. An equally important component of open schools is the mechanism for monitoring learning and providing help in self-assessments. Just as each instructional module provides in-text questions to monitor progress within the module, the open schools provide assignments and response sheets in each course. The open school student is expected to complete the assignment and submit it within a given time to the instructor, who in turn not only assesses but comments on the student's understanding of the material and suggests improvements.
- Contact programmes: Face-to-face counselling sessions are organized, especially during Personal Contact Programmes (PCPs). The advanced technologies are also utilized for distant students like social media, internet, and emails. USOL has its Facebook page, twitter account. As these activities are at the lower scale, the institution is making deliberate efforts to improve various forms of interaction and support to students particularly using electronic media. Tutorial support is of crucial importance to the learners since it serves as a great morale booster for them. The PCP programme gives the learner a chance to have direct rapport and interaction with the counsellor as well as peer groups and help him in overcoming the sense of isolation. Thus PCP programmes form an important component of the student support services in the open schools. In the present studies, a vast majority of the students were happy with the schedule of the PCP and face to face contact programme.
- Library services: The library support services are considered important part of the student support package in the education and distance education is no exception. As per the guidelines provided by the UGC, the open schools are supposed to have an established well-equipped library to provide services to the students. The postal library services were introduced by the Panjab University under in which one-way postal charges for sending the

books to the distance learners were borne by the university. Library services are provided at most study centres. The quality of such services, however, depends on the facilities available with the host institutions. While most libraries established at the study centres do not issue books to students. It has a richly stocked library with more than 86,955 books of text, reference and general on its shelves. In addition, 69 journals, magazines and newspapers are subscribed. Local students can read in the library and borrow books for those residing outside Chandigarh, the library maintains postal service. The students residing at Ludhiana or within a radius of 60 Km., can avail library facility at the Panjab University Extension Library, Ludhiana.

- The capsule teaching programmes: The capsule teaching programme constitutes printed lecture scripts, personal contact programmes (wherein presence is not compulsory), radio talks, audio and audio-visual lessons.

The Educational Media Centre (EMC): has produced 325 Audio lessons and 8 Video Programmes of its own. It has also procured 68 Video programmes produced by other institutions to be shown during the PCPs to the students. Students can get duplicate Audio Lessons on the blank cassettes.

- Teaching Aid Materials: The centre also provides teaching Aid Materials and Equipment to the faculty of the Department.
- Computer Lab: Since computers are becoming an integral part of the education process, the USOL has established a small Computer Lab with 10 Computers to facilitate lesson production.
- Book Fair and Exhibitions: USOL organizes book exhibition for its students and faculty. Renowned publishers organize bookstalls to facilitate reading habits and exposure to knowledge by brining student friendly books.
- Cultural events: Events enhance the student skills. USOL celebrates special days like Shawachh Bharat, Human Rights Day, Punjabi week, Hindi divas, Guru Nanak birth anniversary, Hunar and sports day. Alumni meet, Annual day and convocation are some important annual academic celebrations of institution.

Recommendations

1. The first component of student support is informing prospective students about the programmes and methods used at open schools. This “pre-student support” is particularly necessary to bring in suitable students.
2. The dissemination of information about open schools requires carefully planned publicity about the programmes available. Targeted publicity is particularly important in developing countries, where electronic media are comparatively less developed.
3. Open school methods like self-study print material and electronic media supplement the tutor-based instruction, but tutor-based instruction should remain the central strategy for learning delivery. In the other model, face-to-face contact complements self-study.
4. The contact sessions should be devoted to counselling, tutorials, drills, laboratory experiments for professional courses and peer group learning.
5. The second component of student support relates to enrolment and registration. It is also suggested that the open school may administer enrolment using a range of centralized and decentralized approaches like in some of the open schools, students enrol directly with headquarters i.e., they send in their applications and course fees by mail. Institution should set up regional schools or study centres for students’ enrolment and registration during admission and examination time.
6. Unfortunately, since most of the tutors are drawn from the conventional schools, their repertoire of instructional methods are restricted to direct instruction or lecturing and, in the final analysis, most of the contact sessions shouldn’t turn out to be lectures either on all topics or on selected important topics.
7. The students did not really know about the placement cell.
8. The students knew about the grievance cell but only few agreed that it redresses your problem.
9. The students at the open school at Panjab University were overall happy with the timings of the library; access and procedure of buying books. The students were also fairly contented with the time period for which the books are issued; about number of available copies and also that is helpful for poor students.

10. More focus for visits, co-curricular activities, seminars, workshops, trips and within university interactive sessions for peer learning should be arranged.
11. Short term courses to enhance student skills and personality development workshops should run throughout the session.

Conclusion

Open schools have already made a significant impact in all countries. They are now opening new vistas for the neo-literates, i.e., adults and school dropouts because of their flexibility and responsiveness to learning needs. In the fast-changing socio-technological scene, retraining people for employment and at home is becoming a necessity, and open schools have considerable potential for contributing to general life enrichment as well as for retraining for employment. Student support services are therefore suitably designed to overcome the negative effects of isolation and lack of regular contact between the distance learner and teacher and in doing so, different forms and channels of interaction are created. Open schools have also been able to break down the barrier between vocational and academic schools. They are placing vocational courses at par with academic courses. From many considerations, open schools can introduce a new dimension in education, which combines freedom to learn with functionality.

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Accountability of Social Media: Laws, Censorship and Social Accountability

Ravinder Kaur

Abstract

Digital Information Technology has ushered in a new era of communication. The information flows from not from one person to many but from many-to-many at no additional cost. The literature, news, and journals are published and consumed 'instantly'. In this age of digital reproduction, information is the most valuable resource. The information is bought and sold and privileged over other resources. However, this new culture has made an adverse impact on the lives of people who are at the receiving end of this web of information. In this context, the present paper aims to study the impact of fake news, rumors, and political propaganda on the ethnic minorities. The medium introduced with McLuhanian promise has in fact thrown masses into the tsunami of information in which it becomes almost impossible to differentiate the true story from the false. The paper deals with the problem of tackling rumors on the social media platforms and reflects upon the strategies for tackling circulation of fake news. While enlisting various IT laws and policies, it proposes that governmental intervention is not enough to defalcate social media networks. It proposes that the higher education institutes should impart social media usage ethics among people. Additionally, the paper offers a critique of the indifferent attitude of social media giants such Facebook and Twitter towards hate speeches and communal disharmony that is disseminated through these circuits of information.

I

The World Wide Web has changed the way people perceive and receive information. In 1964, Marshall McLuhan, a media theorist coined and popularized the phrase; "the medium is the message." His objective was to understand the human mind's receptivity to information on mass media and the way messages are perceived by it. McLuhan argues that a medium impacts society not only through the content but also by its own specific characteristics, creating a dominant information-based social environment. In this context, the twentieth century has witnessed the emergence and development of a new medium i.e. the World Wide

Web. It has radically changed the way people communicate. Most importantly, it has made mass mobilization possible and that also at a much greater pace than the conventional media. To substantiate this fact, one can refer to social and political movements such as the Arab Springⁱ. On the other hand, it has become a propaganda tool in the hands of some politically motivated citizens who deliberately spread misinformation or sanction violence and abuse. Thereby, it has become important to fix responsibility for the content posted on social media platforms.

The term accountability in the context of social media refers to making a user answerable for the content posted on his/her blog, website, or any other Social Networking Site (SNS). However, the ongoing debate in this direction is divided between two sides; if a social media post generates unrest among a community or social group, who is to be held accountable/blamed for that: the media corporations or the users? On the contrary, Daniel Imbellino writes that in the present times due to the pervasiveness of digital media, nobody can escape his/her responsibility. It makes everyone from big corporations to common people accountable and answerable for what they have posted online:

Social media doesn't just hold corporations and the political world to account either, but anybody and everybody. The media too is often blasted for their mistreatment of others, just as United Airlines was, or in the case of Pepsi, for displaying racially insensitive content in the form of an advertisement. As if a can Pepsi would somehow bring the world together and break past our differences. ("The Rise of Social Accountability in a Modern Age of Social Media" by, on 23 Apr 2017 on *Medium.com*)

Often, it is seen that some people or groups use SNSs only to create tension among two communities or to generate fear and anxiety among the masses by spreading rumours and fake news. By fixing accountability, the idea is to ensure that content posted on social media sites should be a correct, authentic, and objective piece of information. It should not be posted deliberately to create an atmosphere of enmity or hatred among some targeted communities.

II

Since social media has complicated the flow of information and created an atmosphere of confusion. Therefore, it has become almost impossible to identify and differentiate real news/information from fake news. Undoubtedly, the open, free and unmediated network of social media has created a space for dissent voices, but it has also generated a plethora of unreliable or fake news sites and blogs.

Consequently, it has become hopelessly impossible for a common user to access authentic information sources. Sometimes circulation of fake news results in animosity and even riots among various social groups and communities. Maya Mirchandani argues that social media companies highlight the role of media as a ‘facilitator’ however a study by *Observe Research Foundation* shows that “a growing segment of users precisely employ these tools to provoke violence” (“Digital Hatred, Real Violence”).

There are several instances when a social media post triggered violence and unrest among people. One can refer to a famous case of Dadri in India which resulted in riots among two communities. Later, two men were arrested by the police for spreading rumours on social mediaⁱⁱ. Their motive was to ignite communal tension in the village. In another incident from West Bengal, rumours about child lifting, dacoits, and molesters spread hysteria among people. As a result of it, two men were mob-lynched, and two women were brutally beaten upⁱⁱⁱ. In a similar incident from Uttar Pradesh, where through social media messages and videos rumours about child lifting were spread, two brothers were attacked by a mob^{iv}. One of them died on the way to the hospital. These are only a few examples; one can find innumerable incidents of social media borne rumours.

The controversy stirred by a *Facebook* post by a government official in Bareilly (Uttar Pradesh) hinted at the misuse of social media by various social groups owing to their commitment to their own communities. In this way, the content on social media is considered polemical contrary to mainstream traditional media which follows the policy of objective reporting. In his post, he reflected on the growing unrest and enmity among the two dominant communities of U.P. The post stirred controversy due to its explicit support to a particular group. In fact, writing about a communal issue in a multilingual and multi-cultural country like India becomes controversial. Consequently, if a user comments/writes on a communal issue, he/she is usually trolled and abused online. It also indicates that, caste and religion being two pillars of Indian society are sensitive subjects. Therefore, the blogger was blamed that he was explicitly supporting a particular political ideology. As a result of it, he was ruthlessly abused and trolled. Finally, he had to delete this post.

III

Such incidents have made the new media scholars who were initially too optimistic about the future of new media or digital media think of some checks and filters for the production of content on social media. Many countries are trying to

tackle sensitive and disturbing content by asking social media corporations to control hate speech and rumours^v. The role SNSs are playing in spreading/promoting hate and radicalization online is also considered ambiguous. The critics charge that social media sites such as *Twitter* and *Facebook* have turned a blind eye towards polarising fake news reports and are not taking proper measures to control them. However, a critic Mirchandani argues that such media is not only instrumental in spreading rumours but is also in distorting reality and creating alternate ones “in echo chambers of like-minded users where beliefs are perpetuated, even those that are premised on hate and lies.” For long, these companies have avoided taking responsibility for the content posted by defining themselves as simply platforms and not content developers/producers. This narrative has helped them to avoid the threat of regulation and any legal liability. Under the pressure created by governments of various countries, “these companies have decided to evolve their community standards to expand definitions of, and check, hate speech” (“Digital Hatred, Real Violence”).

Various SNSs have already started applying such filters, though not during the production of content but after it is posted. For example, on *Facebook*, if any material is found inappropriate or offensive by the users or the state^{vi}, it is blocked or deleted. In the case of WhatsApp, the Supreme Court has ordered that the admin of a WhatsApp group will be responsible for the misinformation or fake news spread on the group. It has led to a better organization and conduct among WhatsApp users to some extent. However, some *Facebook* users who are using it to criticize the state policies find it objectionable and deterrent to their freedom of expression. They have started questioning the very idea of social networking sites as ‘free’, or ‘open’ or unbiased spaces. It has given rise to a new debate that is censorship of social media vs. freedom of speech. The Indian Law under IT Act applies various restrictions on the social media mediators such as Article 19(1)^{vii}, A 19 (2)^{viii}, Section 66A, Section 69A^{ix} and 79^x.

Section 66A has probably received the most media attention over the last year or so due to the many arrests made under this section (notably the arrest of two teenage girls in Palghar, Maharashtra in November 2012). This provision criminalizes the practice of sending an offensive message using a computer resource. The biggest concern in this regard is the extremely wide and ambiguous scope of the provision which could include anything that is considered offensive, menacing, that causes annoyance or inconvenience, that insults, that causes enmity, hatred or ill-will, etc. The punishment for such an offense is three years imprisonment.

Moreover, for the past eight years, several social media users have been arrested on the charges of either being offensive to some political leader or inciting violence and hurting religious sentiments. Most of them were arrested under Section 66A of the Information Technology Act^{xi}. The act aimed to punish users for spreading “offensive, false or threatening information” through computers and communication devices. The users, on the other hand, charged that their posts on social media had been censored or taken down. Therefore, some of the arrests were challenged on the basis that they violated the right to free speech^{xii}. In this regard, in *Shreya Singhal vs. Union of India* (AIR 2015 SC 1523)^{xiii} the Supreme Court declared that the section 66A “arbitrarily, excessively and disproportionately invades the right of free speech and upsets the balance between such right and the reasonable restrictions that may be imposed on such right”. Not this alone, in fact, due to its ambiguous nature, the court declared section 66A “unconstitutional”. The court found the Cyber law provision to be open-ended, vague, and unconstitutional owing to the restriction it caused to the Indian citizens’ right to free speech^{xiv}.

Section 69A authorizes the government to block any content from being accessed by the public on various grounds. An intermediary who fails to comply with directions to block content is liable to be imprisoned for up to seven years. This provision ensures that the government can block any content it deems to fall within the fairly broad conditions and has been used with mixed results “while no doubt there are instances where content does need to be censored practice shows that directions issued by the government lack precision (leading to whole domains and websites being blocked), lack appropriate oversight and accountability mechanisms, etc. The broad and ambiguous nature of the conditions to be satisfied before invoking this power are also cause for concern.

IV

Keeping this in view, there has emerged the need to create a policy to observe and filter content produced on social media. Especially in the present context, when the COVID 19 pandemic has engulfed the globe, the situation has become much alarming. The research says that people used SNSs the most during the lockdown^{xv}. There was confusion among the people about the disease itself. They were not able to understand how it spreads, how it may infect them or how to protect themselves. There were bloggers who were recommending all kinds of remedies from homeopathy to allopathy. Some were suggesting home-made remedies. This chaotic situation made the Indian government come out with an App called Arogya Setu and IGOT, and it was said that all the authentic information

related to the COVID 19 can be accessed. Also, the data of infected and deceased is shared on the App. However, the hysteria fake news created can be understood from an incident from Punjab where a couple committed suicide due to the fear and anxiety of COVID 19^{xvi}.

A critic Niranjan Sahoo who has studied the impact of social media in the times of COVID 19 writes that “Fake news is travelling much faster than the coronavirus in India. Even before the country reported its first case on 30 January, India’s social media was rife with fake posts, wild rumours, and conspiracy theories, doctored videos about the disease’s origin, its subsequent spread and possible remedies.” As the cases started increasing, so does the fake messages on all the major social media platforms, particularly Facebook, WhatsApp, Twitter, and TikTok etc. According to a recent report by a website BOOM, fake news related to COVID-19 began circulating from the third week of March and increased massively in early April: “Out of 178 fact checks the website conducted since the onset of COVID-19 in the country, as much as 35% of them were fake videos, 29% images and a similar percentage were doctored messages on a range of issues such as fake diagnosis and treatment, falsified quotes by celebrities with their photos, false notifications and lockdown guidelines among other.”

In this way, the content on social media sites is not always objective, unbiased, and authentic as promised by the media optimists. Much like traditional media channels, various political parties or interest groups use SNSs to influence public opinion. These social media posts or blogs are very much polemical in nature. Therefore, the narrative of new media as an objective platform seems to be a myth.

V

Most of the critics agree that social accountability is the only solution for the fair and positive use of social media. Through primary education and some specifically designed courses in higher education, students may be sensitized about the misuse of social media. Educational Institutes can play an important role in this way. Some compulsory courses may be designed and prescribed to students of all classes where they may be introduced to the use and abuse of social media. The students can be sensitized about the impact of fake news on the citizens. They can be made aware of the legal consequences of the misuse of social media. This can lead to skill development among students as well as in inculcating ethical behaviour among them. Apart from this, people, in general, may be made aware of the accountability of social media through various platforms. Parents can be given some

counselling regarding this in schools and colleges. Additionally, some MOOCs may be designed on this subject to spread the message to larger audiences. In this way, digital media can be brought to use to inculcate social media usage ethics among people.

It can also be said that accountability of social media by the social media networks may lead to the curtailment of freedom of expression of the users. Additionally, bringing social media users under a legal framework may have an adverse impact on the way people use social media. It is a well-known fact that social media platforms are used by a lot of people both from the privileged and marginal classes and castes. Especially for the marginalized sections, social media has emerged as an independent publishing site; it has become a space for the subaltern expression. Therefore, bringing legal formalities may affect the creativity of such users and may delimit the functionality of digital media platforms. Besides, for literary writers, such censorship has always proved negative and unproductive. Above all, it will eliminate the basic difference between tradition and new media as social media being an 'open' network had a major edge over the other conventional forms of media. At the same time, it cannot be denied that the unchecked freedom of the users on social media is not proving fruitful either for all the users.

So, in the end, it may be suggested that freedom, open-ended network and immediacy are the pillars and essence of digital media. And applying censorship on the freedom it enjoys is like disarming millions of users from creatively expressing themselves to reach global audiences. In this way, the social purpose of social media may be affected, and it may become a puppet in the hands of a few global players or the state as it is happening in China and some other countries.

In the times, when traditional news media channels fight for the viewership and TRPs and are also questioned for their alliance with the political parties, the social media platforms provide a respite. If one wishes to learn more about the news going on the Television, one chooses to browse Google or the digital news sites for authentication. This is the reputation online news blogs have earned. In this context, it becomes even more important for the online content producers to provide authentic, well-researched, and objective information to the readers.

End Notes

i The Arab Spring was a series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions that spread across much of the Arab world such as Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and seventeen others in the early 2010s. It began as a response to the

oppressive regime and a low standard of living, starting with protests in Tunisia. It took the world by storm in January of 2011 and since then spread to countries all over the Middle East. The critics argue that social media played a crucial role in the Arab Spring as the protestors organized themselves through social networking sites and blogs. In a country where traditional media is strictly controlled by the state, they were able to highlight their plight to the world through digital media networks. Therefore, the movement is significant as it was the first to highlight the importance of social media in organizing protest movements.

ii Hindustan Times <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/dadri-lynching-two-arrested-for-spreading-rumours-on-social-media/story-gu54rQli1WzIedfsLPLZfO.html> dated 8 Oct.2015

iii NDTV.com <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/social-media-posts-fuel-hysteria-mob-violence-in-west-bengal-1651935> dated 24 Jan 2017

iv India Today, <https://www.indiatoday.in/crime/story/uttar-pradesh-mob-lynching-cases-soar-over-rumours-child-lifting-1592473-2019-08-28> dated 28 August 2019

v In January 2018, a United States Senate Committee summoned representatives from Facebook, Google and Twitter who have long argued that their role is simply that of platforms, not content providers.

vi S 69A authorizes the government to block any content from being accessed by the public on various grounds. An intermediary who fails to comply with directions to block content is liable to be imprisoned for up to seven years.

vii Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution protects the right to free speech and expression irrespective of the medium of communication. While the Courts have interpreted this right in a broad manner, Article 19(2) permits reasonable restrictions to be placed on the right in view of public policy concerns.

viii Purportedly in accordance with A 19(2), the IT Act contains numerous provisions that can be used to censor online content “notably in Sections 66A, 69A and 79. Most tellingly almost all these instances involve executive action with no system of judicial oversight “ in fact under Section 79, the law actively encourages private censorship.

^{ix} S 69A authorizes the government to block any content from being accessed by the public on various grounds. An intermediary who fails to comply with directions to block content is liable to be imprisoned for up to seven years.

^x Section 79 of the IT Act requires an Intermediary to observe certain guidelines in order to avail of exemption from liability. These guidelines (issued in 2011) mandate that the Intermediary must take down any information that is inter alia grossly harmful, harassing, blasphemous, defamatory, obscene, pornographic, paedophilic, libellous, invasive of another's privacy, hateful, or racially, ethnically objectionable, disparaging, relating or encouraging money laundering or gambling, harm minors in any way or otherwise unlawful in any manner whatever, acting upon private complaint or if they discover such content on their own.

^{xi} Section 66A of the IT Act had been enacted to regulate the social media law India and assumed importance as it controlled and regulated all the legal issues related to social media law India. This section clearly restricted the transmission, posting of messages, mails, comments which could be offensive or unwarranted. The offending message could be in form of text, image, audio, video or any other electronic record which is capable of being transmitted. It provided sweeping powers in the hands of the Government to curb the misuse of the Social Media Law India in any form.

^{xii} Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution protects the right to free speech and expression irrespective of the medium of communication. While the Courts have interpreted this right in a broad manner, Article 19(2) permits reasonable restrictions to be placed on the right in view of public policy concerns.

^{xiii} Shreya Singhal v. UOI [(2015) 5 SCC 1]. <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/110813550/>

^{xiv} The ruling was lauded by both the common people and legal luminaries. Although scrapping of 66A may be seen as a victory of right to speech but it has underscored new challenges for the state to control fake news and rumours. However, the repeal of section 66A does not provide an unrestricted freedom to express as there are analogous provisions in the Indian Penal Code (IPC) that will continue to apply to social media usage for “Intentionally Insulting Religion Or Religious Beliefs, Promoting Enmity Between Groups on Grounds Of Religion, Race etc., Defamation, Statements conducing to Public Mischief, Insulting the Modesty of A Woman, Criminal Intimidation (Section 506) etc.”

^{xv} Niranjana Sahoo studies the impact of social media in the times of COVID 19. “How Fake News is Complicating India’s war against COVID-19. The research may be accessed at <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/how-fake-news-complicating-india-war-against-covid19-66052/>

^{xvi}<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/covid-fear-elderly-couple-ends-life-in-amritsar/story-6jdldsvs4NIlvpPRo71HbJ.html>

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Need of Redesigning of Lesson Plans in Indian Schools

Mamta Garg and Arun Bansal

Abstract

Epistemology of learning has undergone a major change in recent years. Learning is no more passive absorption of knowledge and ideas, but the construction of ideas developed on one's personal experiences. Emphasis has, now, shifted towards constructivist approach of learning. NCF (2005) envisioned that in Indian schools the educational practice is still based on limited 'lesson plans' aimed at achieving measurable behaviours. Further it is mentioned that 'ideally lesson plan describes how learning is to be organized and facilitated in the classroom and documents specific plans for teaching. For this to happen, lesson plans need to be redesigned to remove the existing deficiencies. In this paper, authors have tried to pinpoint these deficiencies as indicated by researchers worldwide and recommended the modifications which are required to make lesson plan apt for the changing school scenario.

Introduction

During recent years, the epistemology of learning has undergone a major change, i.e., learning does not involve discovering the reality, but constructing the reality. Knowledge and cognitions are to be constructed and affects are to be felt. Learning is no more passive absorption of knowledge and ideas, but the construction of ideas developed on one's personal experiences. Emphasis has, now, shifted towards constructivist approach of learning. Learning is also perceived as an integral part of learner's physical, social, and cultural contexts. This concept has come to be known as situated cognition and is the guiding principle of the National curriculum Framework for School Education (2005). In the light of change in the approach of learning and expectations of stakeholders of school system the whole pedagogical approach needs to be reoriented.

In NCF (2005) it is mentioned that in Indian schools the educational practice is still based on limited 'lesson plans' aimed at achieving measurable 'behaviours'; according to this view, the child is akin to a creature that can be trained, or a computer that can be programmed. Hence, there is too much focus on 'outcomes', and presenting knowledge divided into bits of information to be

memorized directly from the text or through activities after ‘motivating’ children, and finally on evaluating to see if children remember what they have learnt.

In fact, a lesson plan or unit plan for an inclusive class should indicate how the teacher alters the ongoing activity to meet the different needs of children. Teachers need to understand how to plan lessons so that children are challenged to think and to try out what they are learning, and not simply repeat what is told to them...Instead of finding ways of juggling lesson plans based on mono-grade textbooks, teachers would need to devise, in advance, thematic topic plans in order to engage learners with exercises created for their level.

Recognizing the need NCF (2005) has remarked that ‘ideally lesson plan describes how learning is to be organized and facilitated in the classroom and documents specific plans for teaching. Lesson plans may take a variety of forms.’ For this to happen, teachers need to plan the activities accordingly. But educational practices are still based on limited ‘lesson plans’ aimed at achieving measurable ‘behaviours’; according to this view, the child is akin to a creature that can be trained, or a computer that can be programmed. The term ‘activity’ is now a part of the register of most elementary schoolteachers, but in many cases, this has just been grafted onto the ‘Herbartian’ lesson plan, still driven by ‘outcomes’ at the end of each lesson. There is now more talk of competencies, but these competencies are still pegged onto lessons much in the manner of outcomes.

The traditionally lesson plan format that has a rigid structure is followed for the all the topics and subjects. It leaves a lot of room for improvement at the time of real application of lesson planning. Many components are not covered by present lesson plans. Content selected for the lesson is often found replica of textbook which does not fit into the given columns leading to the repetition of phrases of English like “PT will explain” and “Students would listen” in PT activity and Pupil Activity columns, respectively. Teaching aids become misfit as only material aids like models and charts are considered by teacher trainee while writing in teaching aids column. Entire column remains vacant or is filled by repetitive words and misfiling content. Such rigid lesson plans find mismatch in content and strategy to teach the lessons. Teaching methodologies, mentioned in required column, are only to fill the column. Teaching methods like peer-to-peer learning and group learning etc. are not mentioned at all. More importantly, this rigid template of lesson plan has no such scope as well. Presently, the lesson plans start with aim and objective, which are not clearly understood and mentioned in

terms of achievement of lessons; instead, those are repeatedly copied for all the lessons. Expected achievement or outcome of lesson plan should be in harmony of mentioned aims and objectives. Expected modification in behaviour of all involved may be clearly mentioned. Present lesson plans do not have any scope for mentioning real life implementation of learning. Linkage in term of references and feedback is also missing. Moreover, Existing lesson plans have no scope to take note of individual difference existing among students. All gifted, backbenchers, and differently able are taught using the same resources. There is no planning to utilize the potential of the students by providing notes, project assignments, group assignments, and classroom counselling sessions etc. Along with this, there is no scope for the mention of classroom settings in lesson plans. Environment of classroom affects learning positively. Every topic is a different topic and may require different classroom settings from conventional class to smart class and setting up of blackboard, charts, and models to role-playing lesson plans have no reference section to address the resources used for construction of lesson and to suggest the resources for further study. These lesson plans do not use any social resource and don't take care of variety of subjects and topics. The major flaw in implementation of lesson plans is lying with the time those require to be developed. Monotonous tone of lesson plans exhausts teacher trainee and affects the actual delivery of lesson resulting in loss of vision of a teacher. In such conditions, lesson plans become aim of teacher trainee but aim of education is defeated.

NCERT (2005) states that “Lesson planning, as it is taught during teacher training, is merely a formal routine which masks the acculturation of the young trainee into the profession without disturbing its underlying assumptions about knowledge and curriculum and also without making the new entrant aware of these assumptions and the consequences of the practices based on them.” Kumar (2007) reported that existing lesson plans are suitable for conventional instruction system than the evolved instruction system.

Deficiencies in existing lesson planning

Vagle (2008) mentioned that the pedagogical prophet must dare to imagine and take risk. For each lesson plan developer is expected to expect the situations that may or may not arise. Lesson plans are written in imaginative way. Most of the teacher trainees are trained to perceive what is taught as final. There is less or no scope of reasoning with the adaptations required. Traditional lesson plans are

organized in such a manner that it becomes difficult to adapt in classroom and sequence of events is directed as per planning. NCERT (2005) in a report (National focus group on teacher education for curriculum renewal, p. iv) stated that “Lesson planning, as it is taught during teacher training, is merely a formal routine which masks the acculturation of the young trainee into the profession without disturbing its underlying assumptions about knowledge and curriculum and also without making the new entrant aware of these assumptions and the consequences of the practices based on them.” In NCF (2005), it is mentioned that “our educational practice is still based on limited ‘lesson plans’ aimed at achieving measurable ‘behaviours’; according to this view, the child is akin to a creature that can be trained, or a computer that can be programmed. Hence, there is too much focus on ‘outcomes’, and presenting knowledge divided into bits of information to be memorized directly from the text or through activities after ‘motivating’ children, and finally on evaluating to see if children remember what they have learnt. Instead, we need to view the child as ‘constructing knowledge’ all the time. This is true not only of ‘cognitive subjects’ such as mathematics and science, language and social science, but equally of values, skills and attitudes” (p.21). This indicates learners are treated as passive listener and not given due role in teaching learning process. Kerdeman (2005) also was of view that in order to keep lesson as planned teacher restrict learning environment and that kills the spontaneity of learners sometimes. Jack (2005) stated that “lesson plans generally elaborate on the process of identifying and negotiating benefits but also incorporate other issues.” Lefstein (2008) cited a case study where although the teacher taught directly from and adhered closely to the prescribed materials, curricular contents were re-contextualized into habitual classroom interactional genres, and the open questions that constituted the primary aim of the lesson were suppressed. Shem-Tov (2011) concluded that sticking to planned lesson and not responding to changes happening in real situation would lead to difficulty in teaching learning process. Dolan (2013) cited that over-preparation is one of teaching’s chief traps.

In the report of National Focus Group on ‘Teacher Education for Curriculum Renewal (2006)’ it is mentioned that conventional teacher education programmes, train teachers to adjust to the needs of the existing system through (a) the meticulous planning of lessons in standardized formats, (b) the ritual of fulfilling the required number of lessons delivered and supervised, (c) the ritual of organizing school assemblies and other routine activities and (d) the ritual of

completing the required number of written assignment and projects. “Lesson planning, as it is taught during teacher training, is merely a formal routine which masks the acculturation of the young trainee into the profession without disturbing its underlying assumptions about knowledge and curriculum and without making the new entrant aware of these assumptions and the consequences of the practices based on them. NCFTE (2009) cautioned that operates with rigid lesson plan formats, inadequate mentoring, and supervision; exhibits no original thinking, lacks variety and context specificity in teaching.

In contrary to the uniform format of existing lesson plans, researcher proposed it to be flexible as per the teachers’ and learner’s’ needs. Peterson, Marx, Fraser (1978) cited that teachers have different strategies to the same subject matter and their planning differed in relation to their cognitive styles and abilities. Schmidt (2005) cited that teacher trainees held differing views of lesson planning from each other and from their supervisor. Perry (2013) suggested that teacher’s qualifications are a combination of personal dispositions, such as cultural sensitivity, and professional behaviours, including self-education, seeking mentoring and outside expertise, and purposeful reflection on teaching.

Traditional lesson plans are not diagnostic and remedial by nature. Those are a one-way lesson script for the lesson. Putnam (1987) conducted a study and found diagnosis was not the aim of the lesson plans. Rather, each teacher appeared to move through a curriculum script. Zack, Mannheim, and Alfano (2010) concluded that teachers must devote time to address classroom problems especially when the learners are adolescents. The diagnostic and remedial measure can find a mention in the lesson plans.

Another problem with existing lesson planning is its detailing. It is based on detailed description of every expected activity while planning is matter of personal requirements and execution. There is no scope of planning a lesson using abbreviation, pointers, or tools like concept maps. Martin (1994) used the concept of using concept maps as an aid to lesson planning. Resulting lesson plans were high in quality with few, if any, sequencing errors. Student attitude data showed general enthusiasm for using concept mapping as a lesson planning base, and mixed indications of likelihood of using concept mapping for lesson plan development in actual teaching situations. If a lesson plan itself becomes task, teachers find it a burden rather than help. Silver (1987) cited many practical problems of teacher education like because of the planning in detail, teaching was

intimidating rather than intriguing. The lessons could not be shared among the teachers. Chinien and Boutin (2001) presented qualitative results generated by participating teachers' debriefing interviews as 'By presenting subject matter more sequentially, and therefore more slowly, and by making extensive use of the blackboard, one teacher indicated that it took now twice as long to present certain subject matter. Holberg and Taylor (2005) posed the challenges of lesson plans as teachers spend bulk of time on curriculum and assessment instead of teaching methodologies. The pressure of today's lesson plan takes away rich teaching life. The consequences of not attending to underlying principles are a profession that lacks coherence or, worse, a profession that tacitly operates under principles that, on closer inspection, many may find irrelevant, repugnant, or counterproductive.

Traditional lesson plans seldom have scope for open discussion and peer induced learning. Feedback of students is not accounted at all. Rotanz (2001) indicated that some control must be given to students to evaluate classroom environment and act accordingly. Frazier et. al. (2006) indicated classroom settings are important and lesson plans should have root in real life.

There is no scope of reflection in traditional lesson plans. Peters (2011) discussed that most of the teachers do not act as learners in classrooms. In context of their lesson planning a lot of can be reflected upon based on the actual classroom experience. Paparistodemou; DespinaPotari; Pitta-Pantazi (2014) reported that prospective teachers' attention can be developed through a process of reflection on their teaching. Afinogenov (2009) cited that feedback from stakeholder help teachers adapting the lesson plans. Bhargava (2009) cited that teacher training should not appear as apprenticeship, where only imitation of their lecturers / supervising teachers is done by student teacher rather it should be flexible, challenging, and reflective. It is further observed by NCFTE (2010) that there is not sufficient time for learning either the conceptual or the skill components of teaching for them to manifest in the individual and his/her performance. Due to paucity of time, 'lessons' are planned with virtually no reflection on the content of subject-matter and its organization. As a result, most products of teacher education programmes are neither proficient in general pedagogic skill nor are they adept at reflecting on the subject content of school texts.

The existing lesson plans are also devoid of innovative practices as indicated by various researchers. Kumar (2007) reported that existing lesson plans

are suitable for conventional instruction system than the evolved instruction system. ICT has bloomed into a full-grown functional arm of teaching, but lesson plans are still aloof to it. Mangrubang (2004) cited "Portfolio items can include email dialogue with a classmate relating to science education, an exemplary science lesson plan. Walter (2008) pointed out that the printed page and the bound volume have been replaced over the past decade by Web-based repositories of lesson plans, teaching tips, and learning objects. Tulley and Blair (2009) favoured that educational games could be part of home assignments. Such resources would be useful to weave in a lesson plan. Wilmerding (2010) indicated that series of activities are important to plan.

Vaughn and Schumm (1994) studied that teachers' practices and comments reflected little discourse pertaining to knowledge acquisition or planning for students with learning disabilities. Easterbrooks and Scheetz (2004) also highlighted the problems of inclusive education with regards to teaching and learning.

Thaker (2000) recommended the need for the assessment of lessons before and after delivery and sometime even during the delivery. Siegesmund (2004) reasoned that any time a teacher steps in front of a class and the door closes, change occurs. Lesson plans are adapted or abandoned all together. Revisions are made. Methods for assessment are altered. It was further added that teacher can reflect upon what has happened, what went right, and where we hope to go next. Siegesmund further added that Good teaching is not completing a checklist of content covered which unfortunately appears to be the vision of teaching promoted by state and national standards.

Recommendations for effective lesson plans in literature

Teachers need to be creative within the set boundaries and his lesson plan should be synchronized with the broader directions given to him. It is important to stick to the central aim and develop lesson plan delimited as and when required. Needless to mention, that teachers always have scope of exploring alternative ways of teaching even if the contents are prearranged. Further Gates (2000) mentions that his lesson plans were subjected to adaptations due to dynamics of a classroom resulting in taking a path that was not even foresee and those became productive.

Belcastro (2004) cites that each lesson plan is supported by instructional resources such as handouts, work sheets, teaching strategies, and assessment tools.” The website has so many resources to offer from e-content to mobile apps. Such resources would be useful to weave in a lesson plan. Presently, manual lesson plans or so called, ICT based lesson plans have a very timid scope of such inclusions. Developers/Teachers get struck when it comes to planning for a period. The links and resources for short term and long-term planning of teaching learning are given a complete miss. Comprehensive approaches where teacher can own the lesson plans need to be initiated. It is worth to point here, lesson plans should be standardized at central level while teacher may have their own personalized lesson plans that could be based on standardized lesson plans.

Jack (2005) states, “Lesson plans generally elaborate on the process of identifying and negotiating benefits but also incorporate other issues.” The issue with present format of lesson plans is that they are too descriptive. A good lesson plan may identify the problems and solutions only as rest of the text/content is already standardized”. Johnson (2005) recommended that we start lesson plan with desired output first and try to knit the activities around to achieve the same.

Doherty (2005) viewed that lesson plans could be part of a textbook or textbook can be written in such a manner that teachers and students can follow alike. With aims and objectives given in curriculum and syllabus, other relevant information like activities, teaching aids, and frequently asked question etc can be incorporate in textbook itself. Teacher would be keeping record of anything that is planned beyond that book for the respective chapter/topic.

Frazier, Hernandez, Barconey, Mayfield, Jones, Carr, Kelly, Randels (2007) mentioned that adolescent learners would not be able to focus on teaching points if classroom environment is taking their attention. Teachers should plan the classroom settings in their respective lesson plans. Moxley (2007) cited that the lesson plans need to work beyond the boundaries of single period. A lesson plan can be used as feedback system to the next lesson plan and can spread over number of days. Wilmerding (2010) opined that teachers need to plan the flow of activities that can stimulate the learning. Now, question is where to plan? In mind or on paper. The answer can be found in experience of teacher. A novice teacher may need to plan in writing to read and prepare just before class. On the other hand, an experience teacher can rely on his mind to respond in specific situation or as and when situations arise.

Behzadi and Mohammadi (2011) cited that every good course design begins with needs assessment. For our purposes here, it is good to begin at the beginning and address who is there, why they have gathered, what they hope to accomplish, and how they'll accomplish it. Design an activity that gives students an opportunity to practice what they just learned. Activities that involve breaking into small groups to complete a task or to discuss an issue are good ways to keep adults engaged and moving. It is also a perfect opportunity for them to share the life experience and wisdom they bring to the classroom. Activities can be personal assessments or reflections that are worked on quietly and independently; they can be games or role playing; or they can be small group discussions. The activities should provide an opportunity to the learners to experience what is just taught.

Peters (2011) cited that Lesson plans kept the course of actions on track and let the completion timely. On the other hand, mix of informal communication gives ease to both teacher and trainees. In nutshell, a lesson plan should help in achieving balance. Too much of everything could be dangerous. Teacher should not tow the dotted line and that should be inherent characteristic of lesson planning.

Martin (2013) cited that a lesson plan may have something that learners feel personal and real. The content or technique should associate the teaching points with community and society. Real life examples and implications may be used. Teaching aids from real objects can be helpful e.g., 'what would you do if your computer hangs?' relates the knowledge and skills to their own life.

The previous research studies indicate towards following modifications in existing lesson plans:

- A well-developed lesson plan should include planning of setting of classroom (Frazier et. al. 2007).
- All the teachers are different and have different perception and communication skills and hence flexible structure of lesson planning is required to reflect the individual differences among the teachers in planning and preparation of lesson plans (Peterson, Marx, Fraser 1978, Neely 1986, Schmidt 2005, Alford and Elden 2006, Bumen 2007, Fisher 2013, Perry 2013).

- Lessons should be planned for the learners instead for completions of syllabi and should be means to achieve the behavior modification and not the ends for teacher trainee (Gates 2000).
- Previous knowledge of learners should be used effectively for the construction and delivery of lesson plans. Those should be delivered in two-way communication mode.
- A lesson plan should have scope for discussions and opportunity to recognize the abilities of learners and speak up the minds. Lesson plan may reflect the notes and resources given to learners for self-study and may echo the use of advance teaching learning methods like project-based methods, online studies, and peer to peer tutoring etc. (Mathes, Torgesen, and Allor 2001)
- Lesson planning should prosper the teacher trainee and should not suppress his enthusiasm by getting too rigid in planning (Kerdeman 2005).
- Lesson plans should bring the sense of responsibility and belongingness to teacher trainees by use of first person 'I' instead of 'PT'.
- There should be proper place of registering feedback for further improvement of lesson and record change in behavior of all involved. Behavioral aspects of teaching may be planned for the lessons. Lesson plans should have place for feedback and enhancement even after delivery of lesson plan for future use (Afinogenov 2009, Bhargava 2009).
- Teaching methodologies and techniques may be mentioned explicitly.
- Evaluation and remedial measure should be part of lesson planning (Putnam 1987, Zack, Mannheim, and Alfano 2010).
- It may reflect the assessment pattern in the classroom (Easterbrooks, Stephenson, Gale (2009).
- There must be special mention of limitations and delimitations under which it operates.
- Difference of opinion may be indicated in suggestive reading section in the form of reference books.
- As lesson plans may be re-used repeatedly by other teachers and in variety of situations, lesson plans must have the flexibility to assess the target

audience (Brown 2008-2009, Ochoa and Pershing 2011, Thompson 2007, Schectr and Parknusst 1993).

- Lesson plans should be monitored and research upon in situations and institutions where those are being carried out, to find the usefulness of lessons. Based on feedback, modifications and enhancements may be made (Rotanz2001, Afinogenov 2009).
- A lesson should not only be planned for the normal classroom situations, but it should be kept ready for exceptional situations like electricity failure during presentation etc. as well.
- Existing lesson plans are to be developed by teacher trainees during the teaching practice in such a manner that such developed lesson plans may be re-used by others in real life conditions. However, this does not happen. In order to get the maximum utility of lesson plans, teacher trainee may not in first place develop all the lesson plans from scratch. Instead, he/she may get lesson plans from expert and master those to deliver effective lessons.

There are 14,428 Teacher Education Colleges in 11,861 institutions with an approved intake of 10, 96,673 candidates as on March 2009 (NCFTE 2010, p.5). It can be simply understood that 4.3 million lesson plans are being generated every year at teacher education level. The resources cannot be utilized because of their rigidity in present format. Lesson plans are important and there should be a way out to utilize the existing resources. Further, Department of Educational Surveys and Data Processing conducts education surveys at national level on time series. The latest (8th) was conducted on 30.09.2009. It is reported that 47,406,604 students are enrolled in high schools that have 1,249,355 full time teacher and 146,711 Para/Contract Teachers. A huge resource pool for shared lesson plans can be created if such assets can be utilized properly.

Conclusion

Lesson plans are integral part of teaching learning process and lesson planning can be taken in context of syllabus delivery of interlinked topics. Presently the state of planning of lesson at teacher education and service level is not up to the satisfaction of any of the stakeholders. Though the pedagogy of education has seen many changed with advancement in technology and change in educational theories yet formats of lesson plans at teacher education level have

been the same for years and have not seen any change. The lesson plans are perceived as units under evaluation by mentors. This approach does not let the teacher trainees feel that they are teachers. Moreover, the detailed planning takes such an amount of time that it becomes task.

To conclude, it may be said that preparing a lesson plan is important but vital than preparation is execution of teaching points keeping in view the needs of learners. Schectr and Parknusst (1993) recommend that teacher training programmes require continuous innovations to respond to changing needs. Madrid and Gray (2010) reported that lesson planning is a dynamic and recursive process in which problems of instruction emerged and solutions were suggested. They counted shared lesson planning as a promising strategy. Ochoa and Pershing (2011) found the ideas generated in group could be adopted by various teachers as per their requirements. But these resources cannot be utilized because of their rigidity in present format. Lesson plans should give an opportunity of reading and enhancement of the actual content to be delivered in classroom. Lesson plan should help in identification of students' learning needs based on their learning styles. Lesson plans should address the need of students with disabilities, those who are struggling or unmotivated, and those who are gifted. Thus, an effective lesson plans should be flexible, learner oriented, graded, reflective, and remedial.

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Educational Exclusion at Secondary Stage: Perspectives of Parents and Teachers

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Abstract

Secondary education serves as a link between the elementary and higher education, which in turns help in developing a reservoir of intellectual human resource. A larger number of students get excluded from the secondary school education every year. Expectedly, in coming years the public demand for secondary education is going to rise and it is imperative to develop an impressive and acceptable framework of secondary education. For this, a concerted effort is needed to minimize exclusion at this level. Thus, pressing challenge before us is to know why the children opt to remain away from schools after completing elementary education. It is necessary to find out what really makes them quit the school? What exactly is the way the social dynamics works around such children? What compels the parents to accept the situation as such? The context necessitates a deeper probe into the problem of exclusion of children from secondary education in rural Punjab. To answer these questions, the present study was conducted using qualitative approach. Interview with parents and teachers of dropped out children brings forth a few fundamental structural issues that require redressal.

Introduction

Education is considered so important to individual development that the right to primary education is legally guaranteed in most countries of the world. The present-day education system in India has come a long way and the age-old traditions have undergone a new makeover. India is doing lots of efforts in this field so that the objective of inclusive growth can be achieved very soon by it.

Near universal enrolment up to elementary education stage in India is claimed to have been achieved after the Right of Children for Free and Compulsory Education Act-2009 was made operative from April 1, 2010. The gross enrolment ratio (GER) at the primary level in 2016-17 was 95.12 percent and 90.73 percent at the upper primary level. At secondary and higher secondary stage GER was 79.35 percent and 55.40 percent, respectively. The retention rate at

primary level was reported to be 84.10 percent and as low as 70.62 percent at upper primary level.

The government of India launched a major programme in 2009, the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) to improve access, quality, and equity in secondary education. The RMSA was the most recent initiative of government of India to achieve the goal of universalization of secondary education (USE). The major objectives of RMSA according to 12th five-year plan on secondary education were to:

- Achieve near-universal enrolment in secondary education, with the GER exceeding 90 per cent by 2017.
- Raise the GER at the higher secondary level to 65 per cent.
- Reduce Dropout rate to less than 25 per cent by 2017.
- Raise the minimum level of education to class 10th and universalize access to secondary education.
- Ensure good quality secondary education with focus on Science, Mathematics and English.
- Reduce the gender, social and regional gaps in enrolment, dropout and improving retention.

Despite of overall growth in enrolment and retention, still there is cause for worry that why the number of children goes on decreasing and decreasing after getting enrolled to secondary schools. Many children who enter school are unable to complete secondary education and get excluded from school. This exclusion of children from formal school setting requires careful analysis. Some students are genuinely out from school in physical terms, but some fails to join school, even if it is available in the neighbourhood due to social and economic reasons. Some leave school without completing five years of schooling. Some complete five years of schooling but do not move into the upper primary cycle. There are some who are officially in the attendance records but remains largely absent from school. So there is need to understand completely the underlying dynamics going between child and school. There is need to understand that why child get excluded from school and what are the reasons that child get failed to adjust in school system.

In the past years, the stress has been laid on to enhance the enrolment figures at the elementary levels of education, but little attention has been given to the children who enter at secondary schools. Numerous studies and reports have also shown that various factors interplay to compel children to exclude from the secondary education. Undoubtedly secondary level of education determines the overall size and quality of the knowledge pool in a country which is essential for the productivity and competitiveness of the economy. The exclusion of the children at the secondary level means the colossal wastage of human resources. Education is the worst form of exclusion because it excludes the person from other walks and activities of life. Punjab State is among the developed states in terms of per capita income and development index but unfortunately lagging in human development and further in gender development index. Intense unemployment and lack of skill push the children in the labour market in early stages of life. The silent exclusion of children from the arena of secondary levels of education lead to inequalities and social segregations. Present study is focused on to look on the phenomenon of educational exclusion of children at the secondary stage across all social groups. In this backdrop this study will be vital in essence and spirit.

The state of Punjab has its own share of the tales of successes and failures, of aspirations and compulsions, of hopes and despairs to be narrated. The GER at secondary level was 87.08 percent and it dipped to 72.35 percent at higher secondary stage in 2016-17. The corresponding figures of GER in the case of scheduled caste children were 87.41 and 65.42 percent, respectively. A considerable percentage of children at the age of 14 years stood excluded from the secondary school education. The situation gets grimmer in rural areas.

The high rates of drop out in secondary and higher secondary education, especially among socially and economically disadvantaged groups of learners pose serious challenge. The data reveals that the annual average dropout rate in 2016-17 at secondary level was 19.97(8.60 for Punjab) and at higher secondary level was 5.95 (6.00 for Punjab). The dropout figures in case of scheduled caste children at secondary stage was 22.55 (12.47 for Punjab) and at higher secondary level was 8.13 (9.92 for Punjab) (U-DISE 2016-17). Post-2015 agenda on achieving sustainable Millennium Development Goals, released by UNESCO, observed that every child must get the opportunity of at least 12 years of schooling. Though on decline, but rate of exclusion of children from secondary education is telling.

Conceptual Framework

Exclusion

‘Exclusion’ is referred to as a process that is the consequence of social stratification and establishment of social hierarchy in the society. It is like leaving or pushing some individuals, groups and communities out from the rightful social, political, economic and cultural entitlements. Exclusion in education means that pupil is not allowed to attend school or go on to school premises for a period or permanently. Exclusion in education is absenteeism, repetition, non-enrolment and dropping out are the signs and symptoms of an education related factors. This is very upsetting, difficult, and worrying time for child. It has many forms and expressions as defined by UNESCO (2012):

- Exclusion from having the life prospects needed for learning,
- Exclusion from entry into a school or an educational programme,
- Exclusion from regular and continuing participation in school or an educational programme,
- Exclusion from meaningful learning experiences,
- Exclusion from a recognition of the learning acquired,
- Exclusion from contributing the learning acquired to the development of community and society.

Educational Exclusion

Exclusion from education is not a single ‘one-off’ event in the lives of the children affected. The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) affirms the right of all children to relevant and good quality education. Within the framework of the CRC, neither these conditions nor the decision not to participate can mitigate the obligation of their families, communities, and governments, or of international agencies, to ensure them access and quality. Exclusion is interactive.

Thus, non-enrolment, passivity, absenteeism, repetition and eventually dropping out are the signs and symptoms of education-related factors which play out in a process of being and becoming excluded on an individual and social level. If genuine change is to happen toward creating inclusive learning environments for vulnerable and marginalized children, it is critical to keep in mind that it is each child as an individual who is at risk and being harmed by the forces

excluding them. It is easy to talk about "the poor", "street children" or "girls". But talking in the aggregate leads to thinking in the abstract and taking little relevant action."

DFID (Department for International Development) asserted (2005) that "Education exclusion is a facet of social exclusion and manifests itself in a spectrum of social and psychological inequities. School and educational exclusion – the denial or restriction of access to and meaningful participation in educational institutions and processes – has a number of implications for the societies in which they occur."

According to Indian Exclusion Report (2013-14) "A large number of children remain highly vulnerable to exclusion from schooling despite the efforts of the government. Such children face a range of barriers that compel them to stay away from school, or, upon entering school, render them unable to continue their education, forcing them to drop out". Crucially, there are close linkages between socio-economic status and educational access, because of which children from marginalized groups face significantly higher exclusion from education. The phenomenon of exclusion may be exclusive to certain categories of individuals that need to be studied.

Review of Literature

Studies have shown that socio-economic status plays an important role in exclusion of children from secondary school education. There are different categories of children who are out of school due to different socio-economic background. Certain people are marginalized, excluded, and therefore not getting a quality education are because of disability, poverty, gender, poor health, caste system, nutrition, ethnicity, conflict/ internal displacement, geographical location (rural people), illiteracy after school going age, child labour, orphans, and vulnerable children. Issues such as caste, religion, economic status, place of residence, and knowledge of English have become significant markers in our social and political life. (Joseph, 2000; Kinder et al, 2000; Greenberg, Weissberg, Obrein, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik and Elias, 2003; Ainsworth, Beegle and Koda, 2005; Hammond, Linton, Smink and Drew, 2007; Hill, Samson and Dasgupta, 2011).

Academic atmosphere may also be responsible for exclusion of children like distance to school, bad quality of education, insufficient arrangements,

overloaded classrooms, unfit languages of instruction, inadequate parenting, high fee structure, irregularity of teachers and security problem of girls in school the absenteeism, corporal punishment as well as poor pedagogical practices are also responsible for poor performance of children. Different studies reveal that there is correlation of dropout rate with poor school attendance, poor academic performance, grade retention, and disengagement from schools. (Alexander, Entwisle and Kabbani,2001; Demmert,2001; Schneider,2002; Balgopalan,2003; Branham,2005; Shannon,2005; Balfanz,2007; Balfanz, Herzog, and Mac Iver,2007; Hunt,2008; Stewart,2008).

Besides these, family factors also play an important role in exclusion of children from school. Several factors like low socioeconomic status, high family mobility, low education level of parents, large number of siblings, parental death, family disruption, low educational expectations, low contact with school, parental occupation and sibling has dropped out. Parents involved their Children in household work instead of doing schoolwork. It has been documented that the higher the education of the parent or the household head, the greater the chances of increased access, regular attendance, and lower dropout rates. (Wimberly,2002; Ersado,2005; Etsey,2005; Lloyd, Mete & Grant,2009; Govindaraju & Venkatesan,2010; Ananga,2011; Chugh,2011; Gul, Gulshan, & Arshad,2013; Joy & Srihari,2014).

A significant mass of research work is available to study the exclusionary tendencies at elementary level. Expectedly, in coming years the public demand for secondary education is going to rise and it is imperative to develop an impressive and acceptable framework of secondary education. The need arises to focus on studying the pulls and pushes and factors which determine the chances of a child to stay in the education system or dropped out? How do structures of discrimination, inequality and disadvantages that are inherent in the Indian social structures, and the experiences of schooling, interplay to happen the educational exclusion of the children etc.? Such questions are in fact the major challenge before the present-day researchers and social scientists. That is why the phenomenological understanding of the educational exclusion became vital to undertake. The present investigation is an attempt to get in-depth insights about the phenomenon of educational exclusion at secondary level.

Research Question

What caused the adolescents to dropout from the secondary schools?

Objectives

1. To recognize the factors that lead to the discontinuation of studies among adolescents at secondary education level as perceived by the parents.
2. To find out the factors for exclusion from secondary schools as perceived by the teachers.

Methodology

The study intended to understand the situations as narrated by the parents and teachers of dropped out students that led to their exclusion from secondary education. Semi-structure interviews and focus group discussion were carried out as suggested by Creswell (2007), open ended questions generate data that lead to a textural description (what participants experienced) and a structural description (how they experienced it in terms of the conditions, situations, or context) of the experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with parents to find out the common and unique factors that lead their wards to discontinue their studies. The perspective of teachers on exclusion was taken by conducted focus group discussions with them.

Sample: The study was delimited to Punjab State only. Sample of the study comprised of parents and government schoolteachers of drop-out students (after 8th or 9th class). A purposive-proportionate sample of parents (50), and teachers (100) was drawn from the selected areas. It was ensured that in the sample of parents would be representative of all categories of dropped out adolescents based on their gender (boys/girls), social/economic classes (general and marginalized group) and locale (urban/rural).

Findings

Perspectives of Parents

The parents whose children dropped out from schools were interviewed. Most of the parents interviewed had very meagre income per month. Majority of them were engaged as agricultural labourers. Some of them were employed as help in private concerns and a very few owned small-time businesses with extremely low returns.

Parents of dropout students revealed financial problems (31.32%) as the major reason for dropping out of school and 8.43% accepted the reason as poverty.

The financial constraint was followed by family problems (19.27%) as second major reason for dropping out. Students lacking interest in studies was reported by 14.45% parents for leaving school and 4.81% parents admitted their children left the school due to failure in studies. School being far away from the village was reported by 3.61% parents, health issues by 3.61% parents, availability of no other resources (2.40%) and 2.40% parents accepted migrating from one place to another were other reasons for leaving the school. Marriage of girl child and societal problems were among the other reasons for dropping out of school as reported by 1.20% parents. 7.22% parents reported none of these as reason for dropping out of school.

The responses of parents revealed that most of them, leaving a small fraction of them apart, realised the significance of education and wished their children could continue with their studies in school. Inquiries regarding the probable reasons for discontinuation of studies of children, as perceived by parents the schools in between brought out that nearly half of them left the school in face of severe financial constraints. They were not able to sustain the monetary pressures exerted by the fees, purchase of books, notebooks and other stationary items and variety of other expenses inherent in school education. One fourth of the adolescents, a sizable number indeed, dropped out in the face of family constraints like involvement in domestic chores, challenges arising out of adjusting at home, marrying off girls at a tender age and certain community related complications (*which they did not want to specify*). A little less than one fifth of them left the studies as they evinced no interest in studies and spectre of failure in studies forced a small percentage of students out of schools. Whereas a few of them struggled with poor health which made it difficult to continue and for some others the distance from home to school played a dampening effect. Migratory status of some families too created situations and pulling out of schools was the only option left with their children.

Almost half of the parents expressed that largely they as parents were responsible for the academic weakness and subsequent failure of their wards. Around one third of the parents felt that it was their children who failed to show any commitment towards education. Whereas a small percentage of parents attributed the cause of academic weakness of their wards to the teachers, an equal number of parents held both children and teachers responsible for this situation.

The probable reasons of dropping out of the children from schools in descending order of occurrence were family problems, poverty, lack of interest in studies, health challenges and marriage of girl children and distance between school and home. Majority of the parents did not have any wish to re send their children to schools if any opportunity arose. However, one fifth of the parents still looked for sending their children.

Perspectives of Teachers

Around one third of teachers interviewed revealed that they did notice some signs of withdrawal among students before they discontinued their school. Major indication was long absenteeism of students. Not so prevalent and sparingly noticed indications included lack of interest in studies, challenges of keeping good health and seasonal migration.

According to them, nearly three fourth of the dropped-out students belonged to the poverty stricken and poor families. Their parents were largely daily wage earners and low paid workers engaged in fields and other concerns. Teachers informed that almost one fifth of the dropped-out students were forced to migrate with their parents in search of greener pastures. A sizable percentage of such students exhibited lack of interest in studies. Precedence to domestic work and concerns for safety of the girl children and peer problems were among other reasons for them to opt out of the school. A small number of students could not continue due to their addiction to alcohol and drugs.

On talking about the indications before dropping outs, teachers (78.57%) reported irregularity in attendance as the major indication before student dropout from the school. Non-participation in classroom activities (19.64%), behavioural changes (27.67%) and stress and anxiety (13.39%) among students were little more expressed indicators. Withdrawal came up as a marginal indicator as reported by 5.35% of teachers.

Majority of the teachers were convinced that reasons for dropping out of school were family related (90.17%). The other reasons included factors related with child (26.78%) and policy (14.28%). Though marginally, but societal (11.60%), school (9.82%) and peer related (8.92%) factors also contributed to reasons for dropping out of school. Teachers revealed domestic problems as the major reason for dropping out school followed by financial constraints as the second major reason which contributes about 30.31% of all the reasons. Financial

constraints include economically weak families (13.39%), followed by poverty (6.25%), low-income families (5.35%), labour class where parents take their children along for more working hands to earn (2.67%) and being unemployed (2.67%). Parents being illiterate have also been reported as a reason by 11.60% teachers. Besides these, the other reasons that teachers reported include migration of families (7.14%) students lacking interest in studies (4.46) and (societal pressure (1.78%). Health related issues, student being absent for long duration and parents lacking interest in girl child safety were cited as the least common reasons for dropping out of school by 0.89% teachers. None of these were reported as reason for dropout by 2.67% teachers.

On discussing about scope of intervening and preventing dropping out of students, almost all the teachers, barring a few, believed that exodus of the students could be prevented. They suggested a slew of measures which included provisioning of guidance and counselling services to the students; adding element of vocational training and placement services enabling the willing students to get jobs; and providing monetary help to all the students falling below poverty line, regardless of caste classifications and extending the scope of mid-day-meal facility till secondary classes. Another suggestion was to make education free and compulsory for the students coming from economically weaker section of the society until they complete their studies till graduation. Apart from redesigning the curriculum the teacher-pupil ratio may be further reduced to 1:15 in order to ensure personalised attention to students. Motivational camps should be organised by the schools in villages where parents and other members of the community should be made aware of scope of education. Philanthropist non –governmental organizations should also be encouraged to participate in whichever way they can help the system.

Implications

Interaction with parents and teachers brings forth a few fundamental structural issues that require redressal.

From parents' point of view

It is evident from the above account that there is no lack of awareness among parents about the significance of educating their children. Most of them whose children had to discontinue the studies yearn for getting another chance to bring their children back to schools. However, the ever-rising average private

expenditure per student, both in government and private institutions, on education both in government and private schools reported by National Sample Survey 71st round in Punjab (January -June 2014) complicates the issue of access for poor households. The small economic returns and rising out of pocket expenditure on education at school level leave them with no alternative other than involving their children in work. It compromises with the educational future of children.

The State needs to curb the excessive burden on the students by raising its financial commitments to education to a greater degree than what it is today. Timely delivery of the free textbooks, uniforms, and other services for the benefit of students may be streamlined.

From teachers' point of view

One of the worrying facts the study discovered is that large number of teachers teaching the students had little or no idea of any kind of withdrawal symptoms emerging among the students in their class. They could only mention continued absence of vulnerable students from school as one of the clear warning signals apparent to them. This indicates towards a near absence of a student friendly academic atmosphere in the classroom. The student appears to be alien to the classroom and teacher appears to be aloof to what is happening inside the mind of a student. A disconnect between teacher and taught discourages the students to enthusiastically participate in the learning process. The pedagogical interventions too fail to instil a feeling of possible achievement in the minds of students. They feel the school experience wastage. A slow drift slips into total withdrawal.

Teachers on the hand face at times not an ideal teacher-pupil ratio. If at all the issue of crowded classroom is settled, his hands are awfully filled with the tasks not directly related to academics and students. Such chores predominantly relate to gathering reports, filling data sheets, compiling and submitting in the offices electronically or physically many a times. Perpetually feeding of such unsatiating statistical reservoirs is given top priority by the administrators up the line from local to state headquarters.

A healthy academic atmosphere completely dedicated to the students' growth and learning requires to be re-established in schools where students develop a sense of belongingness. This would further minimize the educational exclusion of children. Educational development of the nation and her natives means more than what reflects in mere statistical figures.

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Effect of Multimedia Method of Instruction on Reading Motivation of Students having Dyslexia

Ashwani Kumar and Kuldeep Kaur

Abstract

This paper presents the analysis of the effect of Multimedia Method of Instruction on reading motivation of students having dyslexia. The sample comprised of 5th grade students with dyslexia (N=30), studying in Government Model High School of Chandigarh. Fifteen students were taught through Multimedia Method of Instruction and acted as Experimental Group and the remaining 15 dyslexic students were taught through conventional method instruction and acted as Control Group. The reading motivation of students was evaluated with the help of self-prepared Reading Motivation scale. Design of the study was pre-test post-test experimental in nature.

Keywords: Multimedia Method of Instruction, Traditional/conventional Method of Instruction, Dyslexia, Reading Motivation

Introduction

All children learn in highly individualized ways. Children with learning disabilities simply process information differently, but they are generally of normal or above-average intelligence. Learning disabilities that can affect reading are more prevalent than people think. The sooner a learning disorder/difficulty/disability is identified and addressed, the better chance a child has in school (Kashyap & Kaur, 2017) and life to succeed.

The most common learning disability is difficulty with language and reading. Most children and adults with learning disabilities remain undiagnosed and go through life with this “hidden disability.” The resulting problems can lead to poor self-esteem (Kaur, 2014), failure to thrive in school, and difficulty in the workplace.

Reading disabilities affect up to 15% of all children and are the most severe of all learning disabilities. Developmental dyslexia is identified by specific difficulties in reading that cannot be described by intelligence or lack of educational opportunities (Lyon, Shaywitz, & Shaywitz, 2003) and individuals

with dyslexia generally lack the skills that facilitate grapheme-phoneme mapping necessary for word decoding. Poor phonemic awareness is main attribute of root cause for dyslexia (Bradley & Bryant, 1978).

Dyslexia is difficulty with the use and processing of linguistic and symbolic codes, alphabetic letters representing speech sounds or numeric representing numbers or quantities. It can affect spoken language, written language, and language comprehension. Dyslexia is the most-common learning disability, affecting nearly 10 percent of the population, despite intelligence, motivation, and education.

According to Thomson and Watkins (1990), “Developmental dyslexia is a severe difficulty with the written form of language independent of intellectual, cultural and emotional causation. It is characterized by the individual’s reading, writing, and spelling attainments being well below the level expected, based on intelligence and chronological age. The difficulty is a cognitive one affecting those language skills associated with the written form, particularly visual, verbal coding, short-term memory, order perception and sequencing”.

Students must have a deep desire to learn at school because long-term academic learning requires commitment and hard work. Most students with dyslexia feel trapped and often avoid reading tasks as compared to their peers. They may seem unmotivated, but their lack of motivation may be due to chronic academic failure (Mcgrady, Lerner, and Boscardin, 2001). Gale and Merith (1997) opined that elementary students with learning disabilities have less motivation than their peers without disabilities because of the frequent academic failure faced by many students with learning disabilities. It is not shocking, therefore, that these students are less motivated. It is common for students to feel that achievement is beyond their capacity and commitment when early attempts to achieve in school are repeatedly met with failure. Some special education educators have commented that students with learning disabilities are not inspired to learn, and research suggests that this is a common feature. (Ghosh, Mofield and Orellana, 2010).

There is ongoing debate on how dyslexic child can be best supported in their learning. Due to a phonological deficit and associated working memory problems, children with dyslexia have issues with learning from text (Berninger, Raskind, Richards, Abbott, & Stock, 2008; Swanson, Zheng, & Jerman, 2009). Multimedia can support their learning by replacing written text with audio or by

substituting audio to the written text. According to principles laid out in the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (Mayer, 2005), various types of multimedia may impact children's learning.

Techniques to help and improve children's reading skills and to encourage them towards further reading are always of interest to educators and to those involved in educational research. It is therefore not surprising that the increased availability of children's storybooks in electronic format should be an area of research interest.

Nevertheless, the concept of electronic-books (e-books) varies from specially converting print-based books to an interactive, immersive, online, and hyperlinked, portable reading device. Over the years, digital reading environments have received growing attention as educational tools to encourage fluency in reading and improve understanding of reading, particularly for students experiencing difficulties in learning to read and reading to learn. There are many e-books with multimodal features such as audio, video, hyperlinks, and interactive resources. Such interactive resources allow readers to interact with the text literally by adding / deleting / replacing text; marking passages by highlighting / highlighting; inserting remarks by adding files / appending notes; and modifying text formatting on the display page (Larson, 2009).

Electronic books, mostly digital versions of popular children's illustrated books, have the same vocabulary and images as their printed versions, but can also read individual words, phrases and stories aloud, express individual syllables in a single word, and provide visual insights into word meanings by animating and marking selected items in the illustrations of the book when children are required to attend to the animated clues, the clues promoted learning for most of the children (Norman, and Patricia, 1998).

Student motivation is a key to their reading success. One major aspect of increasing student interest in reading is focused on getting students motivated to read. According to Ciampa (2012), early childhood readers' motivation to read, along with the books they choose to read, impact their literacy achievement and willingness to read. Ciampa (2012) conducted a qualitative study of eight first grade students. She collected data regarding their classroom reading experiences, student engagement with online eBooks, and post program attitudes towards electronic book reading. Each participant read using an interactive eBook for ten 25-minute sessions for 15 weeks. Data from students, teachers, and parents was

collected through questionnaires, interviews, field notes, and observations. Results of the study indicated that “reading software with multimedia enhancements, motivational aspects, and constructivists methods of instruction can promote reading motivation among beginning readers” (Ciampa, 2012).

Kao Gloria, Yi-Ming, Chin-Chung Tsai, Chia-Yu Liu, Cheng-Han Yang (2016) studied effect of two interactive electronic book (high/low interactive) versions. The book titled “Colour Monster’s Adventure” has a fantasy storyline and appealing art design, and embedded basic concept of chromatology and colour psychology. The low interactive e-book version contains only simple interactive buttons with narration, while the high interactive e-book version features the following three advanced functions: guidance, prompt and feedback. Investigators conducted an experiment in a northern Taiwan elementary school with a total of 40 fourth-grade students. The results showed that the students in the high interaction group performed significantly better in reading motivation, story comprehension and chromatics concepts than their low interaction counterparts. Researchers concluded by proposing a high interactive e-book model and providing suggestions regarding integrating proper scaffolding into designing the e-book content to improve students’ reading performance.

In short, it may be summarized that students with dyslexia need early intervention to cope with their condition. Innovative, need based strategies can help them to overcome some of their reading anxiety and may motivate them for reading.

Objectives

1. To study the effect of multimedia method of instruction on reading motivation of students with dyslexia.
2. To compare the effect of multimedia and conventional methods on reading motivation of students with dyslexia.

Hypotheses

1. There will be no significant effect of multimedia method of instruction on reading motivation of students with dyslexia.
2. There will be no significant difference in reading motivation of students with dyslexia taught by multimedia and conventional methods.

Methodology

Design

The study was experimental in nature and involved pre-test and post-test design. It involved one experimental group and one control group wherein students of experimental group were taught using Multimedia Method of Instruction method and students of the control group were taught using conventional method. Teaching methods/strategies (multimedia method of instruction and conventional methods) were independent variables. Reading motivation was dependent variables.

Sample

For the present study, the population was students with dyslexia of 5th grade, studying in the government schools of Chandigarh. Investigator purposively selected those government model high schools of Chandigarh where facility of teaching through computer was available. Students were initially identified with dyslexia by using teacher's referral form and then intelligence testing was done. The students who possessed average or above average intelligence were then administered DTRD (Diagnostic Test of Reading Disorder). Matching of sample units was done based on Intelligence score/level. Finally, the identified students were randomly assigned to the experimental and control groups. The final sample of the study constituted 5th grade 15 students with dyslexia assigned to the experimental group and 15 students with dyslexia assigned to control group.

Procedure

Phase I - Sample selection: Process of identification and formation of Experiment and Control groups.

Phase II - Pre-Testing: It involved administration of researcher made tool of reading motivation scale to the students of experimental group and control group.

Phase III - Instructional Treatment: In this phase Multimedia method of Instruction as intervention was provided to sample units of experimental group, whereas control group was taught by conventional/traditional method of teaching. This phase of intervention continued for 30 working days (40min./day/group).

Phase IV - Post-testing: This phase consisted of re-administration of researcher made reading motivation scale to experimental group and control group in order to

assess and compare effectiveness of different instructional strategies on reading motivation of students with dyslexia.

Tools for Data Collection

1. Identification tools used:
 - a. Teacher's Referral Form to identify the students with dyslexia (Kashyap, 2017)
 - b. Diagnostic Test of Reading Disorder (DTRD) to identify students with dyslexia (Swarup & Mehta, 2003)
 - c. Standard Progressive Matrices (SPM) to identify the intelligence level of the students (Raven, Raven & Court, 2000)
2. Assessment tool used:
 - a. Reading Motivation Scale (Researcher made)

Statistical Analysis

- Paired t-test was used to study the effect of Multimedia method of Instruction on Reading motivation of dyslexic students.
- Independent t-test was used to study the significant differences between the Multimedia method of Instruction and Conventional Method.

Results and Discussion

A. Descriptive Statistics

Table 1: Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis Values for Reading Motivation of dyslexic students in Experimental Group (Multimedia Method) and Control Group (Conventional Method) at the pre-test stage.

Group	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Ku	Sk
Multimedia method Group (EG)	79.733	80.00	78.00	4.712	-.393	.311
Conventional Method (CG)	80.533	79.00	79.00	4.763	-.272	.372

Figure 1: Pre-test scores on Reading Motivation of students of dyslexia in Experimental Group and Control Group

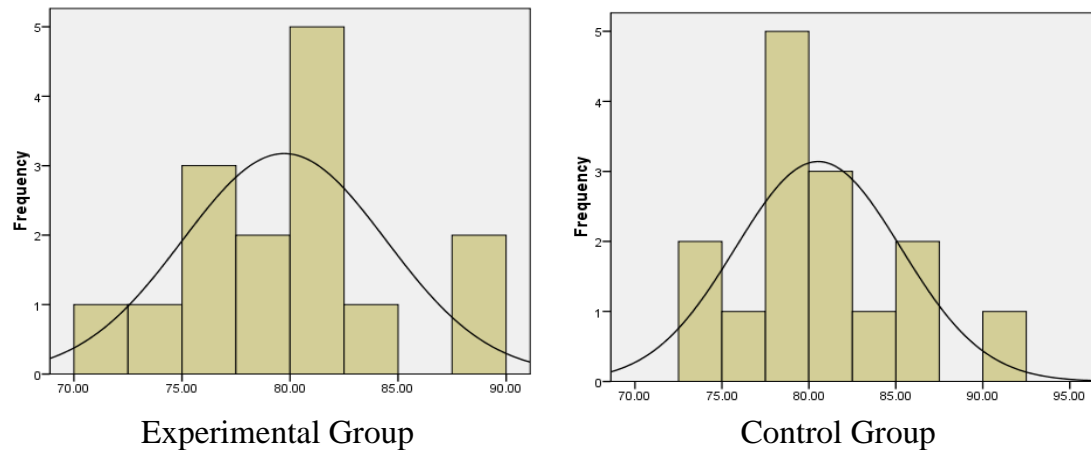


Table 1 & Figure 1 show that the mean scores on Reading Motivation at the pre-test stage for students with dyslexia in Experimental Group and Control Group are 79.733 and 80.533, respectively. The value of kurtosis was found to be -.393 for EG and -.272 for CG. The value of skewness for EG was found to be .311 and .372 for CG. The value of skewness lies within the acceptable limits of normality of distribution. Also, mean, median and mode are approximately equal. Thus, the distributions of measure Reading Motivation (pre-test measure) for EG and CG can be considered as near normal.

Table 2: Mean, Median, Mode, Standard Deviation, Skewness, and Kurtosis Values for Reading Motivation of students in Experimental Group (Multimedia Method) and Control Group (Conventional Method) at the post-test stage.

Group	Mean	Median	Mode	SD	Ku	Sk
Multimedia method (EG)	97.66	96.00	96.00	4.95	-.393	.470
Conventional Method (CG)	83.66	83.00	82.00	4.60	-.093	.418

Figure 2: Post-test scores on Reading Motivation of students of dyslexia in Experimental Group and Control Group.

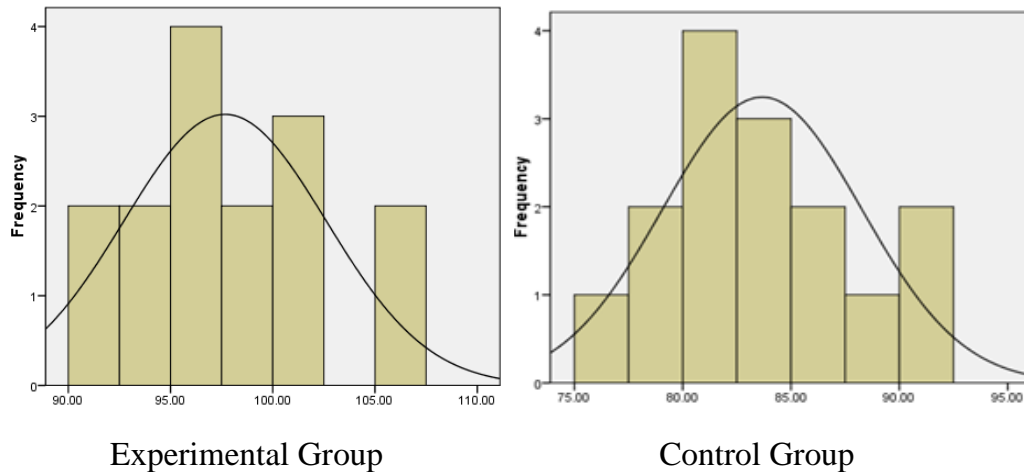


Table 2 and Figure 2 show that the scores on Reading Motivation at the post-test stage for students with dyslexia in Experimental Group and Control Group are 97.66 and 83.66, respectively. The value of kurtosis was found to be -.393 for EG and -.093 for CG. The value of skewness for EG was found to be .470 and .418 for CG. The value of skewness lies within the acceptable limits of normality of distribution. Also, mean, median and mode are approximately equal. Thus, the distributions of measure Reading Motivation (post-test measure) for EG and CG can be considered as normal.

Levene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance

Table 3: Homogeneity of variance for Reading Motivation of students with dyslexia in Experimental (N=15) and Control Group (N=15)

	Levene Statistic	df ₁	df ₂	Sig.
Pre-test	.000	1	28	.986

Table 3 shows the value of Levene's test of homogeneity of variance for pre-test scores on Reading Motivation of students with dyslexia. The Levene's statistic on Reading Motivation of students with dyslexia is 1.178, with degrees of freedom (df1) for between the groups as 1 degree of freedom (df2) for within group as 28. The p-value came out to be .287, which is greater than .05 and is insignificant. This implies that Experimental and Control Group are homogeneous at the pre-test stage of evaluation w.r.t to Reading Motivation.

B. Inferential Statistics

After completion of the assumption testing, the reading motivation scores obtained by students at the pre-test and post-test stages were tabulated, analysed and interpreted. The objective-wise, data, results (statistical values) and their interpretations (in context of the hypotheses formulated) are discussed below.

Objective 1: To study the effect of Multimedia Method of Instruction on reading motivation of students with dyslexia.

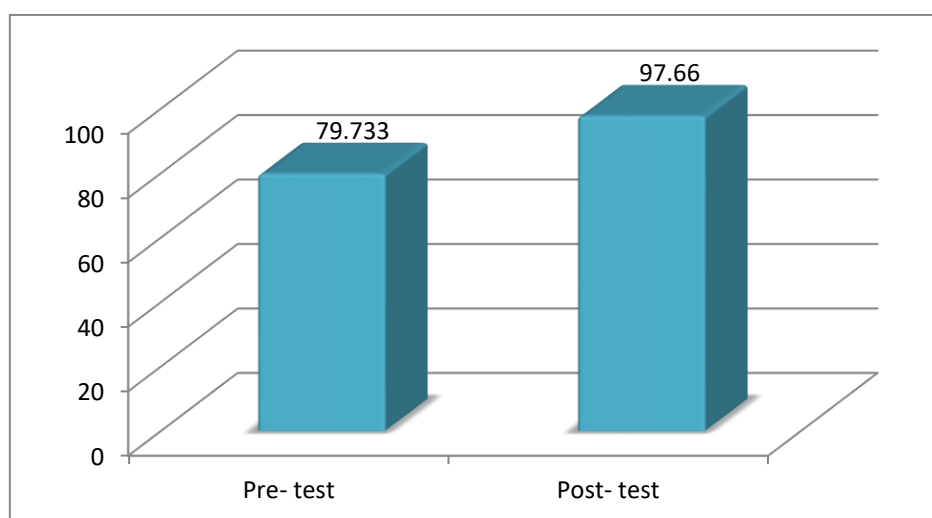
Null Hypothesis: There will be no significant effect of Multimedia Method of Instruction on reading motivation of students with dyslexia.

Alternative Hypothesis: There will be significant effect of Multimedia Method of Instruction on reading motivation of students with dyslexia.

Table 4: Paired sample t-test between for pre-test and post-test gain scores of Multimedia Method of Instruction on Reading Motivation of students with Dyslexia.

Group	N	Pre-test	Post-test	Mean Gain	SE _D	df	t-value	P value	Remarks
EG	15	79.733	97.66	17.93	.79	14	22.54	.000	Significant at 0.01 level

Figure 3: Mean Scores of pre-test and post-test of Experimental Group (N=15) of students with dyslexia



The mean gain score on Reading Motivation of students with dyslexia (Table 4 & Fig. 3) in the Experimental Group (Multimedia Method of Instruction) was 17.93 and mean gain difference was found to be significant ($t=22.54$, $p<.01$). Hence, the null hypothesis stating, “There will be no significant effect of Multimedia Method of Instruction on reading motivation of students with dyslexia” is rejected. Alternatively, it can, therefore, be inferred that the Multimedia Method of Instruction had significant effect on Reading Motivation of the students with dyslexia.

Objective 2: To compare the effect of Multimedia Method of Instruction and Conventional Method on reading motivation of students with dyslexia.

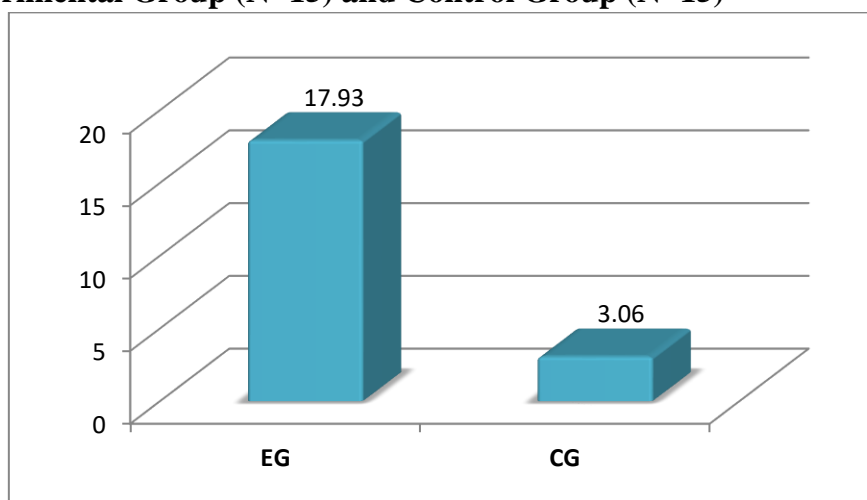
Null Hypothesis: There will be no significant difference in reading motivation scores of students with dyslexia taught by Multimedia Method of Instruction and Conventional Methods.

Alternative Hypothesis: There will be significant difference in reading motivation scores of students with dyslexia taught by Multimedia Method of Instruction and Conventional Methods.

Table 5: Independent samples t-test for mean gain scores on Reading Motivation of students with dyslexia in Experimental Group (N=15) and Control Group (N=15)

Group	Pre-test	Post-test	Mean gain	Mean difference	SE _D	df	t-value	P value	Remarks
EG	79.73	97.66	17.93	14.87	.833	28	17.83	.000	Significant at 0.01 level
CG	80.53	83.66	3.06						

Figure 4: Mean gain scores on Reading Motivation of students with dyslexia in Experimental Group (N=15) and Control Group (N=15)



The mean gain scores on Reading Motivation of students with dyslexia (Table 5 & Fig. 4) in Experimental Group and Control Group were found to be 17.93 and 3.06 respectively and the mean gain difference was found to be significant ($t=17.83$, $p<0.01$). Hence, the null hypothesis stating, “There will be no significant difference in reading motivation of students with dyslexia taught by Multimedia Method of Instruction and conventional methods” is rejected. Alternatively, it can, therefore, be inferred that the Multimedia Method of Instruction as intervention is significantly effective intervention than the Traditional Method of instruction on Reading Motivation of the students with dyslexia.

Conclusion

The multimedia method of instruction used in present study provided diverse variety of features such as highlighted text with audio and animation facility. This varied combination of features improved the way children could comprehend and retain from stories and get motivated to read. Findings indicated that animations reduced the amount of effort that is required for matching nonverbal information with story language. The findings of the present study provide evidence that multimedia method of intervention of stories is more beneficial for motivating the students to take up reading task as compared to children encountering traditional method of stories reading. It is important to note that most electronic book or stories available in the form of audio, video (animations) with subtitle are not similar to the ones used in traditional method. They most often include videos in the form of attractive animations, audio, and subtitles, which were found to have the potential to motivate students to engage more in reading and overcome reading anxiety.

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Literature for Democracy: Exploring the Voice of Resistance in Swarajbir's Play *Dharm Guru*

Rajesh Kumar Jaiswal

Abstract

This paper is an analysis of Swarajbir's play Dharm Guru that foregrounds a critique of fundamentalist ideologies and authoritarian practices, curbing people's civil liberties, freedom of expression, social and economic equality, and frequent violation of human rights and so posing a big threat to democracy. The chosen text underscores the damaging effects of caste, gender, sexuality, and various other cultural ideologies that facilitate exploitation and oppression of the less privileged sections of people and turn them into "bad subjects". The regressive cultural discourses sustained by these dominant social structures trap their subjectivities and prevent them from seeing the oppressive relations of domination and control. At the cutting edge of consciousness, the playwright, as an artist and intellectual, calls for an interrogation of these hegemonic religious-cultural issues precipitating inequality and unfreedom and a resistance to effect ratification and social change.

"Real dictators in the world are a picture, too, of dictators within individuals, of certain kinds and minds" (Hanif Kureishi in Pessoa-Miquel 2007:81).

"Literature is nothing if it is not a liberating force" (Cox 2009:7).

Literature and the Political

Literature is often considered as purely an aesthetic engagement, withdrawn from politics and free of all the political implications. This conventional view, however, holds not much substance, since literature as a sphere of human activity has multiple influences in changing people's perceptions, experiences, and prevailing social configurations at a given time. As a domain of the sensible and an ideological construct, a significant literary text seeks to serve a social purpose by problematizing the established hierarchical ways of seeing the world. It is a means of political mobilization and awakening, and a powerful apparatus involved in "self-fashioning". Literature also performs a corrective act by meddling with the operational dehumanizing cultural codes of caste, class, gender, region, and religion, thereby acting as a catalyst for justice and democracy.

As an arrangement of ‘affects and precepts’, effected by a situated being (the author/writer), positing diverse subject-positions yet espousing a particular way of seeing, literature partakes the political. Engaging with the contemporary issues, a literary intellectual unveils the trap of the official/dominant accounts of the world that goes on downgrading the wretched and impeding their emancipation. A committed/socially engaged literary artist through his/her work undertakes the role of disabusing the people, so that they re-examine their fixed and hegemonic ways of recognizing the world, conceptions of themselves, and could become conscious of their situations and the ideologies/world-views that have caught them unaware. Literary writers affect transformations by unveiling the world to people that Jean Paul Sartre calls “an action by disclosure” (Sartre 2016:xiv) The text under consideration *Dharm Guru*¹, quite a readable and stimulating play written by Swarajbir, a marked Punjabi playwright, builds a critique of the dominant conservative ways of perceptions and engagement, that pose a huge threat to democracy, and seeks to offer various possibilities of intervention by prompting its readers to rethink the various issues it invokes, critically.

Dharm Guru is explicitly political in intent, and imports nothing less than a sophisticated unmasking of authoritarianism and fundamentalism (religious and several other varieties) operating in the present-day world in one form or another. So, the text has a very contemporary significance. A brilliant formulation: the play is an intriguing exploration of the disastrous consequences on people’s lives and society, when political power is controlled by the religious authorities, steeped into old-fashioned regressive theology, and a-historical scriptural metaphysics. With a view to foster and establish democratic ethos and practices, accentuating egalitarianism and pluralism, the text voices resistance against various types of social inequalities and exclusions operating through the existing power-structures of religion, caste, gender, the body-stigma and so on. “The playwright uses a classical tale to tell certain hard contemporary truths in a vernacular idiom . . . Swarajbir engages seriously and creatively with the greater old Punjab’s rich cultural legacy to put under critical lens social problems that have either refused to die or have simply changed form to survive menacingly into our day and world.” “A modern play with a significant contemporary sensibility” (Sharma 2014:114), *Dharm Guru* exhibits mainly a conflict between the two key ideologies - theocratic authoritarian regime and democracy, represented respectively by the characters of Maharishi Vasishtha, also called as Dharm Guru, and Satyavrata, the prince of Ayodhya. The conventional, violent, and hierarchical religious world views of

Dharm Guru² come into clash with, and diverge from, the progressive and the liberal-humanist subject-position of Satyavrata. The latter confronts the conservative/traditionalist Dharm Guru and minces no words in speaking the truth to him, the former who as an administrator and a Guru wields the secular and religious powers together.

Dharm Guru: Invoking Manichean World-Views

Manichaeism³ is a religious system that involves a fierce dichotomizing of the human beings either as good or evil. It keeps projecting the in-group and the out-group divide and deepens the split by taking recourse to various cognitive-affective schemes of perceptions. It is a cast of mind seeking domination, endorsing humiliation and severe punishment against the defiant/misfits. A reading of the play should make it apparent that *Dharm Guru* booms by advocating and practicing a set of hierarchical binaries including men and women, Brahmins and Sudras, mind and body, tradition and modernity, pious and profane and many more. The Guru abounds in puritanical attitude and indiscriminating admiration for the conservative practices as casteism and patriarchy, and even a slightest deviance from these traditional hegemonic practices terminates into censorship and persecution, stifling the spirit of democracy and social justice.

Dharm Guru exhibits uncritical fondness for, and advocates a strict adherence to the four-fold *Varnas*:

Dharma is what has been explained in the ancient scriptures, in *Vedas* and religious books. Dharma is the word of the Brahman. One who follows its path accumulates virtue. His is the supreme spiritual accomplishment. He reaches Swarga. It is the Brahman's duty to reflect on Dharma. The Kshatriya's duty is to protect his subjects. Trade, agriculture, and cattle-rearing are the Vaishya's duty. The Shudra is meant to serve the others.... Dharma shines bright like the Sun. It is the stream of purity. (145)

The Guru claims Brahmins as superior to all the *varnas* and declares: "Dharma is the word of the Brahman." He also asserts the supremacy of the ancient scriptures. He chastises Satyavrata for his un-casteist conduct: "Wretched I have been told that you mix with the low-born. ...You visit the homes of *shudras*." As the play progresses, it is revealed that Satyavrata is in love with a Brahman girl Chitralkha and flees her from her wedding site. Chitralkha's father was marrying her daughter against her wish. So, Satyavrata set his beloved free from

the wedding she was being led forcefully into. But as a punishment, Satyavrata is banished from his Kingdom by Vashistha for fleeing Chitrlekha against the wishes of her father, that too from the wedding site, and then marrying the Brahmin girl while himself being a Kshatriya. For the Guru, this act of the Prince is nothing less than profanity and promiscuity, which may trigger dissolution of the community, and create chaos. He disapproves this inter-caste wedlock:

There are *Varnas*, classes and castes in our community now. Each of these has its own special place in society. They are governed by different rules and it is Dharma that determines those rules. Chitrlekha is a Brahman girl. She is not a princess. (147)

Consequently, Satyavrata earns the wrath of the Dharm Guru and has to face the music for the two-fold “offences” of hurting the sanctity of age-old caste system, and distressing a Brahman (Chitrlekha’s father), howsoever patriarchal he may be! The Guru pronounces the verdict:

As Head of the Holy Assembly, I pass the verdict that hereafter you stand divested of your princely privileges. You shall be no longer known and addressed as a Prince. You shall leave the royal palace, and dwell outside the city, in the forest . . . (148).

The parting grief triggered on account of expelling Satyavrata from the kingdom, his father King Tri-Arun took to renunciation and self-exile and handed over the reign of the empire to the Dharm Guru, Vasishtha. “The Holy Guru is now the King/ The King is now a mendicant.” Thus, with the theocratic establishment which derives force from the transcendental imperatives for political action, and on the top of it, an overwhelmingly conservative Dharm Guru as a ruler who believes in a strict enforcement of puritanical mores and excessive assertion of power, the sufferings of the people multiply. The single minded Dharm Guru with his strict codes of crime and punishment, superficial ideological biases, cultivating differences and exclusions, seeking to return to old feudal values, blocks all social advancement, individuality, and liberalism. He reacts against the modern ways of living and lacks tolerance towards people with the different outlooks and attitudes. His rigid theological imagination prompts him to control people and transform the society into a feudal set-up. Opinionated by scriptural prescriptions, he takes recourse to stick and stone methods to deal with the deviant and socially inferior. He and the like-minded followers treat Shudras as subjects rather as citizens:

Shudras also should exercise self-restraint. They have no right to accumulate wealth or wear new clothes. They must wear only the clothes used and discarded by their masters. And they must devoutly serve their masters. (159)

A Shudra as well as his wealth are the property of their twice born Masters only. (156)

The text also reveals that patriarchy and religion often jell up well. The Guru is thick and thin with misogyny. He believes in female impurity and considers women dangerous creatures as they distract men. He sanctions controlling their actions and subordination/inequality to their male-counterparts. He dismisses their being vocal.

If we wish to establish truth in society, we should disallow women's entry into men's gatherings. We should put a check on their free movement. Women must not dress provocatively. They must not leave home without their husband's permission. For a woman, her husband is everything. "He is the *yajna*, the holy sacrifice; he is the *vrata*, the ritual fast" (159). In an argument over the contentious issue of the wedding of Satyavrata to Chitrlekha, the Guru had clarified audaciously that "Dharma does not permit a maiden the right to decide for herself. This right is vested exclusively in her father." (146). It is clear from the text that the take of Dharm Guru on women, constituting half of the human race, is very sad and disturbing. Chitrlekha is not allowed to exercise her agency. As a woman, she is not accorded any respectful consideration by the holy man.

The treatment of 'human body' in the text is no less trivializing and demeaning than the issues linked with the untouchables and women, reflecting the controlling and insufferable attitude of the Dharm Guru. It is the corporeal body that gives us location in the world, and our individual and social lives are carried out through the mediation of the body. All our knowledge, thinking, memory, devotion, and experiences are transacted through the body. Human beings are the embodied subjects. Yet the importance of the body is not recognized and affirmed. And often distorted images of the body are generated and circulated in certain religious discourses, misconstruing the significance of the body. A range of dogmatic/metaphysical conceptions of the soul/self are accentuated at the expense of the body. Treatment of the human body as evil is promulgated.

Staying in the *Ashram* for receiving education, the disciples of Dharm Guru

are no less difficult and twisted. At a time of famine when people including children are starving, and begging has become their fate, the disciples respond by giving such heartless moral discourses:

A sin it's to live for food

Give up this way, seek salvation

Our bodies are pots of sin

Why to beg for their sake? (166)

The disciples lay emphasis on the prejudiced perspective, endorsing the hierarchy of soul over body. That the soul is trapped in the body, it needs liberation. They further sermonize:

The body is desire
incarnate.

It casts a spell.

Seek freedom from
that spell. Give up the
ways of sin

And seek the Holy
Guru's

refuge. (166)

The play gives enough evidence that cast of the minds of the Dharm Guru and his Disciples are awful and conflict ridden. They are obsessed with purity and pollution. Body, for them, is symptomatic of *adharma*.

The preceding delineation of the Holy Guru as depicted in the play, who cultivates differences and exclusions, is inimical to the interest and well-being of the people. The coercive and authoritarian Dharm Guru and his restrictive blinkered vision betray the very cause of *Dharma*, which is otherwise emancipatory and transformatory. It has been noticed that the Dharma for the Holy Guru is in no way integral to him; he rather exploits it for his political gains. Trapped in essentialist-regressive ideological moorings and a top-down handling of the public issues devoid of empathy and humanistic impulse, such gurus extend and deepen the disabling effects on the vulnerable and socially marginalized folks.

Satyavrata: A Cultural Resistant

Resistance involves raising questions against domination, a struggle against the multiple axes of inequality and un-freedom. It is an ability to intervene in the social world with a view to achieve emancipation. Resistance is a fight not only against the repressive ideological forces, but also against an established way of seeing and moulding the world. As a counter-hegemonic cultural product, the chosen text *Dharm Guru* underscores a fight for democracy, threatened by religious fundamentalism and authoritarianism. The play accentuates deliberations on such crucial issues as freedom of speech, equality, rights of women and Dalits, and unveils an alternative perception of the world empowering the oppressed. A marker of resistance, Satyavrata engages in a critical dialogue with Dharm Guru, and refuses to be co-opted in the politics of piety as publicized by the latter, and to be an ally of the ruling theocratic establishment.

The Holy Guru is now the King
The King a mendicant
Dharma resounds on every side
But the earth lies unquenched.
There is no bread or milk here
All starve, everyone thirsts'
The only stay is now our fate
From eyes all hope has fled
The people starve
Where shall they go?
The birds of prey look down

And wait to feast upon the dead
in this now teeming town
High and dark the groves of Dharma
Dense and great their shade
It burns those who seek its shelter
And waste the town is laid (162)

The above long excerpt from the text highlights an incompatibility between the coercive theocratic regime headed by the Holy Guru and people's well-being. The practice/governance of the *Dharma* under the aegis of the Guru did not lead to

people's happiness; it rather triggered their travails and sufferings. When the distressed public approach Dharm Guru for seeking eradication of various social afflictions and hunger, the latter reacts:

[. . .] But all this is surely the result of our deeds. . . . I can see the social fabric falling apart. Starvation and poverty, drought, and misery—these are the consequences of social disintegration. Society is not following the religious principles which I wanted it to follow. (159)

Instead of taking some substantial steps to sort out their issues/problems, Dharm Guru, as a head of the state, takes recourse to mystification, and evades secular- political corrective measures:

I will also perform a *Havana* for an end to this suffering. All will be well. All this is the result of past deeds only. So, it has to be endured. Adhere to your Dharma. The world is only an illusion. Avoid attachment. Meditate on God. Make sure that Brahmans are not treated with disrespect. They are gods on earth. (160)

In face of the discontents and sufferings of the disenfranchised people, triggered by the authoritarian rule that involves various religious dogmas and censorship of the Dharma Guru, Satyavrata is compelled to become a resistant; questioning caste, gender, and economic inequalities/injustices. All these in combination impair the prospects of establishing and expansion of democracy. He is convinced that the absence of resistance and mobilization against the Guru and his regressive values, and world-views, will amount to being in collaboration with the victimization of his people, and will sustain social hierarchies and inequalities. Inhabiting a subaltern subject- position that involves a break from the conservative religious-cultural take and positioning of Dharm Guru, Satyavrata is committed to forge a saner world. As a critically active and responsible citizen, Satyavrata is no way in sync with the dominant dogmatic ideologies of Dharm Guru who attribute the people's sufferings, including the havoc caused by the famine, to the people's non-conformity of the religious way of life that invokes discriminations based on caste and gender. Unlike the conservative Dharm Guru who maintains hierarchical social relations and exhibits an utter disregard for the marginalized masses and the people who don't fit into his scheme of things, Satyavrata seeks to understand people and their situations realistically, and not in terms of caste and gender fabrications. He takes a fight to the establishment for their entitlements.

The acts and identity of Satyavrata offer a critical lens of seeing and fostering a 'good-sense' and awareness, so that the marginalized/subjugated folks get to know the causes and conditions of their marginalization, and not define and identify themselves with the ideologies and world-views of the oppressor. Satyavrata refuses to perform 'penitence' as advised by Dharm Guru for his 'sinful' acts of marrying a Brahmin girl against the wishes of her father, and his father too. For Satyavrata, "it is not a sin to disagree with one's father." He refuses to subscribe to the trap of *Swarga* as advocated by Dharm Guru.

[. . .] I must judge myself . . . You tell me I cannot enter Swarga [. . .] I say 'no' to your Swarga . . . I need neither Swarga nor a Holy Guru. I will live here only, whether as a ruler or as one banished. But surely, I will live here among the people. This is my Swarga; these people are my Swarga. Yes, this place is Swarga for me. The company of these people is Swarga for me. (189)

Satyavrata dispels the reified notion of *Swarga/Narak* lodged in popular imagination. He struggles to serve a social purpose of transforming existing hierarchical social relations advocated by the Dharm Guru. Driven by empathy for the people, Satyavrata confronts the Guru to draw his attention towards the corrupt practices, multiplying the distresses of the masses in the times of the famine:

It is a terrible drought. Even the wild roots one could eat have dried. Not just grain, even an animal or bird is nowhere to be seen. Those who have hoarded the food grains do not want to give away even a handful. Hunger has brought extreme misery . . . if we are in such misery, how much worse it would be for those poor. . . (168)

Dharm Guru projects his allegiance to a fundamentalist world-view, to violence-prone, the sacred, and perceives a threat from the liberal deviant, the nonconformists. On the contrary, Satyavrata puts the concerns of the people at the centre of his loyalty/engagements. He, no way less than as a public intellectual, dares unmask the blindfolding; pernicious effects of the culturally accepted orthodox yet ruling ideologies which have infiltrated/colonized people's minds and bodies and govern their beliefs, desires and conducts. He fosters in people a critical consciousness essential for a democratic society. As a self-critic and an alter-ego of the playwright, Satyavrata appeals to people to reflect, and decide whether we exist for *dharma* or its reverse.

Conclusion

The foregoing reading of the Play focuses primarily on the two characters whose subject-positions represent a culture-clash, a conflict between the two ideologies, that is, the repressive religious fundamentalism and democracy. With his top-down approach, the Guru acts as a voice of authority embarking on the conservative agendas that upkeep social inequalities and old-fashioned regressive practices. In contrast, Satyavrata, resorting to the bottom-up tactics, uncovers and confronts the Guru's oppressive acts and existing relations of domination. Embodying multicultural voices and interests of the greater society, Satyavrata also exemplifies a social critique of the hierarchically placed socio-cultural practices and builds a connection to the wider arenas of struggle for consolidating justice and democracy. He acts as a bulwark against the Guru's accentuation of caste hierarchy, gender-discrimination, religious puritanism and so on, those that are threatening to the very fabric and foundations of democracy. The text *Dharm Guru* occasions vital discussions on various conservative-hegemonic forces, sabotaging the projects of democracy and social justice, and suggests alternative politics as a mechanism to effect social change. The text raises a crucial question to be reflected upon whether we commit ourselves to the conservative causes or progressive ones. The central ethos and spirit of the play *Dharm Guru*--the oppositional beliefs and values, articulated through the challenging acts and commitments of Satyavrata in the face of intimidating discourses and exclusionary practices affected by the Guru--cannot be summed up better than quoting a weighty remark made by a significant cultural critic Stuart Hall:

[the]most profound cultural revolution in this part of the twentieth century has come about as a consequence of the margins coming into representation—in art, in painting, in film, in music, in literature, in the modern arts everywhere, in politics, and in social life generally . . . Paradoxically, marginality has become a powerful space . . . New subjects, new genders, new ethnicities, new regions, and new communities—all hitherto excluded as decentred or subalterns—have emerged and have acquired through struggle, sometimes in very marginalized ways, the means to speak for themselves for the first time. And the discourses of power in our society, the discourses of the dominant regimes, have been certainly threatened by this decentred cultural empowerment of the marginal and the local. (Hall 1997:183)

Notes:

1. *Dharm Guru*, a play, originally written in Punjabi by Swarajbir, a distinguished playwright from Punjab and the current editor of Punjabi Tribune, Chandigarh. The text was translated into English by Prof. Rajesh Sharma, a faculty in English, Punjabi University, Patiala.
2. With regard to a rendering of the character of Dharm Guru, I have partially drawn upon a research paper of mine published on Guru Nanak.
3. To make a sense and develop an idea of the term “Manichean”, I have greatly banked upon Kumar Ramakrishna’s book *Islamist Terrorism and Militancy in Indonesia: The Power of the Manichean Mind*, published by Springer Press, Singapore, 2014.

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Status of Women Working in Corporate Sector: Their Role Conflict and Coping Strategies

Sugandha Kohli Kaang

Abstract

The present paper examines the status of women working in the corporate sector in the regions of Gurgaon and Chandigarh. An attempt has been made to study the role conflict experienced by working women and the coping strategies adopted by them. The major findings of the study are that women are entering the corporate sector in high numbers however their proportion is still less vis a vis their male counterparts. Majority of women working the corporate sector experience role conflict and feel that their hectic schedule affects their responsibilities towards their families which ultimately takes a toll on their familial relations. It is exceedingly difficult for women especially if they are married to maintain a balance between domestic and professional fronts. Women have to struggle hard to overcome the patriarchal mindset prevailing in the corporate world. Despite excelling in academics as their profession women face discrimination.

Keywords: Status, inequality, Role Conflict, Working, Women, workplace, Coping Strategies, corporate, sector.

Working women are a vital part of the work force but ironically there is existence of inequality in the workforce. Being economically dependent upon men, lacking access to higher education and poor socio-economic status, has excluded women in India from well-paid and high-ranking occupations. However, around the world there has been trend towards increased access for women to education and participation in the work force. It has been witnessed that since 1970, the share of women in the workforce has steadily increased in virtually all regions of the world which now approaches a 50 percent mark in Scandinavian countries, the United States, Canada, the UK, and France. A study conducted by Oxfam revealed that inequality in India has a 'female face' and women are less likely to have paid work *vis-a-vis* men and the wage gap in India is still around thirty four percent. Issues pertaining to gender and work have moved to a center stage and evoked controversy worldwide in the present times. The discourses surrounding women and the efforts to overcome oppression on the grounds of

gender or sexual preferences have become globalized (Cohen, Kennedy and Maud, 2016).

In the contemporary society, the presence of women in the workforce is widely seen and they are found in high number in various professions. However, the percentage of women in workforce is still less in comparison to men. According to International Labor Organization Report (ILO, 2018), even though women form nearly forty percent of the total global workforce, yet it is less than their male counterparts in almost all the countries of the world and inequality is quite pervasive at workplaces. McKinsey Report (2018) noted that women in the service sector are at the greatest risk of losing jobs globally.

In the present times, women are seen to perform multiple roles and duties. On professional side, a woman is expected to be dynamic, competitive, quick, efficient, and straight forward and result oriented and at home she is expected to be very understanding, sensitive, gentle, caring, unassertive and docile. Therefore, a working woman has to maintain a harmonious balance between these responsibilities so that she can give adequate time both to professional and domestic fronts. As a result, women suffer from constant anxiety, pressure, and tension. In today's competitive world, companies exert tremendous pressure on employees to perform due to which they have to put in long hours at their workplaces. In such situations women employees tend to lose grip over their domestic responsibilities which creates a tense atmosphere at home leading to strained relations with family members. This causes frustration and dissatisfaction to her due to which she is not able to give her best anywhere.

To cope with this burden of maintaining a rightful balance between their familial and professional life, women adopt various coping strategies. Coping refers to individual's efforts to resolve stress and create ways of handling new situations at each stage of life (Erickson, 1959). 'Coping strategies' is a term which is defined as specific efforts, both psychological and behavioural, that people resort during stressful events. Coping strategies, in general, can be problem focused strategy in which efforts are made to ameliorate stressful circumstances or it can be preventive focused strategy which involves efforts to avoid the consequences of stressful events. It is observed that when a balance is maintained by adopting certain coping strategies, women are able to perform better both at the workplace and at home, thus contributing to the progress of the organisation that employs them.

Indian working women comprise a distinct social category and the issue of role conflict is very significant. Generally, there are two main types of role conflicts-inter-role conflict and intra-role conflict. Inter-role conflict arises when a person who is performing many roles faces conflict among those roles whereas intra-role conflict takes place where personal expectations are more than the actual in the performance of roles. An attempt to be perfectionist in one role leads to an inadvertent sacrifice of the other, due to which woman employee finds it difficult to do justice to both roles at which further leads to depression, mental anxiety and health associated problems resulting in inefficiency in discharging responsibilities at both places. The mind of a woman as well as of the society at large has been tuned regarding her roles as a woman, in such a way, that she feels guilty if she is unable to give adequate time to her predetermined duties at home. It is at this juncture, role conflict comes forth. Corporate sector demands stringent working hours that adversely affects a woman's family obligations. Especially, when a married woman enters professional front, she not only finds change in her status and role in the family but also goes through immense pressure to balance the dual burden of home and workplace. Thus, with the increasing employability of women, the problem of role conflict is becoming more common which is a major cause of strain, frustration, and dissatisfaction. Rao and Ramasundaram (2007) in their study examined the incongruence in the roles played by employed women and their work-family interface and it was found out that work family conflict was positively correlated with role demands. The main source of conflict was determining priorities and managing time between work and family. It was found that they had feeling of guilt while working, lack of social life, inadequate time for self and for childcare and lastly lack of support and understanding from family members.

The objective of the paper is to examine the status of women in corporate sector and the role conflict which women working in the corporate sector encounters. An attempt has also been made to study the coping strategies adopted by them to order to maintain a balance between professional and domestic obligations. Purposive sampling was used for the purpose of this research. The unit of analysis was women holding top, middle and lower-level positions in the corporate sector. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in data collection. Quantitative data were collected through Interview Schedule. A total sample of 240 respondents from 20 MNCs, IT companies and Private Banks

working at the top, middle and lower-level positions were taken for quantitative data from Chandigarh Capital Region and Gurgaon.

The significant findings of the study are discussed below:

Role Conflict and Effect of Work on Family

A working woman has multiple roles to perform as an ideal woman, like the duties of a wife, caring and self-sacrificing mother, and dutiful daughter-in law and at the same time she is expected to be a proficient well placed dynamic career-oriented women. Thus, there are contradictory role expectations from a working woman, both at home and at the workplace. An attempt to play one role with perfection leads to the sacrifice of the other. The roles at family as well as work are equally important for determining the quality of life of a working woman.

Table-1: Distribution of Respondents showing Role Conflict and Work affecting their Family

Role Conflict	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	175	72.9
No	65	27.1
Total	240	100
Work effect on Family		
Yes	172	71.7
No	68	28.3
Total	240	100

The study reveals that nearly three-fourth, i.e., majority of the respondents reported that they faced role conflict which was quite disturbing for them whereas around one-fourth of the respondents felt that they did not face any kind of role conflict and were able to manage both home and work well. Most of the respondents reported that they had to rearrange family obligations in order to manage their professional expectation which make them guilty and regretful. Some of them also said that because of their strenuous work schedule, they did not find sufficient time to spend with their families due to which they had become very irritable and short tempered. Therefore, they encountered high degree of role conflict which was frustrating and suffocating for them. More than 70 percent of the respondents felt that their work was affecting their family lives whereas few of

them felt that their work was not disturbing their family lives and they had no difficulty in managing daily household chores and work-related activities. Majority (71 percent) of the working women ascertained the adverse effect of work on family lives. Most of the respondents found that increased pressure at their workplace had greater impact on their family care and thus found their work to be negatively affecting their family life. However, it is heartening to observe that 28 percent of women stated that they have successfully managed work and family separately and are able to handle both work and home.

Extent of Role Conflict

The extent of role conflict refers to the degree to which an individual undergoes role conflict, and it varies from individual to individual. The respondents facing role conflict were also asked to state the extent of role conflict. The following table highlights the extent of role conflict respondents are encountered.

Table-2: Distribution of Respondents on the Basis of their Extent of Role Conflict

Extent of role conflict	Frequency	Percentage
High degree of role Conflict	85	48.6
Moderate degree of role conflict	54	30.9
Low degree of role conflict	36	20.5
Total	175	100

It can be inferred from the table above that nearly half (48 percent) of the respondents opined they had high degree of role conflict. The moderate degree of role conflict accounted for around one-third (31 percent) of the respondents and around one-fifth of the respondents reported low degree of role conflict. Thus, out of the total respondents, almost half of them felt high degree of role conflict while working in the companies and managing their families simultaneously. It is explicit that role conflict is pervasive and more than seventy percent of the respondents experienced role conflict.

Impact of Role Conflict

It has become a necessity for woman to work as it is not only important for her alone but also for her family and society at large. The work done by the women within the four walls of home is generally considered to be non-remunerative. Women have moved out for employment to become economically

independent in the same way as the men are. At the same time, the women who are working are not relieved from their day to day chores and other domestic responsibilities. Working women are expected to return home in time to take care of their domestic responsibilities. Due to the prevalent cultural and traditional norms and value system of our society, there are several duties which women are expected to perform such as taking care of children, parents, husband, cooking food and other related activities. Further, atmosphere at workplace, behaviour of fellow workers, nature of work, timing of work and distance of the workplace from home are important factors in determining the professional lives of working women. Therefore, working women faces multi-dimensional problems because of their dual responsibilities. Role conflict has immense impact on family and as well as work. It is generally seen that when a woman is working in the corporate sector, she is unable to give adequate time to family which affects her interpersonal relationships and hence work and family both suffer. Gunavathy and Suganya (2007) in their study on married women working as employees in companies found out that majority of the respondents experienced imbalance in managing work and family. This led to marital discord, stress at workplace as well as at home. It is important for women to balance their professional as well as domestic roles to avoid conflicting situations. The present society accepts women working outside but most of the families have still not completely accepted their changing role and are not ready to shoulder the domestic responsibilities. Despite several facilities such as availability of domestic help and assistance, a woman's primary responsibility expected is to be her family only and she has to take care of her professional duties simultaneously which leads to anxiety, tension and depression.

Table-3: Distribution of Respondents showing the Impact of Role Conflict

Impact	Yes	No	Total
Lack of understanding of spouse and children	116 (66.3%)	59 (33.7%)	175 (100%)
Improper childcare	122 (69.7%)	53 (30.3%)	175 (100%)
Incomplete domestic work	143 (81.7%)	32 (18.3%)	175 (100%)
Difficulties in children education and socialization	125 (71.4%)	50 (28.6%)	175 (100%)
Improper health care of family and self	108 (61.7%)	67 (38.3%)	175 (100%)
Difficulty in performing well in job	117 (66.9%)	58 (33.1%)	175 (100%)

It was found that majority of the respondents experienced lack of understanding from their spouses and children whereas one-third reported that they had a harmonious relationship with them. Across all the levels in the corporate sector, women reported that lack of understanding of their spouse and family was major factor which contributing to role conflict. Sizeable proportion of the respondents reported that they encountered role conflict due to incomplete domestic work, like preparation of food, cleaning of house, washing clothes etc. which demands time. As women spend quite a lot of time at their workplaces, they found it very difficult to spare time for daily domestic chores. Incomplete domestic tasks affected them and their families. Some respondents mentioned that the pressure of domestic chores after tiresome work at office and loss of temper led to misunderstanding with their spouses due to which they encountered emotional stress and pain. Childcare and education is another area of role conflict where women tend to encounter more problems. Majority of the respondents reported that due to their work, they find it difficulty in attending to their children's education and even failed in proper socialization of their children which created a sense of guilt which haunted them constantly. Remaining respondents said that they had no difficulty in the supervision of their children in any sphere. Stress of managing work and home were considered to be among the factors contributing to their physical and mental ill health.

Coping Strategies adopted to maintain Domestic and Professional Roles

Women in the present time are ambitious, educated and strive to be successful both at domestic as well as at professional levels but due to increasing competition, pressure and quantum of work in corporate sector makes it all the more strenuous to balance both home and work. Demand of work dominates, and it leads to work-life imbalance. Therefore, in order to balance their responsibilities, women have to adopt certain coping strategies like taking career breaks, going on unpaid holiday, working part time, compromising with professional growth, working from home, rescheduling working hours etc. These methods have proven to be very beneficial for women to strike a balance between home and work.

Table-4: Distribution of Respondents based on Coping Strategies adopted by them to maintain balance between Domestic and Professional roles

Coping Strategies	Frequency	Percentage
Adjustment with career growth	80	33.3
Frequent career breaks	60	25
Part time work	25	10.4
Work from home	40	16.7
Adherence to strict working hours	30	12.5
Other strategies	5	2.1
Total	240	100

Respondents were also asked about the strategies adopted by them to maintain a balance between domestic and professional roles. Around one-third of the respondents felt that they had to undergo adjustments with their career growth which was very annoying and painful for them. Respondents who were highly educated and well placed also said that they had to compromise with their professional growth. They also pointed out that they would have been on much higher position had they been single. It can further be inferred that the highly educated women who were ambitious and are seen to be equalitarian in outlook, also prefer their family and are willing to compromise on their professional life. One-fourth of the respondents said that they preferred to take frequent career breaks as a coping strategy. The respondents who adopted this strategy took regular breaks from their jobs and also did not stick to one job for a long time and kept on switching to companies just to ensure proper balance between home and work. 16 percent of the women reported that their companies allowed them to work from home which has proved to be boon. Around 12 percent of the respondents adhered to strict working hours as a strategy to manage both work and home environment. 10 percent of the respondents reported that they preferred to work part time only and do not want to work full time as they had to attend to the needs of their families. This was seen in low profile, small companies, and firms. Around 3 percent of the respondents said that they used other informal strategies as a coping mechanism. When they were asked to specify, they said they had developed understanding and adopted adjustment policies with their fellow colleagues to help each other in need.

Respondents Opinion regarding Role Conflict

The respondents were asked to state their opinions on various statements relating to role conflict. The response categories to the items ranged from strongly agree to strongly degree on a five-point scale. The following table highlights opinion of respondents regarding problems concerning work on a five-point scale.

Table-5: Opinion of Respondents regarding work related problems

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Job influences marital status of women and creates more stress to married women	54 (22.5%)	69 (28.8%)	41 (17.1)	43 (17.9%)	33 (13.7%)	240 (100%)
Working women feels more problems in performing household duties	50 (20.8%)	78 (31.3%)	55 (22.9%)	33 (13.8%)	27 (11.2%)	240 (100%)
Family expects financial returns form a working women	65 (27.1%)	60 (25%)	57 (23.8%)	32 (13.3%)	26 (10.8%)	240 (100%)
Working flexibility is found for women working in companies	8 (3.3%)	40 (16.7)	42 (17.5)	76 (31.7%)	74 (30.8%)	240 (100%)
Working women have the freedom to take decisions concerning their life and career	11 (4.6%)	36 (15%)	50 (21.7%)	80 (33.3%)	61 (25.4%)	240 (100%)

Distribution of Respondents by their Opinions on Role Conflict

Majority of the respondents felt that their job influenced their marital status and contributed to more stress whereas some of the respondents strongly disagreed as they felt that their job did not influence their marital status and did not create stressful environment at domestic front. It can be stated that majority of the respondents agreed and strongly agreed that their job influenced their marital status and created more stress for married women. It could be inferred that

majority of the women working in corporate sector encounter difficulties and hurdles in discharging their domestic obligation and work in the organization at the same time. Majority of the respondents said they did not have the sole decision-making authority concerning their life and career. Women who opted for career in corporate sector had to consider many things while deciding to apply for a position in a company. This led to professional dissatisfaction. Responsibility towards children, parents, husband, and other domestic works determined their decisions and had direct effect on the professional work. It was seen that to maintain a balance between profession and home many women limited their professional growth. Single women who had lesser responsibilities at home did best at work.

Many of the respondents were of the view that neither their companies nor families showed consideration and understanding which made them feel helpless and suffocated. Women asserted that some kind of flexibility from home and office would make them comfortable and confident and they would be able to perform and deliver better results. This would also not be detrimental for their health. One of the respondents working in leading IT company in Gurgaon disclosed during discussion that she was visiting a psychologist and taking medication for last one year to overcome fear, burden and other issues she was facing which she developed while working for lengthy hours in her company due to which her relation with her spouse and in laws were strained. She pointed out that her over ambitious nature led not only to deterioration of her mental health but also her relations.

Therefore, it is observed that in present time even when women have become educated, competent, economically independent, still they are not considered equal to men. They are struggling when it comes to focusing on their careers and achieving their desired professional goals. This is the need of the hour that both families and organisation should extent cooperation and understanding to working women especially those who are married so that women can work and give their best with a relaxed and calm mind. Families especially in laws should not take professional life of woman for granted and should support her so that she could achieve professional excellence. On the other hand, organisations and corporate houses should also understand responsibilities of their women employees and provide facilities like work from home, proper leave period during maternity and flexible working hours so that she can work without burden and

haste. This will not only be beneficial for women but for companies which could derive better results and performances from them.

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Nursing Education in India: A Boon or Bane?

Reena Chaudhary and Amrita

Abstract

Nursing is the backbone of healthcare system in any country. With the growing demand for Indian nurses in other countries, the demand for the profession has gone up tremendously in India. Nursing education has grown tremendously from merely two nursing colleges in 1947 to the present day where there are thousands of nursing colleges and institutes. The privatisation of nursing education, however, has proved a bane for quality of nursing workforce. There have been widespread concerns about the employability of the nurses both at national and international levels. This paper attempts to figure out the reasons for deteriorating quality of the nursing education as it developed through the years in India.

Keywords: *Nursing, Education, Training, Private sector, Quality*

Introduction

Nursing has been an important caring profession because of its proximity with the patients. As per its establishment, nursing education can be classified under three groups: government nursing institutes, private nursing institutes and nursing training facilities under armed forces. This paper focuses on nursing education provided in the private nursing institutes and an effort has been made to figure out the reasons for deteriorating quality of the nursing education in India.

Nursing in India has a long history since ancient times for taking care of the sick in the form of tradition of midwifery. Since its very inception, training in nursing has been marked by the caste and gender equations. That is to say, it is dominated by women in huge numbers and is believed to be associated with low castes. It was during Charaka period (250 B.C.) that the first nursing school started in India where only men were trained to take care of the sick and women were involved only during childbirth. During the Medieval period, monasteries had become the sites for training monks and nuns to provide care to the needy. In the Modern era, it was the colonial interests of British which led to the efforts which culminated into Military nursing as the earliest professionalized nursing in 1664 at

hospital in Madras where nurses were brought from England to provide care to soldiers. Thereafter, nursing graduates were called from England to start training nurses in India. It was in 1867 when training of Indian women as nurses started in Delhi at St. Stephens Hospital (Bhutani et al., 2013). In 1905, missionary nurses came to India as members of the Missionary Medical Association and laid the foundation for formalized nursing education in India (Simon, 2009). During colonial period, the training of nurses largely remained under the control of missionaries and later under international agencies such as Rockefeller Foundation, World Health Organization, other missions under United Nations, etc.

Therefore, having a glance through development of nursing as a profession in India, it can be discerned that its acceptability was limited due to various reasons such as low status of women, practice of "*pardha*" among Muslims, caste system among Hindus, illiteracy, poverty, and political unrest. The acceptance of nursing as a profession was hindered by pollution doctrine of caste inequality of Hindu society and purdah system among Muslims. The Christian religion did not have such beliefs and therefore, women belonging to this religion joined nursing in huge numbers and have been in majority since then. At the end of World War II, a majority of nurses in India were trained in mission hospitals and up to 90% were Christians (Nair, 2012). Since the population of Christians is dominant in southern India and missionaries were active there, a disproportionately large percentage of nursing schools was present in Southern India (Simon, 2009).

After independence, various committees were constituted from time to time to overhaul the nursing education and make nursing more respectable among youth. But overall, nursing remained much popular among the youth of the state of Kerala and lately, among other south-Indian states. More recently, the state of Punjab has emerged as a state with nursing as a popular choice of profession. Over the period, an export industry for nurses has emerged in Punjab at par with the southern states in India because of the prevalence of strong international migration tendencies among Punjabis (Walton-Roberts, 2016).

India as a source of trained nurses

India has been viewed as an important source of trained nurses for international nurse labour market. Also, it is facing severe shortage of nurses for its elaborate public health infrastructure to meet adequate nurse-patient ratio. Thus, India is faced with the double challenge of producing more nurses for filling vacancies within India and at the same time, for skilled emigration of nurses. To

meet these two requirements, India has been ramping up its nurse training capacity (Bhutani, Gupta & Walton-Roberts, 2013; Khadria, 2007).

Globally, health systems face a serious shortage of nursing workforce. This global shortage has triggered a large-scale skilled migration circuits from developing to developed countries. India, having an elaborate training infrastructure combined with English-speaking workforce, became a natural source for trained nurses for developed countries (Gill, 2011). It is in this context that India as a source of nurses needs to be reviewed. It is also worthy to note that India itself faces a severe shortage of nursing workforce. An additional 2.4 million nurses are needed to provide a nurse-to-patient ratio of 1 nurse per 500 persons in a country with a population of 1.22 billion (World Health Organization, 2010).

It is well documented that the nursing education facilities have witnessed a boom over the past decade with the major push provided by the liberalised regulations of nursing education. The result was mushrooming of private nursing educational institutions across the country with concentration in certain traditional South-Indian states and the upcoming state of Punjab regarding training capacity (Walton-Roberts, 2016). The expanding private health sector in India is another feature which can be regarded as a reason behind the rise in nursing establishments (Gill, 2016).

The impending acute shortage of nurses and skilled out-migration of nurses necessitated the government policies to ramp up training capacity of nurses to bridge the demand-supply gap. Consequently, the Indian Nursing Council (INC), in late 2008, announced a number of changes in the regulations in order to liberalize nursing training programmes that would result both in an increase in student numbers and enhanced training capacity. This enhanced capacity and student enrolment was proposed to be achieved through a slew of measures facilitating establishment of new nursing schools and colleges.

Enhanced budgetary allocation, change in eligibility criteria for admissions, reduction in high standards of certain facilities and relaxations in the infrastructural requirements were the steps taken by the government for boosting training capacity of nurses. Additionally, the allowable distance between training facilities and affiliated hospitals was enhanced. Also, some significant changes were also made to teaching standards of nursing training.

Problems with nursing education in India

The quality of nurses produced in such private institutions has been questioned for long both on national and international fronts. There had also been concerns with respect to gap between theory and practice in nursing education that even after training, young nurses are not capable to handle basic nursing activities. Nurses educated in India are retrained in certain countries before their employment. Also, there have been numerous instances where Indian educated nurses fail to find employment overseas and end up working in lower cadres of hospital hierarchy. Other issues related to nursing education in India are inadequate curricula, lack of qualified teachers, and dearth of research in this field. Also, there is neglect on the part of policymakers with respect to any plan to enhance the quality and quantity of nurse educators, students, and staff nurses.

As per the study by Kumar (2005), there are a number of reasons for poor quality of nursing education in India which include lack of a national nursing and midwifery education plan, under representation of nurses and midwives in the policymaking, paucity of qualified educators, poor infrastructure for nursing education, poor classification of nursing and midwifery personnel and limited focus on academic work and research.

The Indian Nursing Council has been tasked with inspecting nursing education institutions every 3-5 years. During such inspections, the issues which have been reported are lack of qualified faculty, poor student-teacher ratio, poor infrastructure, inadequate training facilities and lack of funds. Libraries and demonstration rooms were not equipped for imparting practical experience to nursing students. As a result, nursing graduates are ill-equipped for the job market to work efficiently. Given the acute shortage of trained faculty due to mushrooming of private nursing educational institutions, the teaching staff was often found to be overburdened (Rao et al., 2011). It is shocking that during inspections, 61.2 percent of the institutions were found to be unsuitable for imparting training between September 2004 and October 2004. As a consequence, the recognition of such unsuitable institutions was withdrawn. But it is unfortunate that such institutions carried on with their 'training shops' with the permissions from the respective state nursing councils. It is this overlap of functioning of the state nursing councils and Indian Nursing Council and their overlapping regulations with respect to establishment of nursing education institutions that has

resulted in mushrooming of nursing schools in some states (Kumar, 2005; Gill, 2016).

Majority of the colleges lacked the basic infrastructure for teaching nursing education. Around 61 percent of such nursing schools were unfit for training of the nurses because of an acute shortage of facilities and faculties which is fallout of rapid expansion of nursing education capacity (Reynolds et al., 2013). Another issue concerning nursing education is that it has hardly got any attention for years at par with medical education which overshadowed it in every aspect. There are many reasons for such neglect including the lack of autonomy of nurses, their subordinate position vis-a-vis doctors and dominance of the doctors in setting the agenda. Added to all this is poor allocation of public funds as well as poor financing of nursing education by the government are all cited as reasons for this (Rao et al., 2011).

The national regulator of nursing education, that is, Indian Nursing Council, from time to time, shows its commitment to improve standards of nursing education and training and making it at par with international standards. Moreover, the state nursing councils and the hospitals (as employers) too show their concerns regarding declining quality of the nursing training provided in these institutions. Many of such institutions reportedly do not have facilities for on-the-job training of nurses and they are granted approvals before any such verification in this respect. The quality of nursing training is compromised severely as many of such institutions send their students to hospitals for learning through observation (Nair & Rajan, 2017).

It is notable that popularity of nursing as a profession has increased tremendously among the young girls in Punjab. Also, Punjab is one of the top-most states in India with high training capacity for nurses (Walton-Roberts, 2016).

The private sector had been registering an outstanding presence in nursing training sector in the country (Rao et al., 2011; Reynolds et al., 2013). As per an estimate, 88 percent of the nursing training institutes belonged to private sector which had been training 95 percent of all the nurses trained (Reynolds et al., 2013). There have been serious concerns raised by the stakeholders about the prevalent corrupt practices in the health sector. Corruption in the private sector influences training quality, regulation, and licensure, all of which are managed by the Indian Nursing Council and their state nursing councils (Bhaumik, 2013). In 2007, the state government of Punjab ignored the fact that the INC denied licenses

to seven of their colleges, allowing them to enrol students nonetheless (Sethi, 2007; Walton-Roberts, 2014). There are other such instances also which reveal the lack of authority of the national regulator and arbitrariness of state councils.

The spread of nursing training institutions has increased significantly in Punjab besides other states (Kodoth & Jacob, 2013; Walton-Roberts, 2016). Given the boom in the nursing training institutes during the past decade, Punjab has become the upcoming state in nursing training capacity. As in 2004, there were 55 institutions for GNM while only 11 were offering B.Sc., which rose to 132 offering GNM and 60 for B.Sc. in 2009. This number further jumped to 215 institutions offering GNM and 94 for B.Sc. in 2014. At present, there are 214 nursing training institutions for GNM and 108 for B.Sc. (Indian Nursing Council, 2020).

The expansion of private sector has also facilitated emergence of a glut in the market of poorly trained candidates. It is also suggested that private schools and colleges provide the corporate hospital sector with opportunities to promote institutional expansion, including the tendency to exploit student labour rather than hire staff nurses. In other words, since most of these institutions lack the physical and human resources, they provide free labour in the form of interns to their hospitals (Biju, 2013; Gill, 2011; Walton-Roberts, 2014).

Discussion

Nursing has always been an important profession because nurses are the first point of contact between hospital and the patient. It is, therefore, extremely important that they are efficient and committed towards their work. Here, quality of their education and training comes into the picture.

India is uniquely placed with respect to its nursing workforce as it is one of the biggest exporters of nurses abroad because of its enlarged nursing training capacity. This training capacity has been bolstered by the various initiatives taken by the government from time to time to address nursing shortage in the country. All these steps collectively extended the role of frontrunner to the private sector. According to Reynolds et al. (2013), the private sector in India is responsible for producing 95% of nurses. The rapid growth of private sector educational institutions has raised concern regarding the level of corruption in regulation and licensing. There is widespread presence of unauthorized nursing training establishments which put future of thousands of students at stake.

The mushrooming of private institutions is not the only reason. The government has been neglecting nurses and nursing for long. The role of the governments and other regulatory bodies in India has remained confined to the modification of curriculum, and the establishment of degree courses, and other measures to meet the shortage of nurses. State measures have remained inadequate with there being no standardization of nursing or proper regulation of registration in many parts of India and the persistent nursing shortage.

The Indian nursing council has proposed certain reforms for the nursing education sector in order to maintain the quality of nursing education. It has set new norms with a view to restrict the number of students and achieving an optimal student-patient ratio. It has also taken note of poaching of the qualified faculty and initiated steps to check their exodus from the Government to private institutions in the middle of an academic year. The government has also earmarked an amount of Rs 3.19 billion in the 11th five-year plan to strengthen the nursing education and training. Plans are in place to start new ANM and GNM schools in the districts that lack any nursing training institutes and to establish four regional colleges of excellence to improve the quality of nursing education (Bhagianadh, 2011).

Notwithstanding all these measures, there is lot to be done on the level of policymaking. The basic nursing education needs to be streamlined across the country. The administrative control of the profession and training needs to be under nurses themselves. It is high time that nursing comes out of clout of the medicine community, only then the infrastructure and other facilities could be strengthened. There is also a need to enrich curriculum further by incorporating more specialties in nursing. Further, the teaching faculty in nursing should be strengthened. There is a need to encourage research in nursing and continuing education to keep knowledge of nurses updated so that they can handle every situation.

Conclusion

The changes in norms for nursing training facilities have certainly proved a boon for the profit-seeking private sector. The result was mushrooming of private training institutions that too concentrated in certain states. Indian hospitals have engaged in “business process outsourcing” (BPO) to take advantage of this phenomenon. They recruit and train Indian nurses and prepare them to take the foreign nurse examinations. But the nurses trained in India have been facing issues

while seeking employment abroad because of their inadequate training. Therefore, there is an urgent need that the nursing education programme in India should be strengthened. The Indian Nursing Council should be vested with requisite powers, so that it can work in tandem with the State Nursing Councils for the purpose of regulating and maintaining standard in nursing education and training. The government should take initiatives to create and empower leaders from the nursing fraternity itself. Moreover, there should be efforts to provide adequate infrastructure, remuneration and working conditions to the nurses. Efforts should be made by the government to retain qualified nursing personnel in the country.

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Academic Stress in relation to Classroom Environment among Secondary School Students

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Abstract

With the changing times, the world is becoming competitive, and life has started moving at a fast pace. As a result, stress has become an inseparable part of our lives. The term 'stress', which was once used in context of adults, is now being experienced by children from an early age, as they have to deal with it in their daily lives to live up to the expectations of parents and society. As Strauss (2011) mentioned the importance of emotional, physical, and respectful environment in learners' success, the present study focuses on the academic stress and classroom environment among secondary school students. The sample included class X students, studying in randomly selected secondary schools of Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh. The data were collected using Academic Stress Scale (Chavhan, 2012) and Classroom Environment Scale (Kaur and Sharma, 2013). Pearson's product moment correlation was used to ascertain the relationship between academic stress and classroom environment; and independent sample t-test was used to find the difference in academic stress between male and female students.

Keywords: *Academic Stress, Classroom Environment, Students, Secondary Schools*

Introduction

Stress has somehow become omnipresent nowadays. Earlier it was seen that the adults who faced the uncertainties of life experienced stress, however now more and more youth are experiencing it, especially those who are in the decisive phases of their life. Though it is natural to experience some amount of stress also termed as eustress, as it pushes us to do well and meet the demands at work or at school, be ready to face change or challenging social situations. However, it is seen that stress has a harmful effect on health and well-being on some people who experience it for longer periods. What is stress? Is academic stress any different? A student who reaches the school is a reflection of the society in which he lives.

He comes to school with his unique set of characteristics, his individual differences, his experiences, his strengths, and his weaknesses. Academic stress that the students face is also a result of many factors- internal as well as external.

English Oxford Dictionary defines stress as, “to subject (a material thing, a bodily organ, a mental faculty) to stress or strain; to overwork, fatigue.” This definition suggests that stress occurs when pressure is exerted in any form. More is the pressure; more is the stress and greater are the chances of damage. Hence, we can say that external pressures act as a stimuli and stress is a reaction to the stimulus. “Academic stress is a mental distress with respect to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even awareness of the possibility of such failure” (Gupta and Khan, 1987). “Academic stress pervades the life of students and tends to impact adversely their mental and physical health and their ability to perform schoolwork effectively” (Clark & Rieker, 1986; Felsten & Wilcox, 1992). Archer and Lamnin (1985) have defined academic stress as a stress that arises from important factors like writing term papers, anxiety related to tests, inappropriate study skills, too much academic load and classroom environment, which is the major source of general stress among adolescent students. Study conducted by Bisht (1989) reveals that academic stress reflects perception of students’ academic frustration, academic conflict, academic pressure, and academic anxiety.

The 21st century is the age of excellence. To excel in every field brings the pressure to perform and achieve which allows the stress to enter in the life of every individual. Students are no exception to stress. Student life is known to be the age to learn and prepare for future life and evaluation of this preparation is governed by the achievement of the students in their academic pursuits. Aldwin & Greenberger, 1987 reported that problems related to academics are one of the most common sources of stress among students. It was observed by Schafer (1996) in his study that school related daily hassles such as constant pressure of studying, paucity of time, too many written tests that forced lots of memorisation, planning for one’s future, and attending long lectures acted as stressors among the students. This coupled with parental pressure and societal expectations make the situation worse.

Burnett and Fanshaw (1997) identified nine problem areas experienced by adolescents that act as stressors for them. Many of them include school related factors like teaching methods, student-teacher relationships, school workload,

school environment and feeling vulnerable; along with personal organization, achieving independence, anxiety about the future, and relationships with parents.

In addition to these societal factors there are many other external factors that exist in the classroom. The major factor is peer pressure and acceptance, especially during the adolescent period. This acts as a source of pressure which affects not only academics but all facets of adolescent life. Students suffering from any kind of Learning disabilities face stress in coping up with all academic aspects of the classroom such as reading accurately, expressing themselves, speaking in public, simple calculations etc. In the same way board exams, entrance exams, tuition classes etc. also add to stress among students.

Koebele (nd) suggested excessive homework load, peer pressure, busy schedules involving after school activities (like hobby classes and additional academic support activities), image concerns and financial worries related to unaffordability of material goods are also some of the reasons for stress among students. Strauss (2011) reported that the classroom environment, particularly lack of material resources like textbooks and learning materials, inadequate temperature, and unclean classrooms produce negative feelings among students to an extent that students feel a loss of a sense of value and importance. This affects the students negatively in the way they value education and reduces their ability to stay on task in the classroom.

Akeela and Ashok (2018) identified poor infrastructure, less supportive teachers, monotonous teaching methods and poor interpersonal relationships as the school related stressors among adolescents.

In one of the findings, Strauss (2011) reported that “stress in the classroom environment affects children’s likelihood of exhibiting learning problems (difficulties with attentiveness, task persistence, and flexibility) externalizing problems (frequency with which the child argues, fights, disturbs on-going activities, and acts impulsively), problems interacting with peers (difficulties in forming friendships, dealing with other children, expressing feelings, and showing sensitivity, or internalizing problems (presence of anxiety, loneliness, low self-esteem, and sadness in the child)”. The results of the study suggested that a negative classroom environment leads to stress among students which negatively affects their attention, ability to focus and switching between activities.

Pascoe, Hatrick and Parker (2019) advocated that academic stress negatively impacts students' learning capacity and academic performance and increases mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety, sleep disturbances and substance use.

Rationale

Stress related problems and mental health issues are on a rise these days. Adolescents who are in the formative years of their adult lives are especially prone to stress related problems. The review of the related literature suggests that there are various factors that lead to academic stress and major ones responsible for this stress are the growing academic pressure, high expectations irrespective of student abilities and faulty assessment mechanisms that focus more on grades and less on skills acquired. Adolescents spend a major chunk of their academic life at school and school life leaves a greater impact on them. Hence it becomes important for the academicians to create a classroom environment that make the academic journey of our students stress free. Most of the studies on academic stress have been conducted in relation to the demographic variables. There are very few studies that are conducted on academic stress in relation to the classroom environment. So, the present study was conducted with the aim to understand the relationship between academic stress and classroom environment, so that we can identify the factors that are responsible for academic stress among students.

Objectives

1. To study the relationship between academic stress and classroom environment of students.
2. To compare the mean scores on academic stress of male and female students.

Hypotheses

H₀₁) There is no significant relationship between academic stress and classroom environment of students.

1. There is no significant relationship between academic stress and classroom infrastructure of students.
2. There is no significant relationship between academic stress and teacher behaviour and characteristics of students.

3. There is no significant relationship between academic stress and student behaviour and characteristics of students.
4. There is no significant relationship between academic stress and discipline and evaluation of students.

H₀₂) There is no significant difference in mean scores of academic stress of male and female students.

Method and Procedure

In the present study the Descriptive survey method of research was used. For collecting data from the students studying in senior secondary schools of Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh, proper channel was adopted, and permission was sought from the DEO. The population included students studying in senior secondary schools of Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh. After obtaining the permission from DEOs, the schools were selected through random sampling techniques. The researchers personally visited the schools and explained the purpose of research to school administrators and teachers. After getting the permission from school administrators and teachers, researchers interacted with students and explained the purpose of research. Students were given the choice to participate in the research or back out before collecting data. Data was collected from only those students who were willing and gave consent to fill the tools. The sample included 104 students studying in class X in senior secondary schools of Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh. Of these 104 students, 54 students were from the schools of Chandigarh and 50 students were from the schools of Himachal Pradesh. Sample included 55 male students and 49 female students.

The data for academic stress was collected by using the Academic Stress Scale developed by Chavhan (2012) and the classroom environment was assessed by using the Classroom Environment Scale developed by Kaur and Sharma (2013). The academic stress scale included 34 items, where all the items were positively worded. The split half reliability was found to be 0.84 and Cronbach's alpha was found to be 0.86. Academic stress scale was a four-point rating scale with 'Always' scored 1, 'Frequently' scored 2, 'Sometimes' scored 3 and 'Never' was scored 4.

The classroom environment scale was a five-point Likert scale, with positive and negative worded items. The scale ranged between strongly disagrees

to strongly agree. The classroom environment scale included four dimensions namely, (i) classroom infrastructure, (ii) teacher behaviour and characteristics, (iii) student behaviour and characteristics and (iv) discipline and evaluation. The scale included 47 items including 34 positive items and 12 negative items. The reliability of the scale was found to be .978 calculated by using test-retest correlation coefficient. The validity was found to be .22 by calculating inter-correlations of items with the total score. The positive item was scored 5 and 1 for strongly disagree and negative items were scored vice versa.

The process of data collection from students took two days. On the first day the classroom environment scale was administered, and academic stress scale was administered on the second day. Firstly, the instructions were given to students about how to fill the tools and they were asked if they had any doubts or queries. After instructions and resolving queries of students, the students were asked to start filling the tools and these were collected from them after 60 minutes. The researcher then manually scored each item of both tests and manually entered the scores on MS excel sheet. The scores of only those students were taken who were present on both the days and filled both the tools. The tabulated data was analysed by using Person's product moment correlation and independent sample t-test. Hypotheses were tested at 0.05 level of significance by using SPSS (Version 16).

Results and Discussion

H₀₁) There is no significant relationship between academic stress and classroom environment of students.

Table 1: Relationship of Academic Stress with Classroom Environment

Relationship of Academic Stress with Classroom Environment	N	r	Remarks
	104	-.204	Statistically significant

Table 1 shows the relationship between scores on academic stress and classroom environment of the students. Pearson's product moment correlation was calculated to assess the relationship between academic stress and classroom environment of the students and the value was found to -.204, which was found to be statistically significant. This shows there exists a negative and significant

relationship between academic stress and classroom environment of the secondary school students of Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh, indicating that scores on academic stress and classroom environment are inversely proportional, i.e., better the classroom environment, less will be the stress among students.

Table 2: Relationship of Academic Stress with Dimensions of Classroom Environment

Relationship of Academic Stress with Dimensions of Classroom Environment	N	r	Remarks
Classroom Infrastructure	104	-.248	Statistically significant
Teacher behaviour and characteristics	104	-.218	Statistically significant
Student behaviour and characteristics	104	.041	Statistically not significant
Discipline and Evaluation	104	-.105	Statistically not significant

Further, to assess the relationship between the academic stress and dimensions of classroom environment i.e. classroom infrastructure, teacher behaviour and characteristics, student behaviour and characteristics and discipline and evaluation Pearson's product moment correlation was calculated. The value of Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient was found to be -.248, -.218, .041 and -.105 for relationship between academic stress and classroom infrastructure, teacher behaviour and characteristics, student behaviour and characteristics and discipline and evaluation respectively, as shown in table 2. It is evident from the above table that there exists a negative and statistically significant relationship between academic stress and classroom infrastructure and teacher behaviour and characteristics of the secondary school students of Chandigarh and Himachal Pradesh. Also, there is no statistically significant relationship between student behaviour and characteristics and discipline and evaluation with academic stress. This can be concluded that better classroom infrastructure and teacher behaviour and characteristics results in low academic stress while student behaviour and characteristics and discipline and evaluation do not show any such relationship with academic stress. The result is supported by the findings of Jayanthi, Thirunavukarasu and Rajkumar (2014) that teachers'

expectations were the main sources of academic stress among the adolescents. The result is also supported by Strass (2011) who mentioned in his work that instructional material and respect toward teachers and support from fellow students helps to deal with emotional problems among students. The Ministry of Education, Guyana also mentions the importance of the classroom environment as it can help in building positive attitude of students. It mentions the role of the teacher and physical environment along with emotional and respectful environment to build positive attitude among students.

H₀₂) There is no significant difference in mean scores of academic stress of male and female students.

Table 3: Difference in Mean Scores of Academic Stress of Male and Female Students

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	SEM	SED	t-value	df	Remarks
Academic Stress	Male	55	68.02	14.298	1.928	3.066	.859	102	Statistically not significant
	Female	49	70.65	16.960	2.423				

To assess the difference in mean scores of academic stress of male and female students, an independent t-test was calculated (Table 3). The calculated t-value was found to be 0.859 for df 102, which was not statistically significant, as both male and females had similar mean scores on academic stress (male = 68.02 and female 70.65). The results from table 3 show that there is no significant difference between the male and female students on scores of academic stress, i.e. both male and female faces similar academic stress. The result is in congruence with studies conducted by Bartwal and Raj (2013); Agarwal (2011) which revealed that the academic stress experienced by both male and female adolescents is similar. The results show conflict with the studies done by Menaga and Chandrasekaran (2013), Jayanthi, Thirunavukarasu and Rajkumar, (2014), Kumar, Santhosh and Jahira, Kumari and Gartia (2012) showing difference in the academic stress of the higher secondary school students with regard to their gender.

Conclusion

From the present study it was concluded that classroom environment directly impacts the academic stress among the students. Better the classroom environment, lesser will be the stress among students. Classroom infrastructure was identified as one of the main contributing factors for determining academic stress among students, so administration should give importance to infrastructure not only in terms of quantity but quality as well. It has also been seen that teacher's behaviour and characteristics impact classroom environment. Even when a teacher is unaware regarding the crucial role she plays in the classroom environment, she may act as a source of developing academic stress. So, time to time teacher training programs should be held to equip the teachers to deal effectively with the classroom environment. Though stress in a lower amount may push a student to do well but conditions should be maintained in such a manner this stress does not move from eustress to a level where it poses a threat to student's well-being. Schools should also make an effort to appoint counsellors to deal with the problems of students as well as staff. As an extension to this work, further research can be taken up to understand the predictors of academic stress and strategies that can help to minimize it and develop a positive attitude among students.

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