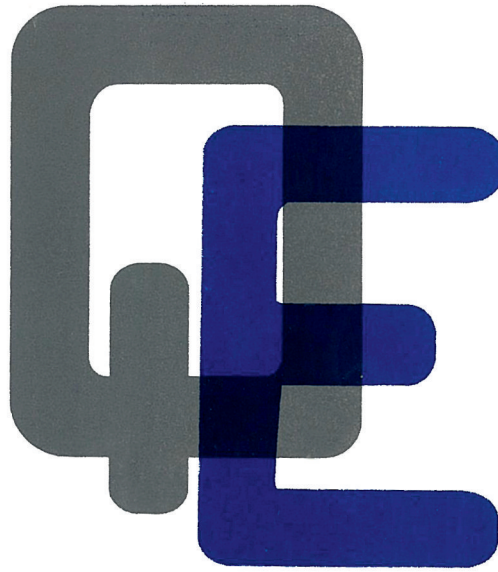




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Editorial

Esteemed Readers,

Peace education has gained great importance in the current global discourse. Even the vision and mission of Sustainable Development Goals have given major emphasis on education, gender justice and peace. In this issue of Quest in Education, we have included a thought-provoking article to enrich the understanding on these contemporary concerns of universal appeal.

- S. Prabhu Shankar's article reflects on **The Power of Non-violence and Peace: Mahatma Gandhi's Enduring Message for a Divided World** and examines the theoretical foundations, empirical evidence, and practical applicability of Mahatma Gandhi's doctrine of non-violence (*ahimsa/ satyagraha*) as a constructive approach to fostering global peace and social harmony in the 21st century.
- Gurbinder Kumar and Jogen Kumar examine the transformative impact of feminist pedagogies in achieving the objectives of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), specifically SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 5 (Gender Equality) in their ideologically rooted article, **Feminist Pedagogies and the SDGs: Reimagining Education for Empowerment**
- In the grounded research based article, **Educational Incentives and Gendered Choices: An Analysis of Pudhumai Penn and Tamil Pudhalvan Schemes**, by Ms. Anu G. M, the Research findings highlight the effectiveness of the schemes in educational access, but gender norms prevent girls and women to translate their educational qualification into career.

The scholars and experts are requested to send their original research-based articles, case studies and book reviews on contemporary challenges faced by the education sector.

Prof. Dr.

Vibhuti Patel

Chief Editor

THE POWER OF NON-VIOLENCE AND PEACE: MAHATMA GANDHI'S ENDURING MESSAGE FOR A DIVIDED WORLD

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This article situates Gandhian thought within modern scholarship on nonviolent resistance, explores the transformative potential of nonviolence in cultivating reconciliation and mutual understanding, and assesses how Gandhian principles might inform conflict prevention, peace education, and community healing. Drawing on interdisciplinary literature and selected contemporary examples, the paper argues that while Gandhian non-violence may not serve as a universal solution to all sources of global discord, its core tenets—moral transformation, mass-based non-cooperation, strategic discipline, and creative non-coercive tactics—offer vital pathways for nurturing peaceful societies, countering polarization, and strengthening institutions committed to justice and coexistence. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for embedding nonviolent philosophies into peace-building frameworks and civic initiatives and identifies research gaps for further exploration.

Keywords: *Non-violence, Peacebuilding, Conflict resolution, Peace studies, Constructive programme, Reconciliation*

Introduction

"Nuclear Weapons were a sinful and diabolical use of Science" (Gandhi, 1947). The 21st century has been shaped by a complex array of global challenges, including political polarization, social unrest, ideological extremism, and threats to communal harmony. While traditional responses have often relied on security measures, enforcement, and coercive interventions, such approaches can sometimes lead to unintended consequences: social fragmentation, loss of trust, civic disempowerment, and cycles of fear and exclusion. In this context, there is a growing interest in peaceful alternatives that prioritize inclusive dialogue, non-coercive transformation, and the restoration of human dignity. Mahatma Gandhi's

philosophy of non-violence—anchored in Ahimsa (non-harm), Satyagraha (truth-force), moral discipline, and collective civil engagement—offers a distinctive moral and strategic framework that deserves renewed examination as a means to foster peace, justice, and sustainable coexistence in the modern world.

Assumptions on enduring significance of Gandhi's non-violence

This paper explores the following central question: In what ways can Gandhian non-violence be relevant and practical in fostering peace and addressing the complex challenges to social harmony in the 21st century?

To answer this, the paper:

- (1) outlines Gandhi's beliefs and theory of non-violence and peace.
- (2) reviews contemporary empirical research on the effectiveness of nonviolent movements.
- (3) examines the nature of modern societal and ideological conflicts and how nonviolent strategies might respond to them.
- (4) analyzes case studies and mechanisms through which nonviolence promotes reconciliation and delegitimizes coercion; and
- (5) provides pragmatic policy recommendations and identifies research agendas for advancing peacebuilding through Gandhian principles.

Theoretical Foundations: Gandhi's Ahimsa and Satyagraha

Gandhi's doctrine rests on ethical and strategic pillars. Ethically, ahimsa is a moral discipline that refuses to inflict harm on others and seeks the transformation of both oppressor and oppressed through truth (Satya) and love. Practically, Satyagraha is a method of nonviolent struggle: organized, principled, and aimed at eliciting conscience, creating social pressure, and disrupting unjust systems without reciprocal violence.

Three operational elements make Gandhian non-violence more than mere passivity:

Mass-based participation: Satyagraha mobilizes broad social segments—workforce, women, religious groups—creating exit options for regime

coercion and imposing political costs on violence.

Moral framing: Nonviolence seeks to shift legitimacy away from violent actors by exposing injustice and appealing to domestic and international moral sensibilities.

Strategic non-co-operation and constructive programs: Techniques include strikes, boycotts, civil disobedience, parallel institutions, and constructive social work that build resilience and alternatives.

Gandhi also emphasized self-discipline (control over anger and retaliation), voluntary suffering as a moral witness, and long-term transformation of relationships rather than quick coercive victories.

Empirical Evidence: Does Non-Violent Resistance Foster Peace?

Recent quantitative and qualitative research has significantly informed the debate on the effectiveness of nonviolent movements in advancing peaceful and democratic change.

Notably, studies by Erica Chenoweth and others demonstrate that nonviolent campaigns have a higher success rate than violent struggles in achieving political and social objectives, and that such movements are more likely to lead to inclusive, participatory, and democratic institutions in their aftermath. Research indicates that nonviolent campaigns tend to attract broader participation across social, ethnic, and class divisions, which enhances their legitimacy and increases the likelihood of durable, peaceful outcomes (Gangrade, 2004).

These findings are especially relevant in a global context where divisions, marginalization, and authoritarian responses often erode prospects for peace. When nonviolent movements successfully mobilize diverse constituencies, they can delegitimize coercive responses, foster dialogue, and open pathways for peaceful negotiation and reform. However, important caveats remain: the success of nonviolent efforts depends on factors such as political context, regime characteristics, external influences, and the strategic capacity of movements. Research also notes that state actors may evolve their responses—employing legal restrictions, digital surveillance, or targeted repression—to challenge the effectiveness of peaceful resistance.

The Nature of 21st-Century Challenges to Peace and Social Cohesion

The landscape of peace-building and civic engagement in the 21st century has become increasingly complex due to evolving global dynamics. Decentralized movements, transnational ideological networks, the rise of lone-actor extremism, and the hybridization of conflict—including the use of cyber tools, disinformation, and propaganda—have significantly altered the context in which nonviolent action must operate. Post-9/11 geopolitical shifts, foreign interventions, and rapid technological advancements have not only changed the means of disruption but also the narratives surrounding identity, resistance, and legitimacy. Scholarly and policy analyses highlight the rise of ideological polarization, right-wing and ethno-nationalist extremism, and the persistence of radical networks in fragile or fragmented states. These developments pose unique challenges to applying traditional forms of nonviolent resistance in today's world (Brookings Institution, n.d.).

Key obstacles to nonviolent engagement include: (1) actors who deliberately incite fear or provoke disproportionate responses to undermine peace efforts; (2) regions where authoritarian or extremist control limits safe civic participation; and (3) ideological frameworks that reject compromise, pluralism, or moral dialogue. Nevertheless, these same contexts often reveal deep societal grievances, structural injustices, and unmet human needs—conditions that, if addressed thoughtfully and non-violently, offer opportunities for inclusive civic mobilization, restorative justice, and long-term peacebuilding.

Mechanisms: How Non-Violence Can Foster Peace and Social Transformation

To remain relevant in the 21st century, Gandhian methods must be linked to mechanisms that actively promote peace and reduce the drivers of violence and division. One such mechanism is the delegitimization of violence, wherein nonviolent movements expose the moral and practical shortcomings of coercive or extremist approaches. When broad segments of society publicly reject violence and uphold the ethics of non-harm, divisive ideologies lose their appeal. This moral stance can weaken recruitment narratives and diminish communal support for actors who rely on coercion.

Strategic non-cooperation also plays a crucial role in isolating those who seek

to disrupt peace. Through boycotts, community-led refusal to enable harmful activities, and active civic reporting, peaceful societies can increase the social and operational costs for groups or systems that perpetuate division. When communities disengage from violence-dependent economies or governance models, they disrupt the legitimacy and control of those structures (Chenoweth, 2019). A key element of Gandhi's philosophy—constructive work—offers pathways for de-radicalization and reconciliation. Initiatives such as community education, participatory local governance, and inclusive economic development create positive alternatives to the grievances that often lead to division and unrest.

Rehabilitation programs grounded in moral persuasion and social inclusion can provide more holistic responses than punitive measures alone. Nonviolent civic pressure can also help open political space for dialogue and reform. When sustained peacefully, mass movements that articulate shared grievances may compel engagement and negotiation by demonstrating widespread public will. In contexts where change agents depend on public support, a credible, nonviolent alternative increases the potential for peaceful resolution.

International and transnational solidarity, mobilized through nonviolent activism and moral appeals, can draw the attention of global civil society, generate diplomatic support, and encourage constructive international engagement. Unlike militarized responses—which often cause civilian harm and perpetuate cycles of resentment—nonviolent strategies aim to reduce suffering and address root causes of injustice and exclusion. These mechanisms, however, are not automatic. Their success depends on strategic planning, the protection of peaceful participants, and the presence of enabling conditions such as legal safeguards, strong civil society networks, and sustained international support.

Case Studies and Comparative Insights

While classic Gandhian examples—such as India's independence movement—remain deeply inspirational, contemporary case studies offer practical insights into the potential and limitations of nonviolent approaches to building peace and social resilience.

Case 1 – Mass Nonviolent Movements and Democratic Transitions:

Comparative research demonstrates that nonviolent movements (e.g., the Eastern European revolutions, South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle) are often more successful in achieving political transformation and establishing inclusive institutions than movements grounded in violence. These examples suggest that where widespread grievances exist and civil society can be effectively mobilized, nonviolent strategies are more likely to result in lasting peace and equitable governance.

Case 2 – Community-Led Peacebuilding in Conflict-Affected Regions:

Examples from local communities in regions facing ideological polarization or armed control (e.g., Kurdish civil society initiatives in parts of Syria and Iraq, communal peacebuilding efforts in certain African regions) show that community-level non-cooperation and local governance initiatives can reduce the influence of coercive actors. These efforts often combine intercommunal dialogue, civic organizing, and the strategic withdrawal of resources and legitimacy from those who disrupt peace.

Case 3 – Social Reintegration and Transformative Rehabilitation:

Several countries have explored rehabilitation programs focused on education, moral development, and reintegration into society, reflecting Gandhian ideals of transformation over punishment. Though outcomes vary depending on political context and program design, these initiatives demonstrate the potential of nonviolence in healing divided communities and offering alternatives to exclusion and alienation.

Case 4 – Digital Nonviolence and Counter-Narratives:

In today's digital age, the struggle for peace and dignity also plays out in the information space. Nonviolent digital strategies—such as counter-narratives, peace-oriented storytelling, and online civic engagement—seek to delegitimize hate-based ideologies and promote empathy, justice, and inclusion. Though Gandhi lived in a pre-digital era, his commitment to moral persuasion and truth remains highly relevant in shaping contemporary narratives.

Despite these promising examples, several challenges remain:

(i) in environments with heavy repression, peaceful civic mobilization can be suppressed or distorted; (ii) external interventions or instability may fracture communities and constrain nonviolent organizing; (iii) global networks of ideological influence can bypass local peace efforts; and (iv) online platforms may be used to amplify divisive content despite grassroots peacebuilding. Nevertheless, these cases affirm that, when supported and protected, nonviolent approaches rooted in Gandhian principles can offer powerful and adaptable tools for advancing peace in complex 21st-century contexts.

Strategic Design: Translating Gandhian Principles to Contemporary Policy

To operationalize Gandhian approaches in modern conflict and counterterrorism policy, the following design elements are critical:

Protection and enabling of civic space by means of non-violent mobilization requires safe spaces, legal protections, and mechanisms to prevent state repression. International actors can play a role in monitoring and offering protection through documentation and pressure. *Broad-based inclusion* aiming at building movements that cross ethnic, religious, and socioeconomic lines to deny violent groups monopolies on grievance narratives. *Non-violent discipline and training* that movements are taught to cultivate nonviolent discipline - training activists to resist provocation, manage interactions with security forces, and maintain moral authority.

Constructive programmes that concentrate on parallel governance, education, public services, and economic initiatives reduce dependence on violent actors and present tangible alternatives. *Information strategy* by means of employing strategic communications to counter extremist narratives, expose the costs of violence, and frame nonviolence as a viable, dignified option. *Integration with rule-of-law and justice mechanisms* where in non-violent movements should be coupled with transitional justice, accountability for abuses, and institutional reforms to avoid grievances that can re-ignite violence. *International support tailored to nonviolent methods* aimed to aid, diplomatic leverage, and capacity building should prioritize civil society, local governance, and nonviolent conflict resolution approaches rather than exclusively military support.

Challenges in Applying Gandhian Non-Violence to Contemporary Peacebuilding

Applying Gandhian non-violence to today's complex peace and security environments presents several practical and ethical challenges: Asymmetric Risks and Immediate Protection needs that focus states having a legitimate responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of their citizens in the face of immediate threats to peace and public order.

Nonviolent strategies often unfold over the long term and may not offer rapid solutions in crisis scenarios (Ghosh, 2018). Bridging this gap requires thoughtful integration of protective measures with long-term peace-building. Authoritarian Resistance and Repression, regimes may co-opt legal tools, surveillance technologies, and coercive tactics to suppress peaceful civic mobilization. In such cases, strategic timing, international solidarity, and sustained external advocacy become essential to protect and legitimize nonviolent movements.

Moral Expectations and Community Realities, expecting communities under threat to uphold nonviolence without addressing their need for security and dignity can be ethically problematic. Peace-oriented policies must balance the right to self-protection with the promotion of nonviolent pathways that are realistic, empowering, and context-sensitive.

Engaging with Ideologically Rigid Actors, driven by rigid, exclusionary ideologies may not respond to moral appeals alone. Nonviolent strategies in these contexts should be complemented by locally informed approaches, including education, dialogue, and preventive measures rooted in de-radicalization and reconciliation. Transnational and Technological Complexities, Online platforms and transnational networks can sustain divisive or harmful narratives, even when local support diminishes. Peace movements must therefore develop digital resilience, build transnational solidarity, and engage in strategic communication to uphold truth, dignity, and non-coercion in the information space.

Policy Recommendations

Drawing from theoretical insights, empirical evidence, and real-world case studies, the following policy recommendations are proposed for governments, civil society actors, and international partners. Integrate nonviolent strategies

into peace and resilience frameworks by incorporating civil resistance training, civic education, and grassroots organizing as central components of peacebuilding and community resilience programs. Support and protect civil society and independent voices by providing funds, capacity-building, and diplomatic support to local NGOs, religious institutions, youth groups, and community leaders who advance nonviolent responses and build inclusive counter-narratives. Prioritize constructive programs in post-conflict contexts by investing in livelihood generation, participatory governance, and infrastructure that offer peaceful and dignified alternatives to reliance on coercive or militant systems of support.

Build capacity for nonviolent discipline and digital literacy by training activists and community organizers in nonviolent principles, security planning, and strategic communication to enhance both offline discipline and online resilience against misinformation or digital repression (Stiftung, n.d.). Design holistic approaches that balance security and peacebuilding by developing integrated strategies that combine proportionate security measures with civic engagement, restorative justice, and institutional accountability, ensuring short-term safety while strengthening long-term peace. Invest in monitoring, evaluation, and learning by supporting rigorous, data-driven evaluation of nonviolent interventions—including comparative and longitudinal studies—to understand what works, in which contexts, and why.

Way Forward

The path ahead lies in translating Gandhian non-violence from a moral philosophy into practical strategies for modern peacebuilding and social transformation. Governments, international organizations, and civil society must invest in strengthening capacities for nonviolent action—such as civic education, interfaith dialogue, grassroots peace initiatives, and digital campaigns that promote inclusion and counter divisive ideologies. Incorporating Gandhian principles into peace negotiations, post-conflict reconstruction, and preventive diplomacy can help redefine security not merely as the absence of conflict but as the presence of justice, dignity, and reconciliation.

At the same time, future research should focus on empirically exploring how nonviolent methods function in complex contexts shaped by social polarization, digital challenges, and evolving forms of disruption. Developing

case studies, comparative analyses, and policy frameworks grounded in Gandhian thought will provide actionable insights for practitioners. By bridging ethical ideals with strategic innovation, the global community can advance a more resilient and humane model of peacebuilding—one that honors Gandhi's vision while adapting to the realities of the 21st century.

Agenda for Further Studies

Effectiveness of nonviolent approaches in high-risk contexts, comparative studies on communities facing severe social or political challenges, examining where nonviolent peacebuilding efforts have succeeded or encountered obstacles.

- (1) Rigorous evaluation of digital campaigns that use Gandhian moral principles to promote peace, inclusion, and resilience against divisive or harmful online content to study the digital nonviolence and counter-narrative impact.
- (2) Integrated models for security and peacebuilding by means of conducting field experiments by testing combinations of protective measures with civic nonviolent initiatives aimed at fostering community cohesion and long-term stability.
- (3) Peacebuilding through constructive programs by conducting longitudinal studies of rehabilitation and reintegration programs grounded in Gandhian ideals of moral transformation, education, and social inclusion.
- (4) Transnational and diaspora engagement by carrying out research on how diaspora communities and global civil society actors can effectively support nonviolent peace strategies and community resilience in their countries of origin.

Conclusion

Mahatma Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, though rooted in the political struggles of the early 20th century, continues to hold profound relevance in addressing the complex challenges of peacebuilding in the 21st century. Gandhi envisioned *ahimsa* not merely as a moral principle but as a practical method of transforming conflict to seek justice without perpetuating cycles of harm or division. Contemporary research on nonviolent resistance affirms his insight: broad-based, disciplined, and morally grounded movements are often

more effective and sustainable than approaches rooted in coercion or force. In the context of global social tensions and multifaceted conflicts, Gandhian non-violence does not promise immediate solutions to urgent crises. Yet it provides a framework for long-term peacebuilding by delegitimizing violence, addressing root causes of injustice, and constructing inclusive and equitable alternatives. Its strength lies in its dual role—as a moral compass that re-humanizes conflict and as a strategic tool, that mobilizes people across divides. The enduring lesson is that the logic of violence, whether exercised by states or extremist groups, can only produce fragile and temporary order. By contrast, non-violence opens the possibility of reconciliation, dignity, and durable peace. Integrating Gandhian principles into contemporary peacebuilding, social policy, and diplomacy therefore represents not a retreat into idealism but an investment in the only sustainable alternative to ongoing division and strife. Gandhi's voice reminds us that in an age marked by unprecedented interconnectedness and challenges, the courage to renounce violence may be the most pragmatic and transformative strategy of all.

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FEMINIST PEDAGOGIES AND THE SDGS: REIMAGINING EDUCATION FOR EMPOWERMENT

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Rooted in critical and feminist theory, feminist pedagogies challenge traditional hierarchical structures in education by centering inclusivity, collaboration, and critical consciousness. Through participatory teaching methods, an emphasis on lived experiences, and an emphasis on intersectionality, feminist pedagogy reframes the educational process as a tool for both individual and collective empowerment. This approach aligns with global calls for gender-equitable, inclusive, and transformative education systems capable of addressing systemic inequalities. The abstract highlights key principles of feminist pedagogy, including decentralization of authority, dialogue-based learning, and recognition of diverse identities in classroom contexts. It also discusses how such pedagogical practices can help dismantle patriarchal norms embedded in curricula and institutional frameworks. Drawing on global case studies—from rural India to feminist collectives in Latin America—this study examines the practical applications, challenges, and policy implications of integrating feminist pedagogies into formal and non-formal education systems. It argues that feminist pedagogical models not only improve gendered outcomes in education but also contribute to sustainable development by fostering equity, agency, and social justice. The paper concludes with policy recommendations for mainstreaming feminist pedagogues and re-imagining education as a transformative space.

Keywords: *Feminist pedagogy, SDG 4, SDG 5, gender equality, critical education, inclusive learning, intersectionality, empowerment*

1. Introduction

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, offer a comprehensive framework to guide global development efforts until 2030. Encompassing 17 interlinked goals, the SDGs aim to address pressing global challenges, including poverty, inequality,

climate change, environmental degradation, and peace and justice. Central to these goals are SDG 4, which emphasizes the provision of inclusive and equitable quality education, and SDG 5, which aspires to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (United Nations, 2015). These goals are mutually reinforcing; without inclusive and transformative education, the possibility of achieving gender justice remains limited, and conversely, the absence of gender equity in learning environments undermines the potential of education to act as a catalyst for social progress.

Despite progress in expanding access to education globally, systemic inequalities persist. Women and girls—particularly those from marginalized communities—continue to experience barriers in educational settings. These barriers include not only limited access but also discriminatory curricula, gender-insensitive pedagogies, unequal teacher expectations, and unsafe learning environments (UNESCO, 2020).

Moreover, dominant education systems often mirror broader patriarchal and hierarchical structures, where knowledge is imparted through top-down methods, student voices are marginalized, and the epistemologies of women, queer people, and racialized communities are excluded or devalued. The result is an education system that frequently reproduces rather than challenges gendered and social hierarchies. Within this context, feminist pedagogies emerge as a radical and transformative alternative to traditional modes of teaching and learning. Rooted in feminist theory and influenced by critical pedagogues such as Paulo Freire, feminist pedagogies seek to disrupt power relations in the classroom, value lived experiences, and foster critical consciousness (hooks, 1994; Freire, 1970). This pedagogical approach emphasizes inclusive, participatory, and dialogical learning spaces that empower learners to become agents of change. Rather than viewing students as passive recipients of information, feminist pedagogy encourages them to be co-creators of knowledge who engage with the world critically and ethically.

The application of feminist pedagogies within the SDG framework is particularly timely and necessary. SDG 4, which calls for the promotion of lifelong learning and equitable education, cannot be fully realized through technocratic solutions or curriculum reform alone. It requires an epistemological shift—an overhaul of how knowledge is produced, distributed,

and valued. Feminist pedagogy, by foregrounding intersectionality and decoloniality, provides a lens through which education can be reimaged to serve all learners equitably, especially those who have been historically marginalized. Similarly, SDG 5 extends beyond increasing the number of girls enrolled in schools. It demands structural changes that dismantle gender-based discrimination and empower women in all facets of life—including the classroom.

Feminist pedagogies contribute to the realization of both goals by fostering critical engagement with social issues, enabling marginalized voices to be heard, and challenging the deeply entrenched power dynamics that shape educational institutions. These pedagogical strategies draw from diverse feminist traditions—Black feminism, Dalit feminism, Indigenous feminism, queer theory, and transnational feminism—to address not only gender but also the intersectionality of caste, class, race, sexuality, and ability. Through this approach, feminist educators cultivate an environment where education becomes a space of resistance, solidarity, and transformation.

Importantly, feminist pedagogy does not advocate a one-size-fits-all model but rather emphasizes context-specific strategies that reflect the lived realities of learners and educators. In rural India, for instance, feminist teaching strategies may involve integrating community-based knowledge systems and challenging caste hierarchies. In urban classrooms, it might mean deconstructing media stereotypes or integrating gender and sexuality into science and humanities curricula. Regardless of context, the central tenet remains the same: education must serve as a practice of freedom (hooks, 1994).

Moreover, feminist pedagogies emphasize relationality and care, which are often overlooked in traditional educational settings. The affective dimensions of learning—empathy, trust, mutual respect—are essential for building inclusive classrooms.

These values also align with the broader human-centered ethos of the SDGs, which advocate for partnerships, peace, and participation in sustainable development efforts (United Nations, 2015). By cultivating care-based educational relationships, feminist educators foster a sense of belonging and

safety that is crucial for meaningful learning and personal empowerment.

This paper explores how feminist pedagogies can be mobilized to advance SDG 4 and SDG 5 by centering inclusion, dialogue, and empowerment. It critically examines the principles, practices, and challenges of implementing feminist teaching strategies across diverse educational contexts. It also highlights the significance of intersectionality in developing pedagogical tools that respond to the complexity of gendered oppression in the Global South and beyond. Drawing on global case studies, theoretical frameworks, and empirical research,

The paper demonstrates that feminist pedagogies are not merely academic preferences but necessary interventions for transforming education into a vehicle for social justice.

Ultimately, the paper argues that reimagining education through feminist lenses contributes not only to gender equality and quality education but also to broader goals of sustainable development. As the world moves toward the 2030 Agenda, there is an urgent need to reframe education systems as spaces for critical thinking, collective action, and transformative empowerment. Feminist pedagogy offers a viable and visionary pathway to achieve these goals—one that sees education not simply as instruction, but as liberation.

Theoretical Framework: Feminist Pedagogy and Critical Education

Feminist pedagogy emerges at the intersection of critical pedagogy and feminist theory, offering a radical rethinking of educational practice grounded in justice, dialogue, and transformative agency. Deeply influenced by Paulo Freire's (1970) conception of education as the "practice of freedom," feminist pedagogy rejects hierarchical and authoritarian models of teaching in favor of dialogic, participatory, and student-centered approaches. In Freire's view, education must cultivate critical consciousness (*conscientização*)—a process by which learners become aware of social injustices and are empowered to act against them. Feminist educators such as bell hooks (1994) have extended Freire's work by foregrounding the intersectionality of oppression, including gender, race, class, caste, and sexuality, and by theorizing the classroom as a space not only of resistance but also of healing and collective transformation.

At its core, feminist pedagogy is relational and political. It views the classroom as a dynamic site where knowledge is produced collaboratively and where power relations are made visible and subject to critique.

As Luke and Gore (1992) argue, feminist pedagogy challenges the traditional "banking model" of education, in which teachers deposit knowledge into passive students, and instead promotes a model of co-learning where students are encouraged to bring their own lived experiences into dialogue with academic content. This practice not only validates diverse epistemologies but also works to dismantle systems of dominance embedded within curricula, assessment practices, and institutional structures.

The theoretical foundations of feminist pedagogy align closely with the objectives of SDG 4 and SDG 5. SDG 4 emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and the promotion of lifelong learning opportunities for all, while SDG 5 seeks to eliminate gender disparities and empower women and girls in every sphere of life (United Nations, 2015). Feminist pedagogy directly contributes to these goals by cultivating learning environments that are inclusive, reflexive, and attentive to social inequities. Through dialogical teaching methods, attention to marginalized voices, and the incorporation of critical social theory, feminist educators challenge the structural and cultural norms that perpetuate inequality in education.

Furthermore, feminist pedagogy calls for an ethical commitment to care, mutual respect, and vulnerability within learning spaces. This stands in stark contrast to the depersonalized and performance-driven ethos of neoliberal education systems, which often prioritize standardized testing and individual achievement over collective empowerment and social justice. Feminist educators advocate for curricula and practices that are emotionally responsive and politically engaged—conditions necessary for fostering agency among learners and for confronting systemic barriers to education (Shrewsbury, 1993).

In reimagining education as a liberatory act, feminist pedagogy encourages critical inquiry into dominant ideologies, repressive histories, and institutional exclusions. It equips learners with the tools to understand their positionalities

and to participate actively in democratic life. This theoretical framework thus serves not only as a pedagogical model but also as a strategy for broader social transformation—one that resonates strongly with the aspirations of the SDGs.

Feminist Pedagogies and the SDG Agenda

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted in 2015, provide a transformative framework for global development by integrating social, economic, and environmental dimensions. Among these, SDG 4 and SDG 5 are central to the vision of a just and equitable society, with education and gender equality at their core. Feminist pedagogies offer both a theoretical and practical approach to reimagining education in a way that directly supports the achievement of these goals. By disrupting traditional, hierarchical, and patriarchal systems of knowledge transmission, feminist pedagogy fosters inclusive, participatory, and critical learning environments that empower marginalized groups and promote equity.

3.1. SDG 4: Quality Education

SDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all" (UNESCO, 2020). Feminist pedagogy contributes meaningfully to this goal by embedding principles of inclusion, participation, and critical engagement into educational spaces. Traditional education systems, particularly in postcolonial and patriarchal societies, often reinforce social hierarchies by privileging certain knowledge systems while marginalizing others. Feminist pedagogy, by contrast, affirms the value of diverse perspectives and centers the lived experiences of learners, especially those marginalized by gender, caste, class, race, or ability.

One of the fundamental tenets of feminist pedagogy is the creation of inclusive classrooms that embrace diversity in all its forms. This includes not only gender diversity but also intersecting identities such as caste, ethnicity, religion, and sexuality. By acknowledging and validating these identities, feminist educators foster an environment in which all students feel seen, heard, and respected. This inclusivity is a prerequisite for equitable quality education. Secondly, feminist pedagogy emphasizes student-centered and participatory learning, rejecting the didactic, "banking model" of education in favor of

approaches that treat students as active co-creators of knowledge. This aligns with SDG 4's emphasis on equitable access and participatory learning processes. Teaching methods such as open dialogue, collaborative projects, and reflexive writing help students develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills, moving beyond rote memorization to deeper cognitive and ethical engagement.

Moreover, feminist pedagogy promotes critical consciousness, encouraging learners to interrogate dominant narratives, question historical silences, and recognize structural injustices. A curriculum that includes feminist, decolonial, and indigenous voices provides students with the tools to understand power relations and envision alternatives (Andreotti, 2011). Such approaches are transformative, not only for individual learners but for society at large, as they nurture informed, empathetic, and engaged citizens.

3.2. SDG 5: Gender Equality

SDG 5 aims to "achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls." Feminist pedagogy is inherently aligned with this goal, as it challenges gender norms, disrupts patriarchal power structures, and creates educational environments that promote empowerment and agency. Unlike conventional pedagogy, which often reinforces gender binaries and traditional roles, feminist teaching explicitly addresses how gender shapes experiences in and outside the classroom.

Through curriculum content and pedagogical practice, feminist educators challenge traditional gender roles, question stereotypes, and deconstruct binary thinking. They also integrate critical discussions on topics such as gender-based violence, reproductive rights, care work, and LGBTQ+ identities, thereby expanding students' understanding of gender and equity.

Feminist pedagogy also emphasizes the creation of safe and supportive educational spaces, particularly for girls, women, and queer students. Such spaces allow students to share their experiences, build solidarity, and find empowerment in collective reflection and action.

Creating these affirming spaces is not ancillary but foundational to achieving SDG 5's targets around equal access to education, leadership opportunities, and freedom from discrimination.

Finally, education grounded in feminist pedagogy fosters self-awareness, leadership, and agency among learners. These attributes are essential for the empowerment of women and marginalized communities. As Stromquist (2015) argues, empowerment through education involves not only access but also transformation of knowledge, of social relations, and of one's sense of self and possibilities.

4. Case Studies: Feminist Pedagogies in Practice

Feminist pedagogies, though rooted in theory, gain transformative potential through localized and contextual implementation. Across the globe, educators and organizations have adopted feminist pedagogical principles to foster inclusive, participatory, and empowering educational practices. The following case studies from India, Latin America, and university settings illustrate how feminist pedagogies can support Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality).

4.1 India: Gender-Sensitive Education in Rural Classrooms

In rural India, where systemic barriers related to caste, poverty, and gender intersect, feminist pedagogical practices have been crucial in promoting inclusive education. The NGO *Educate Girls* offers a compelling example of how gender-sensitive educational interventions can empower both students and teachers. The organization conducts training programs for educators that focus on participatory teaching strategies, gender awareness, and bias recognition in classroom practices.

Through curriculum adaptation and dialogical methods, these educators create environments that are responsive to the needs of girls and marginalized learners. Girls, who were previously silenced or excluded due to traditional patriarchal norms, now find opportunities for self-expression and academic growth. Consequently, regions impacted by *Educate Girls* have reported increased female enrollment, retention, and academic performance (Bhattacharya, 2017). The project exemplifies how feminist pedagogy—when operationalized through

teacher training and community involvement—can disrupt entrenched inequalities and align educational practice with both SDG 4 and SDG 5.

4.2 Latin America: Popular Feminist Education in Community Schools

In Latin America, particularly in Brazil and Nicaragua, grassroots feminist collectives have implemented community-based education models grounded in feminist and Freirean ideals. These models—commonly referred to as *popular education*—go beyond conventional schooling by integrating literacy, vocational training, and political consciousness-raising, especially among indigenous and Afro-descendant women.

These community schools focus on collective empowerment through dialogical learning, mutual respect, and shared leadership. Participants engage in critical discussions on gender roles, labor, domestic violence, and land rights. This model not only challenges patriarchal and colonial power structures but also fosters localized, culturally resonant learning environments (Culwell & Galman, 2012).

By placing women's experiences at the center and using learning as a tool for liberation, these initiatives embody the transformative essence of feminist pedagogy. They contribute to gender justice, economic autonomy, and enhanced civic participation, thus advancing the broader SDG agenda from the ground up.

4.3 Universities and Gender Studies Programs

At the institutional level, feminist pedagogy has found formal expression through university-based gender studies programs. Across the globe, these programs offer critical spaces for academic inquiry, activism, and intersectional learning. Scholars like Patti Lather (1991) have been instrumental in developing pedagogical frameworks that challenge positivist paradigms and hierarchical knowledge structures.

In gender studies classrooms, students are encouraged to question norms, engage in self-reflexivity, and co-create knowledge. Teaching methods often include narrative inquiry, collaborative projects, and experiential learning—all grounded in principles of justice and inclusivity. These programs also serve as incubators for feminist research and policy

advocacy, thereby linking theory with practice.

By institutionalizing feminist pedagogy, universities foster a new generation of scholars and activists equipped to challenge systemic inequalities and contribute meaningfully to the pursuit of SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 4 on equitable education.

Barriers to Implementation

While feminist pedagogy offers a transformative framework aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), its implementation faces numerous structural and socio-political barriers. These challenges hinder its potential to create inclusive, critical, and empowering educational spaces.

One of the primary obstacles is institutional resistance. Many educational institutions continue to operate within hierarchical and bureaucratic frameworks that discourage participatory and dialogical learning. These rigid structures prioritize standardized testing, passive knowledge acquisition, and teacher-centered instruction—models fundamentally at odds with the values of feminist pedagogy (Kumar, 2018).

Additionally, there is a widespread lack of teacher training. Most educators are neither exposed to feminist theory nor equipped with the tools to apply feminist pedagogical practices. Professional development programs often overlook the importance of intersectionality, critical pedagogy, and gender sensitivity, leaving teachers unprepared to foster inclusive and reflexive classrooms.

Political and cultural backlash also poses a significant challenge. In many regions, particularly those with conservative socio-political climates, feminist content and pedagogical methods are perceived as subversive or threatening to traditional values. This resistance often results in censorship, public criticism, or policy restrictions against gender-focused curricula (Kumar, 2018).

Furthermore, the co-option of feminist discourse has diluted its radical potential. Feminist pedagogy is increasingly reduced to generic "gender sensitivity training" or depoliticized diversity initiatives that avoid engaging with power, privilege, and systemic oppression.

As Mohanty (2003) cautions, such superficial incorporation risks neutralizing the emancipatory intent of feminist education.

To realize the transformative aims of SDG 4 and SDG 5, these barriers must be acknowledged and actively dismantled through systemic reform, grassroots advocacy, and pedagogical innovation.

Discussion: Toward a Transformative Educational Model

Feminist pedagogy reimagines education as a site of liberation, moving beyond the confines of literacy and access toward critical consciousness and systemic change. By centering lived experiences, fostering dialogue, and encouraging the interrogation of power structures, feminist pedagogy equips learners with the tools to challenge inequality in their communities and institutions (hooks, 1994). In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), this approach compels a broader understanding of education—not merely as access to schooling (SDG 4), but as a participatory, inclusive, and justice-oriented process.

Importantly, feminist pedagogies contribute to multiple SDG targets beyond SDG 4 and SDG

5. They inherently support SDG 10 (reduced inequalities) by highlighting intersecting forms of marginalization related to gender, caste, class, race, and sexuality. They also nurture peace and conflict resolution skills, thus reinforcing SDG 16 (peace, justice, and strong institutions). Moreover, by promoting collaborative learning and shared leadership, feminist pedagogy exemplifies the kind of partnerships envisioned in SDG 17.

Crucially, feminist pedagogy challenges the neutrality of knowledge, calling attention to whose voices are heard and whose are silenced in curricula and classrooms. In doing so, it fosters critical awareness and collective responsibility among learners—an essential foundation for sustainable development. To move toward a truly transformative educational model, educators and policymakers must embrace these principles, ensuring that the SDG agenda does not replicate existing hierarchies but works to dismantle them.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Feminist pedagogies offer a transformative pathway for realizing the ambitions of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality). Rooted in the principles of intersectionality, reflexivity, and justice, feminist teaching practices reimagine the classroom as a site of empowerment, where marginalized

voices are centered and dominant narratives are critically examined. These pedagogies not only respond to the need for inclusive and equitable education but also contribute to a broader vision of social transformation aligned with the entire SDG framework.

To embed feminist pedagogical principles meaningfully within education systems, several strategic interventions are necessary:

- **Curriculum Reform:** Educational content must be restructured to reflect diverse gendered, cultural, and decolonial perspectives. This entails incorporating feminist scholarship, local knowledge systems, and critical histories to challenge normative biases (Andreotti, 2011).
- **Teacher Education:** Pre-service and in-service teacher training programs should include feminist and inclusive pedagogical approaches that promote dialogical learning, emotional literacy, and collaborative knowledge construction (hooks, 1994; Luke & Gore, 1992).
- **Policy Support:** National and institutional education policies must formally recognize and endorse participatory, student-centered, and gender-sensitive teaching methods. This includes allocating resources and frameworks for implementation and evaluation.
- **Qualitative Assessment:** Beyond enrollment and test scores, evaluation mechanisms must capture qualitative indicators such as voice, agency, critical thinking, and community impact—core outcomes of feminist education (Stromquist, 2015).

Ultimately, feminist pedagogies remind us that education is not neutral. When grounded in equity and empowerment, education becomes a powerful force for dismantling inequality and fostering sustainable development—one classroom at a time.

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EDUCATIONAL INCENTIVES AND GENDERED CHOICES: AN ANALYSIS OF PUDHUMAI PENN AND TAMIL PUDHALVAN SCHEMES

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The study aims to study the effectiveness of monetary assistance schemes in educational empowerment through a gendered lens. Pudhumai Penn and Tamil Pudhalvan schemes are two notable initiatives encouraging girls and boys from low-income families to pursue higher education, respectively. There exists a significant research gap in examining the true metric of empowerment in making career or higher educational choices and how such financial incentive-based interventions help in addressing traditional gender norms in the educational sector. The study aims to bridge this gap by analysing the policy gaps in the schemes that could address internalised gender norms in society and address a perception-reality gap on the influence of gender on career aspirations.

Analysis points out the scope of the schemes to address the subconscious gender bias in educational choices in order to achieve overall empowerment.

Introduction:

Education is the key to bringing socio-economic development in a country like India. It was a long-term struggle to make education equitable in India. During ancient times, education was limited to men and upper varna women (in the Vedic Age). The first ever school for girls was established in 1848 at *Bhide Wada*, Pune, due to the efforts of Savitribai Phule and her husband, Jyotiba Phule. Post-independence, in South India, steps to ensure equal education were marked by the "mid-day meals" scheme of the Tamil Nadu Government, which served the twin purpose of tackling malnutrition and increasing the enrolment ratio. Currently, the *Pudhumai Penn* and *Tamil Pudhalvan Schemes* are designed to enhance the enrolment ratio of female and male students from economically weaker families, respectively. Though access to education has improved across India, the extent to which it has helped to address traditional

gender roles in society remains to be examined. The research focuses on how educational incentive schemes help to break such traditional gender roles in society beyond bridging the academic gap.

Background of the Research Essay:

Traditional gender roles in India are an outcome of patriarchy, cultural socialisation and societal expectations. Patriarchy found its roots in India as early as 1500 BC. Women were viewed as property. Protecting women of the family became the man's duty, which directly translated to his honour. This ensured women stayed within the households while men ventured out. This marked the beginning of the gendered division of labour, where care work was assigned to the female gender, and the male gender became the sole breadwinner of the family.

Patriarchy also imposed traits for genders and placed men on a higher pedestal, who needed to be strong all the time, while women were considered weak and nurturing. When it comes to cultural socialisation, it begins with the basic unit of society, which is the family.

For example, children often grow up seeing female members preparing meals for the entire family and male members driving the car. Next to family, in social institutions like schools and offices, men take up leadership spaces more than women. Women represent 13.6% in the current Lok Sabha. According to the Supreme Court of India's State of the Judiciary report in 2023, women account for 36.3% of the district judiciary, and in 14 states, more than half of the new civil judges (junior division) are women. However, this progress fades at higher judicial levels, where, as of January 2024, only 13.4% of High Court judges and a mere 9.3% of Supreme Court judges are women. At the grassroots level, even if women are given one-third reservation in *Panchayats*, they only become nominal leaders while the actual powers are exercised by their husbands, which is often described as '*Sarpanch-patishm*'.

Societal expectations do not allow men and women to explore careers according to their interests. Rather, it defines who can do what. Men are forced to start earning earlier than women. In the last eight years, more women have enrolled in higher education compared to men (All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE) Report 2021-22). The choice of career is often dictated by

society or decided by family members. True empowerment lies when students make informed career choices for themselves. Failure of this translates to an income gap among genders. It is clearly visible in the aviation sector, which shows occupational gender differences. While women are preferred more as flight attendants, men occupy more technical and managerial roles. According to a report by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), women account for only 5.2% of airline CEOs and 3.3% of board chairs in the industry. India ranks 112th out of 153 countries in terms of gender pay gap (WEF). The report highlights that women in India earn 62.5% less than men. The aviation industry is no exception to this trend. According to a survey by the Aviation Women's Association, women pilots in India earn 30-40% less than their male counterparts. This also shows barriers to men wanting to pursue the hospitality and beauty sector. Sometimes, roles particularly assigned to women are not reflected in the workforce. The culinary industry is a case in point for this paradox. The Time use survey conducted by the National Statistical Office in India (2019) shows that just 6.1 percent of men participate in cooking. However, data shows that men make up for 80 - 90% of chefs while women hold only 10% of executive chef positions, earning nearly 22% less than their male counterparts. In this light, the research essay aims to study how State initiatives help to break such traditional gender roles.

Statement of Problem:

Monetary assistance schemes address access to education to reduce gender gap. It is necessary to explore how the incentives help to address occupational gender differences based on traditional gender roles. The true metric of empowerment, which lies in the level of independence in making informed choices in education and career, needs to be assessed.

Literature Review:

Swamy, Jayasathya (2023) conducted "A STUDY ON HIGHER EDUCATION PUDHUMAI PENN SCHEME". The research studies the attitude, satisfaction level and difficulties faced by women in availing the benefits of the scheme. The study investigates on how the financial incentive offered under the scheme helped to improve the enrolment ratio, reduce the gender gap in education and whether it addresses women's empowerment in Coimbatore

city.

Shriram K, Dr & Bilal, A Mohammed & V, Rajesh (2025) conducted a study on "ROLE AND IMPACT OF SCHEMES EMPOWERING WOMEN IN TAMIL NADU WITH RESPECT TO 'FREE BUS SERVICES, KALAIKATTI MAGALIR URIMAI THOGAI AND MOOVALUR RAMAMIRTHAM AMMAIYAR PUTHUMAI PENN'". The study investigates how these schemes collectively improve women's access to education,

healthcare, and employment, helping to reduce gender inequality in the state. The study focuses on socioeconomic empowerment and improved quality of life of women in Tamil Nadu. The research identifies that more awareness and access to the schemes would amplify the impact. The study suggested educational tutoring and mentorship support under the *Pudhumai Penn* Scheme for students to explore career prospects.

Dr.D.Ramya carried out research on "A STUDY ON AWARENESS OF TAMIL PUDHALVAN SCHEME AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS IN TIRUPPUR DISTRICT".

The study examines the extent of awareness about the scheme among students spanning across different regional spheres and from families of different income levels. The study brings out a lack of clarity among students as to how the scheme supports skill development and entrepreneurial aspirations. The study suggested the extension of the incentive till the student gets placed.

Research Gap:

Current studies have investigated the extent of awareness about the schemes among the students. The impact of the welfare schemes is examined across the student population. The effectiveness of the schemes to close the gender gap in education is studied. However, there is a gap in the research on how the schemes help to truly empower students. This can be understood from the reasons and how the decision on the choice of career was made by the students. More research is needed on how the schemes, beyond monetary support, help to address the occupational gender differences arising out of traditional gender roles rooting from Patriarchy.

Research Methodology:

The study is based on quantitative analysis of primary data collected through the distribution of online and offline survey questionnaires among the beneficiaries of the schemes in colleges and ITI in Coimbatore district. Secondary data includes authentic websites, journals and articles. Analysis is carried out on IBM SPSS software. Quantitative policy analysis helps to present the purpose of the research in a well-structured manner. It helps policymakers to improve the policies based on real time, measurable data that gives a clear picture of the demographics.

Sample size: 190

Sample test: IBM SPSS tools

Sample media: Hybrid (online and offline) survey questionnaire.

Data Collection:

Primary data was collected through the distribution of survey questionnaires. The questions were prepared carefully to understand the thought process of students. The language of the questionnaire was kept simple to avoid confusion. Most of the questions were based on ranking for easy answering. In Polytechnic and Industrial Training Institutions, every question was explained by the researcher to give clarity to the participants. As most of the beneficiaries were from Tamil medium school background, a translated questionnaire was distributed wherever needed. This type of data collection helped in real-time understanding of

the level of student exposure and provided an opportunity to interact with students. All the data was collected with prior permission from the Heads of the institutions and person-in-charge for the *Pudhumai Penn* and Tamil *Pudhalvan* schemes. Data collected was used solely for the research purpose, maintaining confidentiality for the safety of students.

Secondary sources of information include government websites, government orders, reports of international organisations like the UN, reports of authentic research institutions and online studies. These sources of information add value to the research and help to substantiate the arguments for presenting the case. Information was used diligently to avoid any baseless points and to make

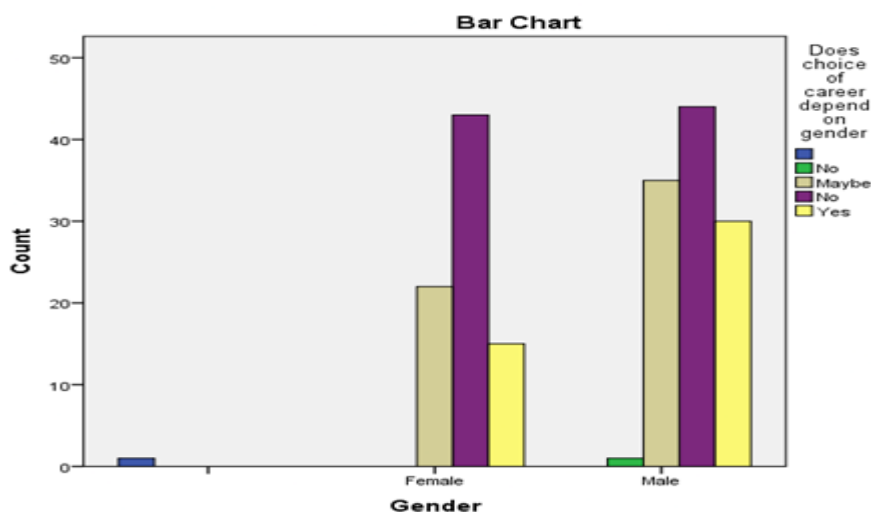
sure the thesis was completely data-driven.

Data Interpretation:

a. (a)Influence of gender on career choices:

The study explores the perception of whether gender has an effect on choice of career for male and female students. Participants were asked their opinion directly whether they think gender has a say in selecting a career. Then the participants were asked whether, if given a chance, they would choose the same career they are pursuing now.

- Only **18.75%** of female students think gender influences career choice.
- **53.75 %** of female students think gender does not influence career choice.
- Only **27.27%** of male students think gender influences career choice.
- **40%** of male students think gender has no role in career choice.
- **58.75%** of female students say their career choice will remain the same regardless of gender.
- **54.55%** of male students say they would pursue the same career regardless of gender.



• **Fig 1: Perception on influence of gender on career choice**

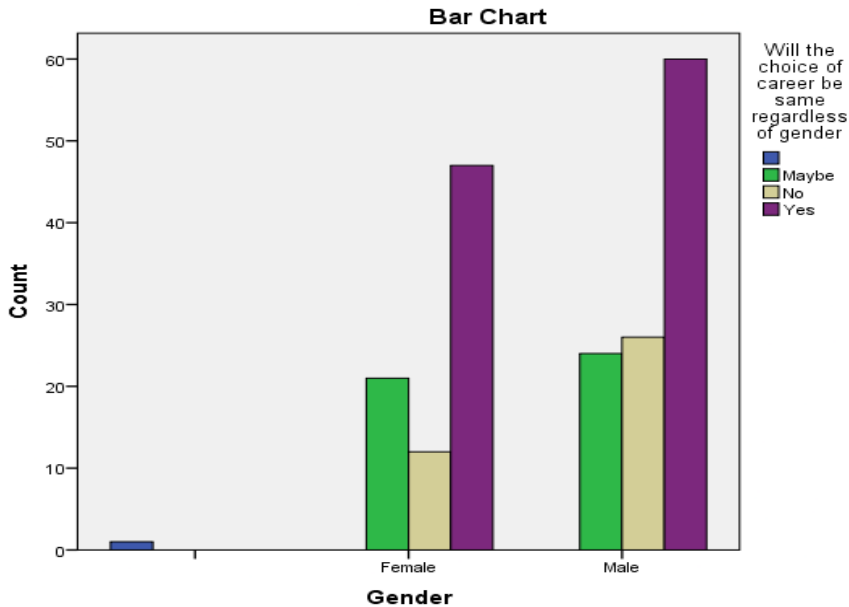


Fig 2: Choice of career regardless of gender

a. (b)The perception-reality gap:

Participants of the study were asked whether their career choices were influenced by gender.

53.75 % of the girl and 40 % of the male respondents felt their gender had no role in their career choice.

Most of the students further insisted that regardless of their gender, they would choose the same career which they currently pursued. On the contrary, a significant majority of male students chose fields that gave them better chances of employability, while girl students had the opportunity to choose fields based on their interest or ambition. Even in industrial training institutions, courses like machinist, fitter, electrician, refrigeration and air conditioning technician, wireman, turner are offered for male students, whereas female students are offered desk-oriented courses like sewing

technology, technician medical electronics, computer operator and programming assistant, information technology, and desktop publishing operator.

The data reveal a compelling paradox. While a substantial proportion of both male and female respondents assert that their career choices are not influenced by gender, the underlying motivations they cite for selecting their educational paths suggest otherwise.

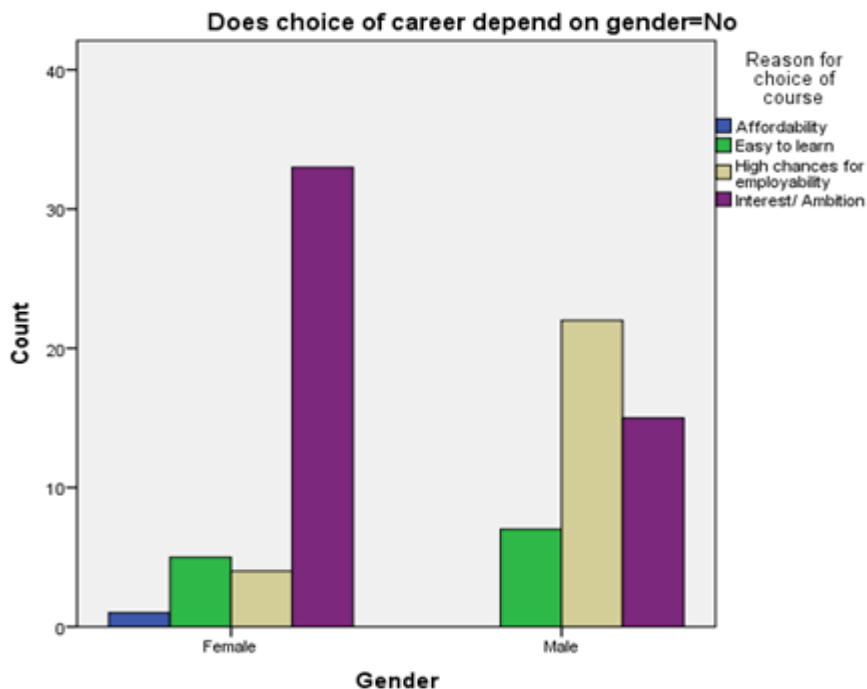


Fig 3: Reason to choose the course across participants who felt gender does not influence career choice.

This contradiction highlights how implicit gender norms continue to shape individual decision-making, even in contexts where explicit biases are denied. Among male respondents who denied gender influence, the predominant motivation **was high chances of employability (50%)**. This points to a

practical, outcome-oriented approach that aligns with conventional masculine roles associated with economic provision and career success. On the other hand, female respondents within the same category predominantly chose **interest/ ambition (76.7%)** as their primary reason, reflecting a value-driven, affective orientation more traditionally associated with feminine self-expression and emotional authenticity. This reveals a perception–reality gap. A majority of female students claim gender doesn't influence career decisions, but very few pursue careers in traditionally male-dominated fields like mechanical engineering. This could suggest structural or social barriers, or internalized gender norms still subtly shape decisions even when students believe they are unaffected (Pierre Bourdieu's theory of *habitus*). Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity further sharpens this interpretation. Butler argues that gender is not something one is, but something one does - a repeated performance that conforms to societal expectations. In this light, the choices made by students are not free from gender, but are in fact performances that re-enact socially sanctioned gender roles, even while denying them. The male students' practical rationale and the female students' affective one represent performative reiterations of masculinity and femininity, respectively.

Way Forward:

1. Curriculum and Career Guidance:

- Gender-Sensitised Career Counselling: Introduce counselling sessions in schools that challenge gender stereotypes and encourage students to explore all fields based on aptitude rather than societal norms.
- Early Exposure to Role Models: Invite professionals from underrepresented genders in different fields (e.g., female technicians, male nurses) to speak with students and normalise diversity in career choices.

2. Awareness and Sensitisation:

- Workshops on implicit bias: Conduct interactive workshops that help students reflect on how gender roles are internalised and subtly influence decision-making, even when they believe they're neutral.
- Curriculum integration: Embed gender studies or equality education

into mainstream curricula to help students critically examine how social norms affect life choices.

- Gender neutral language: Bring awareness on gender-neutral terms like 'wire-person' instead of 'wire man'.

3. Institutional Reforms:

- Incentivise non-traditional fields: Offer scholarships, mentorship programs, or special support systems to encourage students to enter non-traditional domains.
- Gender-Inclusive Policy Design: Institutions should monitor and report gender that data to inform equity-based interventions.

4. Social Messaging and Media:

Campaigns Challenging Stereotypes: Run community awareness campaigns showing students breaking gender norms in education and work. It helps reshape what's considered "normal" or "ideal."

5. Apart from the above, the policies currently address cis genders (cis male and cis female genders), i.e., binary in nature. It could be expanded to cover gender fluid students. The Tamil Nadu government funds higher educational expenses of transgender community, but such an arrangement brings categorisation of male, female and transgenders leaving out many other gender fluid individuals.

6. The incentive amount could be increased as suggested by the participants.

Conclusion:

Monetary assistance schemes like *Pudhumai Penn* and *Tamil Pudhalvan* significantly address the economical barrier in pursuing higher education for girls and women from the underprivileged families. Improving the scheme through gender sensitisation would make it more empowering for all. It can help in achieving holistic development by closing not only the educational

enrolment gap but also the gender gap. It addresses the intersectionality of gender, poverty and educational empowerment.

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PROF. K. VENKATARAMANI KRISHANMURTHY

(20-7-1951 to 20-4-2026)

Friend, Philosopher & Guide to the Higher Educations Institutions in India

By Prof. Vibhuti Patel,

Trustee,

Indian Council of Basic Education, Mumbai



In passing of Dr. Krishanmurthy Venkatramani, the higher education universe has lost a friend, philosopher and guide to innumerable universities and colleges and hundreds of principals and teachers for whom he was a great mentor. He made valuable contribution as IQAC member of over a dozen colleges of University of Mumbai and SNDT Women's University. He meticulously examined each and every document shared with him and provided helpful suggestions, guided principals and authorities about new statutes, compliance mechanisms, and faculty development.

As an expert resource persons of NAAC, he made remarkable contribution for raising the benchmarks for academic excellence in tune with National Education Policy, 2020. It was a learning experience, whenever I heard him as co panelist in the workshops or in the Academic Council, College Development Committee or Internal Quality Assurance Committee of Maniben Nanavati College for Women, BMN College of Home Science and MMP Shah College for Women. His profound sense of precision, meticulous

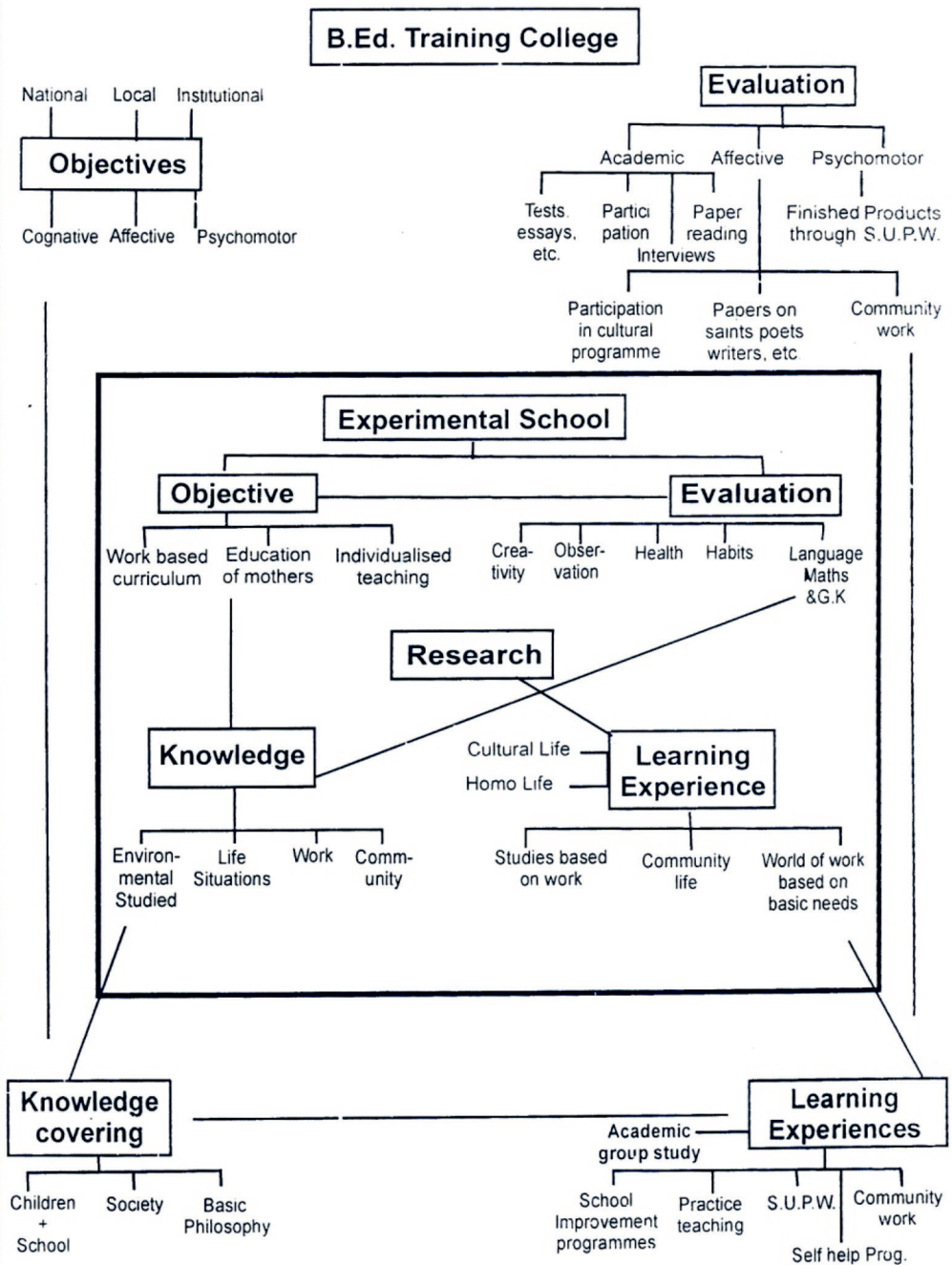
approach. He has keen eye for detail and precision in the educational governance.

- Venkatramani also served as Registrar of University of Mumbai. As a teacher of mathematics, he was popular among his students and as principal of Somaiya College and left an indelible mark of work ethics. He enjoyed good will of staff, teachers and authorities due to his helpful nature, magnanimity in human relations and generosity of heart. He had his admirers among Trustees and Management, Staff, teachers and Students and Principal's Association. He was highly respected by the national level decision makers in the field of higher education as he was a Ready Reckoner of Maharashtra University Act, UGC Rules and well versed with NAAC procedures.

Quest in Education salutes you for your dedication and sincere efforts for building educationists as well as educational institutions.

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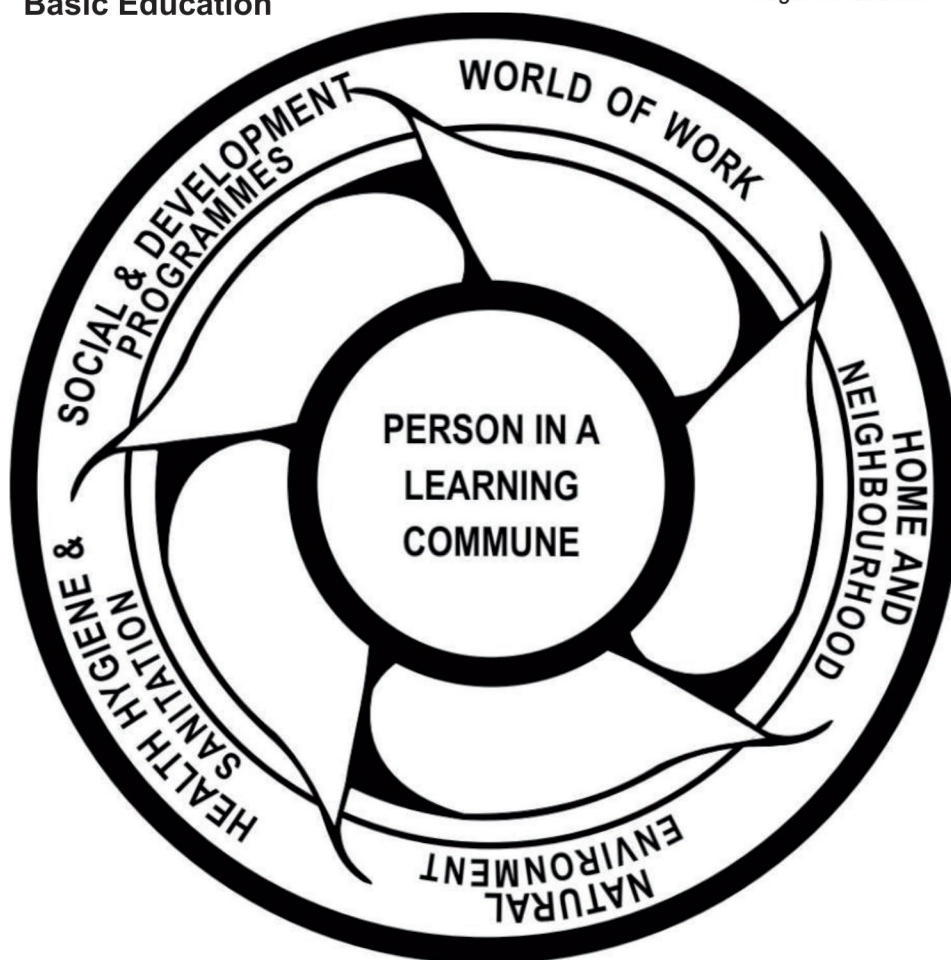


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Development of well-integrate personality is possible if :

- Educational experiences and work experiences interweave, intersect and reinforce each other.
- Students and teachers participate actively in the community services such as adult education, promotion of better health, hygiene and sanitation etc.
- Curriculum provides for self-directed learning and
- Education concerns itself with the development of the human person.

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