



## QUEST IN EDUCATION

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## Editorial

This issue of Quest in Education focuses on important concerns in the contemporary discourses that preoccupy the policy makers and educationists.

‘Life Skills for Adolescent Children’ by *Dr. Asha Patil* shows significance of communication, thinking, emotional skills as well as decision making, problem solving and money management skills and both, parents and teachers are duty-bound to impart these skills to the boys and girls.

Primary research based article by Prof. Manisha Karne & Dr. Sandhya Krishnan titled, ‘Analysing the Impact of Cash Transfer on students of Tribal Residential Schools in Maharashtra’ reveals that there are hindrances at the level of banks as there are problems reported about delay in opening of bank accounts, delay in transfer of cash, negative attitude of the bank staff in some cases etc. The state needs to be proactive in demanding accountability from the banks in this regards.

‘Indian Schools in Context: Gender Bias and Structures of Power’ by Dr. Meenu Anand is based on a research study conducted among sixteen government and private schools of Delhi, India. It seeks to divulge and bring into light the reinforcement of masculinity and femininity constructs within a school system

Draft National Education Policy-DNEP (2019) has been widely debated throughout India both in official circles as well as among civil society groups. Several Round Table discussions have taken place in last 6 months on the policy. Article by Prof. Vibhuti Patel provides critical reflections on the DNEP, 2019.

We request authors to send their original research-based articles and book reviews on issues concerning education. As Quest in Education publishes peer-reviewed articles, the authors should be ready to wait for seeing their article in print.

**Prof. Vibhuti Patel Prof. Veena Devasthali Dr. Ratnabrabha Rajmane**

## **Life Skills for Adolescent Children**

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*The twenty first century parents try to provide facilities such as latest gadgets, lunch/dinner at luxurious hotels, branded clothes, frequent visits to malls/parks/resorts etc., to their children. They believe this would make their children happier, as they cannot spend quality time with them. They select the best school, mostly private, to educate their children. In addition, they send their children to tuitions/ personal coaching classes. In return, they expect their children to score higher grades in the examination. Problem starts when children fail to fulfil parents' dreams. Unfortunately, parents overestimate their children's capacity.*

### **Introduction**

Many a time's children lack communication with their parents. They are scared of their own parents' reactions. This affects their self-confidence and creates hurdles in their performance. In nineteenth century, children were blessed with joint family upbringing, where sharing, adjusting with others, team work, playing (success and loosing), confidence building, respecting elders were integral part of their growing up process. Today, due to the nuclear family set up, most of the children are deprived of these benefits. Hence, there is an urgent need for these children to learn life skills.

Most of the schools focus on bombarding information about various subjects. There are very few schools which focus on imparting skills for healthy living. Life skills lead to a better life. Uncensored exposure due to technological revolution has affected children adversely. Today, children have better materialistic facilities, but they lack in value system. With both the working parents, the flow of money easily fulfils their undue demands. They do not take 'NO' as an answer to these demands. Without family's moral support, they become vulnerable, and at times contemplate suicide as a last resort. Hence, suicide rate is

increasing. To handle this at an early stage, one needs to equip adolescent children with life skills to face the challenges of life.

### **Need for Life skills**

Adolescence is an important threshold stage of life, when the child enters into adulthood. It is a transition period, which is marked with special attributes. In this stage, reproductive organs grow at a faster rate and achieve their peak level of development. Along with physical growth, emotional development also takes place. Due to all these changes, opposite sex attraction increases. There is lot of peer influence at this stage. This is the stage, where adolescents form their self-image. Mental development also takes place along with physical growth and development. Adolescents start expressing their opinions. They want more freedom and prefer to do things independently. They do experimentations and indulge in adventurous things. Many a times, under peer pressure, they do substance abuse, and involve in unsafe sex, which not only affects their bodies badly, but also destroys their whole life. In short, adolescence stage can become vulnerable, if not handled properly. Hence, life skills are crucial for the physical and mental wellbeing of all the adolescents.

### **What are life skills?**

World Health Organization defined life skills as “the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life”.

Life skills help to improve one’s competencies, which in turn, help them to take informed decisions. It is an effective tool, which helps the adolescents to act responsibly. It develops critical thinking skill, which enables them to resolve problems. They help to handle peer pressure, emotional disruption, and conflicts, if any. Overall, it improves social skills, which results into living better life.

It is universally accepted that the health needs, and particularly the reproductive and sexual health (ARSH) needs of adolescents, continue to be ignored and neglected. As they stand at the threshold of adulthood, they need authentic knowledge that helps them understand

the process of growing up with particular reference to their reproductive and sexual health needs. By developing a critical understanding, they have to be well equipped to cope with the problems which they confront. They need guidance and independence simultaneously, education as well as opportunities to explore life for themselves in order to attain the level of maturity required to make responsible and informed decisions (Kapoor, 2018). In short, life skills inculcate healthy behaviour. Hence, Dakar Framework for Action (World Education Forum, Dakar, Senegal, 2000), also emphasises on need for life skills.

Following are some of the important life skills every adolescent should have:

**Communication skills-** Assertive communication is very important in interpersonal relations. This reduces conflicts and helps for smooth functioning. Adolescents need to be taught that every person has a right to express their opinion. Each individual has their own opinion. Respecting others' opinion is very important. Verbal and non-verbal communication, acceptable to society should be taught, as this helps in improving interpersonal relations.

No parent wants their child to be singled out due to his/her clumsy manners. Hence, they should be taught manners, which are acceptable in the society. Parents/teachers should help them to develop and maintain friendships. They should teach them to value interpersonal relations. Teach them to respect others irrespective of their age.

Communicating with people, without offending them, is very important. India is multi-lingual, multi-cultural, multi religious country, where meaning of words changes from place to place. One needs to understand this while living in such country. One needs to understand temperaments of others before uttering words. Hence, listening skills are very important in assertive communication. One has to go beyond words and understand the context and the tone. This definitely helps to avoid misunderstandings. Mostly, all parents and teachers teach how to communicate; hardly there is any training on listening skill development. In effective communication, empathy and understanding other person's perspective is very important.

**Thinking Skills**-Parents should develop analysing skills in their children, which leads to critical thinking. This includes understanding the different attitudes of people towards the same issue, their reasoning, behaviour, and values. We need to teach them that each issue/problem has various angles and everyone's perception is different. They should be given more options in life. At this stage, parent and teachers should encourage the adolescents to develop their creative and constructive ideas. They should be allowed to express their opinions freely and ask for logical reasons as well. This develops clarity in thoughts.

**Emotional skills** - Parents, teachers and adolescents themselves should realize the fact that during adolescence children have strong emotional outbursts. It is due to the hormonal changes in the body. As a result, they have mood swings. At one moment, the adolescent will be happy, and at the other moment he will cry, or feel sad without any obvious reason. Sometimes, he would be annoyed and angry for petty reasons. It requires at least 4-5 years for settling the emotions. Thus, handling their emotional state requires a lot of training. Emotions should be expressed in a constructive manner. This training will help them to improve their interpersonal relations.

Teaching adolescents to express their emotions in a positive way is very important. There is difference between suppressing the emotions and coping with them. Never ask an adolescent to suppress his emotions, instead train him to express them in a positive manner. This training includes how to react to different people in different critical situations. Teach them to respond and not to react. They should be taught to think before responding. Adolescents face peer pressure, which may create stress, which in an extreme case, may lead to depression. It is the responsibility of the parents to help them to deal with the stress. Parents have to teach them to distinguish between different emotions and act accordingly.

Emotions can be categorised into four heading namely happiness, sadness, fear and anger. Distinguishing the exact emotion is the first step in coping with it. Parents have to tell the adolescent that both positive and negative emotions are natural. Handling them properly is

important. Parents have to teach adolescents to express their emotions by inculcating various habits like writing diaries, doing rigorous physical activities, playing outdoor games, jogging, painting, singing, playing musical instrument, talking to close ones, meditating, yoga etc. These activities are great stress busters and are useful for physical and mental health.

**Self-awareness** -This is the time where teenagers form their self-image. It is very important that parents and teachers help them identify their strengths and weaknesses. Parents should make special efforts that the adolescents accept themselves as they are. They become very self-conscious about their appearance. They should be convinced that their bodies are genetically designed and cannot be changed. For example, the colour of eye, skin, hair, height etc., are inherited. They should never be compared with others and body shamed. It affects their self-esteem very badly and leaves them emotionally bruised for their life. Even parents should never compare their child either with other siblings or any relatives or any classmates. Rather they should be told to appreciate whatever they have. This helps them to develop their self-image, which boosts self-confidence. Teach them to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to develop them. Self-awareness helps them to behave with others empathetically.

**Empathy**- Parents/teachers must inculcate this value in adolescents. They have to teach them to understand and take care of other people's needs, feelings. This will help them to accept people, who are physically, financially, mentally and emotionally different from them. This includes poor people, differently abled (physically and mentally challenged) people. This will definitely prepare them to lead a better life in culturally diverse country like India.

**Decision making skill**- As mentioned earlier, adolescents start expressing their opinions and want to take their own decisions. Many a times they are not aware of the repercussions of their decisions. Parents and teachers should train them in how to take decisions. They should explore various options and analyse their effects before taking final decision.

**Problem solving skill-** This is one of the most important skills every adolescent must learn. One needs to be objective while solving problems. Parents should teach them that each issue has various angles. To solve it, various options should be taken into consideration weighing all the pros and cons. They should try to achieve a win-win situation. Critical thinking skills are needed to apply while solving the problem.

As a parent/ teacher, you should help them to solve their problems, if they come to you. Don't give solution immediately. Teach them to find the exact problem, its root cause, what exactly bothers and why. Many a times the problem is not there in reality, but it is in their perception. Ask them to find out various alternatives to solve it. Then, ask them to choose any one option. Once option is selected, ask them to apply and tell them to take the responsibility. It is very important that they themselves should take its responsibility.

**Money management** -Now a days children get a lot of pocket money. Parents should teach their children the value of money. They should give a fixed amount per month to children. They should be asked for detailed expenditure report at the end of every month. This should be done in a very friendly manner. This will inculcate the skill of proper budgeting in them and help them prioritise their needs. This will develop the habit of saving in them.

**Valuing Food and water** - Adolescents should be taught not to waste food and water. They should be made aware about grains, their cultivation process, hardships faced by the farmers to produce them and the efforts put in by the mother to cook them. They should be told about importance of healthy eating habits and inculcate the same. Parents themselves should also follow healthy eating at home and outside. They should set an example. Due to over exposure to media, most of the adolescents prefer cold drinks, eat junk food, which are harmful for human body. Parents should restrict such practices for the better future of their children. Adolescents should be informed about various sources of water and its scarcity and the importance of saving it for future generations.



**Cleanliness and hygiene** - Keeping oneself and the surrounding clean is very important. They should be taught to keep their rooms, clothes, books and other sport items tidy and clean. Boys should be taught to maintain their facial hair clean and the importance of regular shaving. Girls should be taught to maintain cleanliness during menstruation, proper way of disposal of sanitary napkins, healthy eating and proper rest during this period. Children (irrespective of their sex) should be taught dusting and mopping.

**Time management** - Poor time management is mainly due to poor organization. If adolescents are taught to be more organized, they will save time in searching for the things. Teach them to keep things at right places, so there is no need to search for things.

**Manners** -Etiquettes and manners are very important in one's life and social life. It is an indispensable part of personality building. One needs to teach adolescents to accept their mistakes and learn to say "sorry". Apologizing for mistakes is first step in building good interpersonal relations. They should be trained to take responsibility of their mistakes. Teach them that making mistakes is a part of learning and one should not be embarrassed for it. Politely they can ask for excuse. They should be taught to say 'please' and 'thank you', wherever and whenever needed.

**Safety** - In today's techno-savvy world, safety (cyber, road, electronic) is very important. On regular basis, parents should guide their adolescent about safety, whether they like it or not. Safety measures should be taught, especially if they are using deserted roads or travelling late night. Ask them to remember helpline numbers, close relative numbers and police station number. Now a day's safety app is available. Make sure they are downloaded in their mobile, if an adolescent has mobile phone. Ask them to update about their whereabouts regularly, but avoid policing. Tell them not to talk to strangers, especially when they are alone, not to share personal information and photos, especially on social media. Make them alert if someone is abusing sexually or verbally (either personally or online), report immediately to parents. All parents must trust their child.

**Goal setting** - Goal setting is an important step in life, which gives a positive turn to one's life. There are two types of goals-short term goal and long term goal. Parents should help the adolescent to set their goal based on their strengths and weaknesses, resources available with them. They should have regular dialogues with them on what they want to be. Parents should guide them to set realistic and achievable goals. Otherwise, they will end up with disappointment and frustration. Once goals are set, ask them to prepare a plan of action to achieve them. Parents should make them aware that they can change the goals in between, if needed, based on resources available and situations. Parents should remember that they should not force their own dreams and expectations on children.

**Time management** - Inculcating time management skill at early stage of life is very important. Parents/teachers can ask them to plan their activities, and then prioritize them as per their urgency and implement accordingly. Many adolescents do not plan, especially their study routine. Just before examination, they realize that they are lagging behind. This creates a lot of stress and fear of examination. Some of them suffer from anxiety of failing the exam. This disturbs their routine life and creates unnecessary problems, which can be avoided with timely intervention. Parents can set a role model by themselves.

**Decision making** -This is one of the important life skills, which all adolescents must learn. At every step of life, one needs to take decisions such as selection of stream for study, selection of friends, selection of life partner, selection of career, and so on. One needs to follow certain steps, before taking a decision. They should explore all the possibilities, options, choices and their consequences. As a parent/teacher, help them to learn how to make a choice by exploring all the pros and cons. We should teach them to take the responsibility, as sometimes the decision may go wrong. Make them realize what went wrong, so that next time they will not repeat the mistake. This way they will be trained to take decisions.

Many parents have unrealistic dreams, which they want their children to fulfil. Sometimes these dreams are due to the pressure of social status and comparison with others. Hence, they concentrate only on

school education. Their whole attention is focussed on the percentage of marks achieved by their children. The need of the hour is to learn life skills, which most of the parents/teachers forget. Life skills help children for all round development of their personality.

**Participation in co-curricular activities** - Parents and teachers should encourage teenagers to participate in various co-curricular activities. These activities help children in coming together, share, do team work, and accept success and failure and help each other. This helps them to inculcate values, build positive attitudes. This also builds their hobbies and also relaxes them. co-curricular activities are helpful in physical as well as mental development.

## **Conclusion**

In twenty first century, due to knowledge explosion adolescents are exposed to various types of information and knowledge. They are not in a position to take decision what is correct and what is wrong-culturally as well as socially. This is a transition period and they need proper guidance. Life skills education prepares them for better present and future. It is the duty of all parents and teachers to provide it at the right time.

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## **Analysing the Impact of Cash Transfer on students of Tribal Residential Schools in Maharashtra**

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*Tribal children are deprived of free access to education due to the existence of economic, social and geographical barriers for tribal population in India. For promoting education among tribal, a kind-based transfer scheme existed for giving incentives to students studying in government/ ashram schools and it was implemented in most states in India. Under this, the provision of free textbooks and uniforms has been a common policy in all the states. Apart from free textbooks, free uniforms were received by a large percentage of students under this scheme. However, kind-based transfers are likely to lead to leakages and corruption as money gets transferred at different levels across the government machinery. There could also be delays in students receiving the items as well as compromise in the quality of items distributed by the contractors.*

*There is a huge divide in general category and ST in various economic parameters like income, landholdings, Labour Party forcefulness involution rate, health and educational status. This is despite that fact that constitutional provision that was in the form of mandating the Tribal Sub Plan as part of the State budgets. However, the issue of unspent balance is a common problem for the tribal development department of most states in India and hence it seems to have adversely affected measures to have desired improvement in the health and education outcomes for tribal population in states. In case of Maharashtra which is close to the top of the ladder in per capita income vis-à-vis other States, tribal population continues to lag behind*

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*the others when it comes to measured outcomes as compared to general population.*

### **Introduction:**

This paper is based against the background of introduction of Direct Benefit Transfer of cash in the bank accounts of tribal children enrolled in primary and secondary residential schools for tribal schools in Maharashtra. This paper explores this issue of DBT for equity in the light of the mechanism of transfer of cash to the accounts of students and the enhancement of choice for students as they are able to buy brands, size, colour and quantity as per their preference is a huge qualitative improvement in the policy of inclusiveness.

The DBT scheme replaced the kind-based transfer that was operational until the previous year. In June 2017, the department of tribal affairs of the Maharashtra government initiated the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) scheme in state ashram schools of the region. This paper, based on findings from surveys of student-beneficiaries and the school authorities, shows the effectiveness of the mechanism of directly transferring the cash to the accounts of the students in ashram schools of Maharashtra at different levels. It looks into the extent of the success of the scheme in terms of its implementation and meeting its desired objective of providing the necessary educational items to school students. The paper also presents the perceptions of the students and their parents regarding the scheme as well as the hurdles that school authorities may have faced during its implementation. Tribal regions in the state of Maharashtra vary in terms of their geographical location. This paper analyses the DBT scheme region-wise, taking into account the differences that geographical location makes in the overall effectiveness of the operation of the scheme.

**Research question:** The main research question of the study is as below-

*“What is the effectiveness of the DBT scheme from student’s perspective and what measures may be taken to further improve the outreach of the scheme in the future?”*

The most important objective of this study was to find out the proportion of students who have received the cash transfer under DBT scheme. The study then analyses the perceptions of the students and of their parents regarding the DBT scheme, especially in relation to the earlier kind-based scheme.

**Research design:** This study is based on two surveys. One survey questionnaire was administered to students of schools that have been covered under the DBT scheme. The questionnaire was however administered only to students holding individual bank accounts (studying in standard fifth or above), who were mature enough to appropriately answer the questions. A second questionnaire was administered to school authorities such as the head master, warden, teaching and non-teaching staff who were involved in implementing the DBT scheme in their schools. The number of sample schools was chosen from each project area in proportion to its representation in the state. Once the number of schools to be chosen from each project area was determined, the sample schools were chosen randomly. Finally, about 30% students (from standard fifth onwards) were randomly chosen from each sample school, who were administered the student-questionnaire. This paper focuses on the student survey and the insights from the analysis of the responses given by students only.

The student-survey could be completed in all the 112 schools with a total number of 10,411 students spread across ashram schools in Maharashtra.

### **Major Findings from the student's survey**

#### **1. Success in cash transfers:**

#### **2.**

On the basis of number of accounts opened in the sample schools, we were able to reach over 32,000 beneficiaries of DBT indirectly. As seen in Table 1, joint accounts are for students currently studying in first to fourth standard, for whom the response was collected from the warden/ Head Master of the schools. The number of female accounts is more than the number of accounts for male students in the sample schools and it is mainly due to the overall enrolment for females in fifth standard and above being more than the males in ashram schools.

**Table 1: Total (indirect) beneficiaries covered in the school survey**

<b>Type of Account</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Individual Account	26,356 (82.1)	12,313 (80.9)	14,043 (83.1)
Joint Account	5,762 (17.9)	2,897 (19.1)	2,865 (16.9)
<b>Total (Individual + Joint)</b>	<b>32,118</b>	<b>15,210</b>	<b>16,908</b>
<i>Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentage in total.</i>			
<i>Source: School Survey</i>			

The most important objective of this study was to find out the proportion of students who have received the cash transfer under DBT scheme. The region wise data on the number of students who have received DBT and those who have not received is indicated in Figure 1.

*Source: School Survey Data*

Across 106 schools which were covered in the school-survey, the ratio of non-beneficiaries to beneficiaries was 1:14. This could be further brought down by reducing the pending cases. Only 7.3% of the students had not received the DBT.

The largest fraction of non-beneficiaries was found in the Nagpur region (about 20%), whereas other regions had a small proportion of non-beneficiaries.

In those cases, where the benefits have not reached, the main reason is the lack of the necessary documents such as Aadhar card of the students or of the parents.

### **3. Students' awareness:**

In terms of students' awareness about the scheme, it was found that most of the students were aware of the nature of the scheme, the list of items to be purchased, the amount they had received in their accounts and the number of instalments in which cash will be deposited. There

was also awareness about the documentation that was required for opening the bank accounts.

Efforts have to be taken to make students aware about the total amount that they are entitled to receive under the scheme as this was relatively low.

### **Purchase of items:**

The majority of the students purchased the items that were listed. Durable items such as pillow, pillow cover, umbrella, etc. were purchased by relatively fewer students as they had those items from the previous year's stock or they do not use those items at all (such as pillow and night dress).

Purchase of sanitary napkins among the relevant population is relatively lower, at close to 80%, indicating that greater awareness should be created about menstrual hygiene.

In most of the schools, students have purchased the recommended quantity. In case of toiletries, students prefer buying the items in instalments as per their requirement. The purchase of items such as uniforms, night dress and undergarments is based on need and preference of the students.

Note-books are an exception, wherein students have purchased more than the recommended quantity, indicating that more number of notebooks could be provided under the scheme.

### **4. Student and parent perception about the scheme:**

More than 90% of the students have showed their preference for DBT over the earlier scheme of transfer in kind. Most students indicated during the survey that they are happy as they were able to purchase the items that they like. It could be in terms of buying brands of their choice, colour, size etc. Some of the students have purchased jeans, bags etc. instead of night dress as they find these items to be more useful.

Nagpur region was a laggard in terms of positive response from students about the scheme, mainly because many students here have not received the cash transfer yet and have bought items from their parents'



money. As many students had received only the first instalment when the survey was conducted, some students found the money to be insufficient.

Other disadvantages of the scheme, according to the students are the time that it takes to wait in long queues at the banks and to travel to far-away banks and markets to withdraw money or buy the items. Some students also cited parents losing their daily wages on days they accompany their wards to the markets or to the banks.

Regarding parental response, we observed that 82% of the parents responded positively to DBT.

In most of the schools it was reported that children joined the schools in June with most of the items given in the DBT list. As the parents were made aware about DBT by schools by February 2017, they purchased these items with their own money even when DBT transfer had not taken place.

**5. Parental factors:** Some schools reported that it was difficult to contact parents and get their cooperation due to several reasons. Some parents migrate to different regions for work hence getting the documents, ensuring their presence for Aadhar camps or for other documentation purposes was difficult. Some principals cited illiteracy and backwardness as the major constraints in getting the documents for parents as well as their children. Some of these problems are summarised as below.

<b>Table 2: Problems faced by parents in complying with the documents required</b>	
Nature	Frequency
Missing documents	42
Communication problems	32
Late response from parents	47
Other	17

*Source: Compiled by authors based on school survey data*

Despite this, HM/ Wardens reported that in most of the school's children joined the schools post-summer vacation with most of the items mentioned in the DBT list. As the parents were made aware about DBT by schools since February 2017, parents anticipating the cash transfer purchased these items in advance with their own money.

**6. Parents' support was also observed** by way of visiting the schools for documentation and accompanying the child to bank for operating the account. In case of 68 per cent of the schools, it was reported that father of the child generally accompanies and operates the account of the child. The rest of the accounts are operated by mothers and in very few cases it is some other person closely related to the child operate the account.

**7. Problems in opening the joint accounts:** For students in I-IV standard opening of joint account was mandatory. Getting Aadhar cards for these children was a major challenge for schools. Parents also many times did not have required documents. This problem was more in the interior regions. Parent's lack of awareness and illiteracy were the major blocks in getting joint accounts.

**8. Problems of implementation at the school level**

In most of the schools the HM and teachers took the efforts to make parents aware of the DBT scheme. The major hurdle faced by them was getting the documents from the parents. Many students did not have Aadhar card as a result we find that 45.28 per cent of the schools reported that getting Aadhar card was a major constraint in implementation of DBT.

**General take-away from the study**

The overall comparative performance across regions indicates that Nashik has performed well in implementing the scheme, whereas Nagpur region is the laggard as it has relatively more number of remote areas. Nagpur has the largest number of schools with non-receipt of DBT. There were delays in depositing the first instalment of the transfer. Hence, this region certainly needs a better focus. Otherwise, it

will be a case region that needs the most but gets the least attention. Few take away from the study are as below:

Students are certainly happy about the scheme as seen from their positive response across regions. Overall, for the state of Maharashtra more than 90% of the students have reacted positively towards the scheme.

Our survey also reflects that students are well aware of the transactions taking place in their bank accounts, although efforts need to be taken towards making them better informed about the total amount of cash that they are entitled to receive under this scheme.

The pattern of their purchase of items indicate that many students are not buying some items if they already have these from the previous year, which is why they have deferred from purchasing them this time.

Some attention needs to be paid to the low proportion of female students purchasing sanitary napkins, in spite of it being an essential item. It perhaps reflects the lack of awareness among students about menstrual hygiene, which ought to be corrected in the future.

The quantity purchased of some items is lower than recommended, but our analysis indicates that this is rational as students buy as per their requirement.

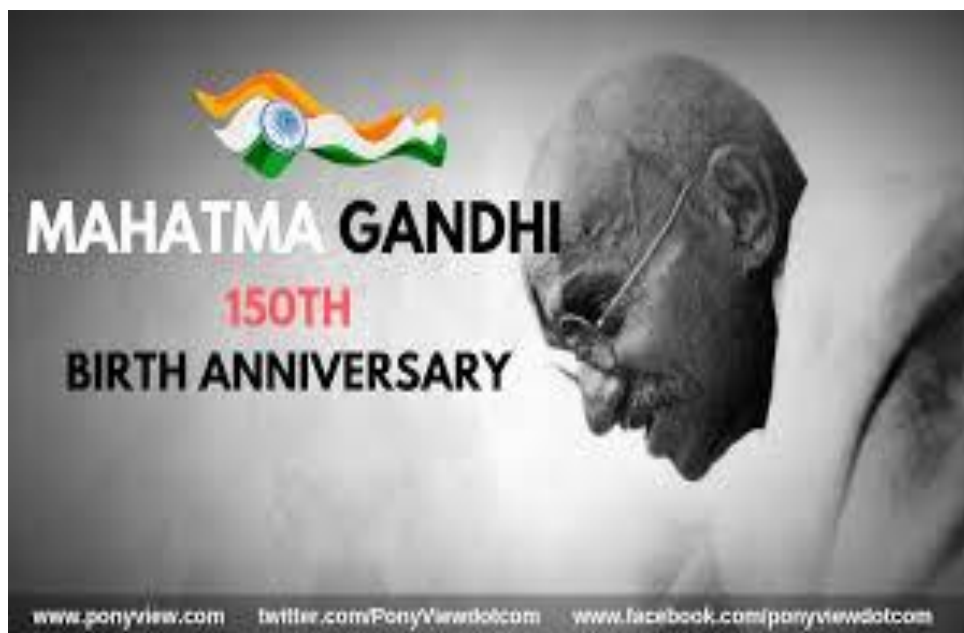
Few students cite insufficient amount of money as the reason for not purchasing all items. This is probably because most of the students in the sample had received only the first instalment of the cash transfer, which fulfils only 60 per cent of the total cash requirement. It will be a good idea to study whether the cash transferred is sufficient after students also receive their second instalment.

The positive response towards DBT is mainly due to the students being able to make a choice regarding, brand, colour, size etc. The negative response is due to parents losing labour days and the time consumed for making trips to banks and markets for purchase of items.

Contrary to the beliefs of the sceptics, less than one per cent of the total sample students have given the money to their parents or used the money for purposes other than their own educational activities.

Overall observation regarding the implementation of the scheme indicates hindrances at the level of banks as there are problems reported about delay in opening of bank accounts, delay in transfer of cash, negative attitude of the bank staff in some cases etc.

Hence, from the policy perspective, if these problems could be sorted out, the coordination between banks and schools will improve and from next year onwards the implementation of DBT will be much easier and the transfers will take place on time. To conclude, students seem to be satisfied with the new arrangement of transfer of cash to their accounts vis-a-vis the kind of transfer. The freedom to make choice in purchasing the items as per need and their preference is the major factor behind the positive response.



## **Indian Schools in Context: Gender Bias and Structures of Power**

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### ***Abstract***

*Social institutions lay the norms that structure the socio-cultural and political life of an individual. After family, schools are primary institutions that play a dominant role in laying down the configurations of ideas and interests which are expressed as the 'formal rules, compliance procedures and standard operating practices that structure relationships between individuals across society. Schools, through overt as well as covert means, express the larger normative element, that the young boys and girls are expected to adhere to, which in turn holds the institutional structures together.*

*Gender, as a cross cultural issue is deeply embedded in our institutions and thus, schools too through its actions, practices and larger philosophy tends to lay down gender based norms and cultural expectations in a manner that appears as completely natural. Hierarchies between the two sexes, form the structural and cultural contexts in which gender is enacted in everyday life, thereby fragmenting gender into multiple masculinities and femininities.*

*The current article is based on a research study conducted among sixteen government and private schools of Delhi, India. It seeks to divulge and bring into light the reinforcement of masculinity and femininity constructs within a school system. Citing empirical evidence, the paper seeks to present in intersecting ways how teachers and children draw upon and reproduce normative beliefs about gender and how these, in turn, lead to stereotypical notions of gender. Analyzing the research evidence across a wide range of parameters, the paper also makes an effort to reveal the opinions of school teachers and students on acceptance or resistance to any form of change in gender relations as the result of continued gender reinforcements. It also endeavours to link the findings with the gendered paradigms of power prevalent in the larger society and how schools, as significant institutions of society, provide a larger context thereby becoming active*

*instruments of creating gender based hierarchies and compartmentalization within the society.*

## **Introduction**

Social institutions lay the norms that structure the socio-cultural and political life of an individual. Considered as the ‘rules of the game’ in a society (Kabeer, 2004), institutional rules, norms and conventions have powerful material effects on people’s lives. They lay down rules that may be written or unwritten, explicit or implicit, codified in law, mandated by policy, sanctioned by religion, upheld by convention or embodied in the standards of family, community and society. Playing a powerful role in shaping human behaviour, institutions provide a structure, and hence a degree of stability to everyday life. They reduce uncertainty, make certain forms of behaviour more predictable and allow individuals to co-operate with others to produce results that they would not be able to achieve on their own. At the same time, however- and whatever their official ideologies-institutions rarely operate in egalitarian ways. Rather they tend to support hierarchical relationships (Anand, 2010).

Institutions like family, school, marriage, caste, religion, media, market and state are stable arrangements through which various structures are carried out and social relations are reproduced. These institutions influence individual acculturation through prescription, suggestion, expectation (example) and through punishment. The inclusion and thrust on the role of social institutions that reinforce gender based norms and culture among the children can be judged by the development of ‘Social Institutions and Gender Index’(SIGI) **by the** Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). **SIGI** is an innovative measure of underlying discrimination against women and is one of the latest captures and quantifies discriminatory social institutions – early marriage, discriminatory inheritance practices, violence against women, son bias, restrictions on access to public space and restricted access to productive resources (OECD, 2013). This reflects that newer and pioneering ways are being developed across the globe that aims at analysing various social institutions with respect to their impact on individuals and society.

## **School System as an Institution**

School system as a primary institution of society has gained a paramount attention in the contemporary society. Viewed as a progressive and proactive institution that enables children to learn values and ethics considered important for their overall personal development, schools have gained greater responsibility in the present-day era. While the family system in India is undergoing rapid transformation, there is an increased psycho-social and economic pressure on the school system to not only fulfil its role as an academic institution but also provide a positive, pro-social environment for children. Schools are also being viewed as 'corrective institutions' that play a major role in re-socialisation of the child who has already acquired some understanding of 'do's and don'ts' from his/her family (Anand, 2010). Schools are powerful institutions that reinforce gender based norms and culture among the children.

## **Gender as a Social Construct**

Cultural ideology about gender or about being a man or a woman is conveyed through a gendered socialization of boys and girls. All the societal institutions beginning from the family, school, religion and mass media; portray men and women as 'opposite sexes' thereby reinforcing gender. Gender role system develops through the course of socialisation. The gender role system assigns particular sets of personality traits (that are polar opposites) to women and men. This explains the segregated role expectations, behavioural patterns and varied personality traits for men and women. While men are expected to be independent, bold, assertive and aggressive, women are projected as dependent, passive, nurturing and gentle. The gender role system has also assigned distinctive activities, spheres of action or work which is commonly called as sexual division of labour. The crucial aspect of sex role system in the different valuation by cultures and societies of the two sets of traits and activities described as males and women's (Kumar, 2005).

Different institutions draw in and reproduce norms and beliefs about gender, caste and class in intersecting ways and determine/explain how resources get distributed, who gains and who is excluded. In this

context the question of power and authority is critical to the understanding of whose meanings and interpretations will prevail. Understanding gender inequality through such an institutional perspective helps in identifying the complex ways in which organizational rules, cultural norms and routinized practices from different institutional sites intersect to produce and sustain such inequalities. Interests and needs of women and men may not be always be neutrally interpreted. Even if these institutions are neutral, they help to generate and perpetuate gender based inequalities in society.

### **Locating Gender Socialization in School Education**

The role of schools in reinforcing gender identity through various classroom processes and the larger school practices has been an issue that has gained concern. According to Chanana (2003), schooling reinforces the gendered inequality of socialization across all divides. Schooling is essentially embedded in the societal context and ensures the reinforcement of gendered expectations from boys and girls. It ensures conformation of boys and girls in to the stereotyped expectations. It ensures that women remain passive actors in the process of schooling and do not question the patriarchal ideology and do not transgress the social boundaries and work within the accepted societal values. In fact, schools and schooling become active instruments of cultural reproduction and social control without seeking to alter the informal and formal processes of socialization.

Within the school system, teachers are the key persons in the transaction of school curriculum through classroom teaching. The teachers have a primary responsibility not only towards children's education but also towards their overall development. Teachers exert a major influence on how children acquire norms and acceptable behaviours (Anand, 2014). If the teacher provides the students a gendered perspective during classroom teaching, through overt or covert means, such opinions and notions go a long way in impacting the beliefs in the young, impressionable minds of children. In other words, the children are likely to develop cognitive images/ information that contain the gender stereotypes transmitted through the teachers. In other words, gender emerges and is reproduced during social



interaction within the school system where the school teachers play a key role.

The qualitative concerns with respect to gender socialisation within the schools have caught attention worldwide. An analysis of trends with respect to gender and education in the Indian context over the last few decades reveal the paradigm shift in the focus of research on education. During the decades of 1980s and early 1990s, the attention rested primarily on the issues related to primary education. Issues such as enrolment of girls in schools, their retention and factors associated with their dropout rate gained a lot of importance. However, the last two decades have witnessed an increased thrust to integrate qualitative aspects of education such as importance of teacher's attitudes, their expectations, teacher's behaviour towards boys and girls, parental motivations, aspirations etc. The current focus of action in the area of education reflects the efforts towards analysis of schools as social institutions and enhancing the quality of their outcomes. Thus, an analysis of an understanding of differentiation among boys and girls in the assignment of different roles in the classroom, differentiation in co-curricular activities; differential expectations in terms of hobbies, professional aspirations; system for rewards and punishment etc. is likely to unveil the role of school system as larger contexts to reproduce and transmit gendered ideology.

### **Present Research- Objectives and Methodology**

The present research was conducted among 16 schools of Delhi — eight governments and eight private. Schools were selected from four different zones of Delhi with equal representation of both categories of schools, that is, two governments and two private schools from each zone. Broad objectives of the current study are enumerated as follows:

1. To analyse the classroom practices in elementary schools of Delhi from a gender perspective.
2. To examine the opinions of school teachers regarding gender biases in school practices.
3. To ascertain the level of awareness among teachers on gender issues.

4. To study the understanding of gendered roles and identity as imbibed by upper primary school children

To meet the above objectives, quantitative as well as qualitative information was gathered from school teachers and children. A structured interview schedule was administered among 160 school teachers (80 males and 80 women's). Focus group discussions were held with 160 school children (80 males and 80 women's) from the upper primary classes (classes VI–VIII). All respondents were taken into confidence before gathering information and all efforts were made to ensure the ethical principles in terms of maintaining confidentiality with respect to identities of respondents/schools at any given time. Analysis was done on the basis of findings of teacher's interviews, group discussions with students and observations made by the author. Major findings of the present research are as follows.

### **Major Research Findings**

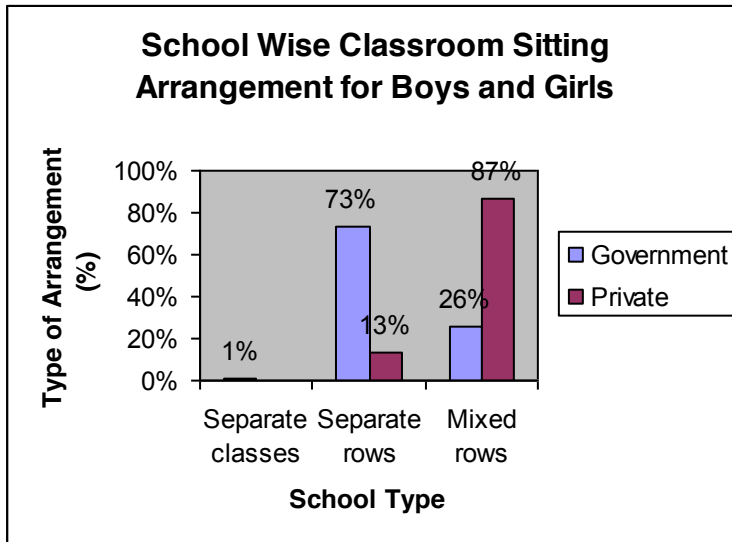
Current research discovered various contrasting opinions across the respondents in relation to various domains and variables with respect to gender and education. Major research findings can be listed as follows:

#### **A) Classroom as a context**

Classroom is a little society that exerts a powerful socializing influence on the children. In a classroom set up, children do multiple tasks—studying, playing and taking part together in different classroom processes and activities. Therefore, classroom processes are seen to have an impact on transmission of expected behaviours and traits from boys and girls. Information gathered from the teachers and children about the different classroom processes including seating arrangement and about class monitors revealed various trends.

**Seating Arrangement:** Current research reflects gender differentiation in terms of seating arrangement in a classroom. The figure 1.01 reflects sex based segregation in seating arrangement as practiced by most government school teachers.

Figure 1.01



Out of eighty government school teachers, 73 percent revealed that they made girls and boys sit in separate rows, 26 percent said that they made the children sit together while 1 percent said that they had separate classes for girls and boys. This shows the gender differentiation on the basis of sex in seating arrangement. Government school teachers were asked regarding the reasons for segregated sitting arrangements for the students. According to most of them, *'boys and girls talk a lot when they sit together'*, *'this is the system in our school'* or *'boys and girls should not be mixed together as boys are more naughty and do not let the girls study'*. These statements reflect the biased opinions of teachers that lead to their treatment of boys and girls as separate categories or as separate entities.

In private schools on the other hand, different observations were made with regards to class room seating arrangement. 87 percent teachers shared that they followed mixed seating arrangement for boys and girls. Thirteen percent said that they made boys and girls sit separately in the class. Most private school teachers talked about alternating the seating arrangement for their students based on rotation of seats on a daily/weekly basis by students. Few teachers talked about making the students sit according to their roll numbers while few talked about

having special consideration for children with weak eye sight or those who needed more attention were made to sit in front. This shows their sensitivity and rational explanations for following a particular sitting arrangement in the class. Rather than following the sex based segregation in allocation of seats, most private school teachers were following innovative and just methods of seating arrangement and thereby trying to move beyond the sex based stereotypical and biased way of allocation of seats to students.

### **Classroom Leadership**

Present research explored the leadership roles among boys and girls in a classroom. The school teachers were asked about the assignment of leadership roles among boys and girls in the class. Girls were given more tasks as compared to boys with respect to class monitor-ship. The table 1.01 presents the responses of the teachers from government and private schools with regards to their assignment of leadership roles to the children in the class:

Table: 1.01

#### **School Category Wise Disaggregated Data on Leadership Roles** (In percentages)

<b>Class Monitor</b>	<b>Government</b>	<b>Private</b>	<b>Total</b>
Girls	31.2	22.0	<b>53.2</b>
Boys	7.3	0.9	<b>8.26</b>
Both	18.3	20.2	<b>38.5</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>56.9</b>	<b>43.1</b>	<b>100.0</b>

According to more than one half teachers from the government schools; girls were more responsible, obedient and were therefore made class monitors. Boys on the other hand were often restless, over active and did not conform to the norms. This corroborates the gender stereotype of girls being compliant and the boys being disobedient/ non-compliant. Seven percent teachers from government schools and about one percent from private schools said that they preferred a boy to be the class monitor as boys could show authority and exert control over both boys and girls. Girls according to them were *mild* and *soft by nature* and were 'ineffective' monitors.

About twenty percent teachers from private schools and one fifth from government schools had two monitors in their class- one boy and one girl. This again shows the stark difference in the leadership trends in the two types of schools. A contrast was again found in the explanations by school teachers from the two types of schools for having two class monitors. Most teachers from the government schools reasoned that they had two monitors so that the boy monitor could discipline the boys while the girl monitor disciplined the girls. They felt that boys could more easily exert influence over other boys since boys were generally aggressive. Similarly, they opined that since girls were more obedient and submissive, they could be disciplined by girls. Moreover, they felt that *both boys and girls did not like to be disciplined by someone from the opposite sex.*

### **B) Rewards and Punishment System**

Current research explored both from the teachers and children about the different rewards and punishment techniques adopted by the teachers in order to maintain effective discipline in school. Children shared that their teachers were happy when they completed their work in time, paid attention to studies, were neatly dressed, obedient, disciplined, participated in the extra-curricular activities, were regular and punctual. However, it was seen that the manner of appreciation or the reward system varied among the government and private schools. Most children from government schools talked about receiving applause in the form of ‘clapping’ in the class and verbal appreciation from the teachers where they were projected as role models by teachers. Reward system was more or less based on conventional means of appreciation in most government schools.

Reward system seemed to be more innovative among private schools where apart from verbal form of appreciation, the teachers also adopted star/ badge system on a weekly/ monthly basis and the same were given to children. Their names and achievements were also displayed in the classroom/ corridor in the form of charts. Many private schools gave *stars* to children when they were neatly dressed, exhibited discipline, were prompt in classroom participation; besides scoring high in academics/ co-curricular activities. This reflects that private schools reinforced overall personality traits/ behaviour and achievements and

not merely applauded meritorious academic achievements. They were given prizes, gifts, certificates, *points*, *grades*, special duties like the responsibility of decorating the display boards and leadership roles (school prefects etc.). Many teachers at the primary level shared that they often bought chocolates, toffees and gave them to children whenever they demonstrated proactive behaviours. Such children were also taken to the school Principal for applause and encouragement.

Exploration regarding the differentiation in varied types of punishment meted out to children revealed shocking as well as contrasting statements. Seventy-one percent of the government school children confessed about getting punishments ranging from standing with raised hands, ears and hairs getting pulled, sitting like cock, making rounds of the school ground, slapping, hitting and being scolded publicly in the school assembly, pulling hairs, beaten on head, pounding, beaten with objects like key ring/scale/wood/stick/ duster etc. Twenty-three percent of private school children confessed about receiving physical punishment in the school. The children from the private schools spoke about being given punishments like the teacher writing a complaint note in the school diary for parents, referring them to the school counsellor, issuing warnings. Each and every child agreed that boys were given more severe punishment as compared to girls for similar offence. They also agreed that their teachers trusted the girls more than the boys. This again corroborates the gender bias where girls are considered docile and soft whereas boys are considered naughty and mischievous.

### **C) Professional Aspirations**

In the present research, both teachers as well as students were asked about their professional aspirations.

The table 1.02 reflects several stereotypes in the opinions of about two third male teachers as they preferred girls to take up professions like academics, beauty culture, nursing and considered them suitable for domestic work. Strong association was found between the professional aspirations of male teachers for boys as well as girls to take up medicine They showed increasing preference for boys to take up armed forces, business and plumbing. Such opinions reflect gender biases and segregation of professions on the basis of an individual's sex.

Table: 1.02  
**Opinions of Male Teachers for Professional Aspirations among  
 Students (in percentages)**

Professional Aspirations for Students	Government			Private		
	Girls	Boys	Both	Girls	Boys	Both
<b>Doctor</b>	-	13.3	37.3	-	2.7	46.7
<b>Engineer</b>	-	14.7	36	-	6.7	42.7
<b>Plumbing</b>	-	32	16	-	30.7	18.7
<b>Armed Forces</b>	-	31.1	19.6	0.4	20.9	28
<b>Business</b>	-	33.3	17.3	-	21.3	28
<b>Academics</b>	12	-	38.7	6.7	1.3	41.3
<b>Beauty Culture</b>	33.3	-	17.3	28	-	21.3
<b>Nursing</b>	33.3	1.3	16	25.3	4	20
<b>Domestic work</b>	33.3	-	17.3	25.3	-	24
<b>Call Centre</b>	1.3	21.3	28	-	4	45.3
<b>Journalism</b>	-	13.3	37.3	-	1.3	48

Let us now take a look at the opinions of women teachers as shared by them with regards to their professional aspirations for male and women students:

The table 1.03 reflects a wider viewpoint of many women teachers with respect to the choice of profession for girls and boys. A comparison of the two reflects three emerging trends.

One, **women teachers are more accepting and forthright as compared to male teachers** about women being suitable for *unconventional* professions. Two, **private school teachers are much more open minded** with regards to acceptance for both boys and girls for most professions. Three, **male teachers from private schools seem to be more free from the gender stereotypes** as compared to their

counterparts in the government schools with regards to professional aspirations for students.

Table: 1.03

**Opinions of Women Teachers for Professional Aspirations among Students (in percentages)**

Professional Aspirations for Students	Government			Private		
	Girls	Boys	Both	Girls	Boys	Both
<b>Doctor</b>	1.3	6.3	42.5	-	-	50
<b>Engineer</b>	-	7.5	42.5	-	-	50
<b>Plumbing</b>	-	22.5	27.5	-	17.5	32.5
<b>Armed Forces</b>	-	20.5	29.6	0.0	15.4	34.6
<b>Business</b>	-	18.8	31.3	-	15	35
<b>Academics</b>	13.8	-	36.3	17.5	-	32.5
<b>Beauty Culture</b>	18.8	1.3	30	17.5	-	32.5
<b>Nursing</b>	23.8	2.5	23.8	17.5	2.5	30
<b>Domestic work</b>	25	1.3	23.8	13.8	-	36.3
<b>Call Centre</b>	1.3	8.8	40	-	2.5	47.5
<b>Journalism</b>	-	5	45	-	3.8	46.3

Women teachers were more open towards accepting unconventional professions for women as compared to male teachers. Higher number of women teachers accepted that women too could very well take up engineering, navy, plumbing and business as professions. They shared that *women were no less than men and could do even better than men* in most jobs. This shows a sense of self confidence and empowerment among these working women. Male teachers on the other hand considered women to be apt for professions that required *delicacy and light work*. Plumbing, navy, air force were too *demanding* professions and could not be managed well by women. They all agreed that women *should take up careers and not sit at home*. However, they shared that



women should *first give preference to their home and then towards the job*.

Teachers from private schools were more open minded and encouraging with regards to professional choices for the students irrespective of their sex. According to them, professions that are usually considered male dominated, for example, armed forces (navy, air force and army), plumbing, engineering and business could be pursued by both boys as well as girls. The private school teachers talked about the importance of keeping in mind the interests and aptitude of students with regards to their choice of career instead of forcing them to opt for sex based career choices. However, jobs that required outstation traveling, transfers were generally not considered very suitable keeping in mind the household and childcare responsibilities that are often shouldered by women. This however shows the gender bias among the private school teachers.

It was also observed that male teachers from private schools seemed to be more progressive in their ideas as compared to male teachers from the government schools. They agreed that all women should take up careers and *make use of their education*. They agreed in higher proportions than the male teachers from government school teachers that women could very well take up engineering, air force, army, navy, medicine, Business Processing Organizations (BPOs), journalism and business. The male teachers from government school on the other hand stuck to traditional choices for professions based on sex.

#### **D) Awareness On Bias in School Curriculum**

The teachers were asked regarding their views on the presence of gender biases in the school textbooks. The table 1.04 presents the responses of teachers from government and private schools on the gender bias in the school textbooks:

Table: 1.04 reflects that about three fourth of the teachers found their school textbooks to be containing gender biases. About 21 percent teachers did not find any such biases in the textbooks while about 6 percent teachers were indecisive about their opinions. Women teachers were more sensitive and aware about such biases as compared to the

male teachers. The teachers who were sensitive to the gender biases in the textbooks were more likely to neutralize the impact of the same while transacting the curriculum. The rest were likely to simply reinforce the patriarchal beliefs already being transmitted to children at home during the course of classroom interactions and curriculum transaction.

Table: 1.04  
**Teacher’s Opinions on Gender Biases in School Textbooks**  
 (in percentages)

<b>Gender Bias in Curriculum</b>	<b>Responses of Teachers</b>		
	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Can’t Say</b>
Content	72.9	21.3	5.8
Pictures	73.5	20.6	5.8
Language	72.9	21.3	5.8

### **E) Art Education**

Art education as an internal part of the school curriculum and covers a wide range of innovative subjects and activities (music, dance, theatre, puppetry, clay modelling, craft and other creative means) to enhance latent talents among children and boost their confidence. Gender differentiation in art education was analysed in order to explore any differentiation among boys and girls.

Children shared that girls dominated in music, dance, sewing across all government schools and these subjects are labelled as *girl’s subjects*. Boys on the other hand took part more in drawing and painting activities. Children from a government school said that *music was the only choice offered to girls while boys were offered drawing. There was no alternate activity for the students*. Few boys from government schools shared that they wanted to learn music but were *forced to take up drawing as all the male friends had taken up drawing and they would have made fun had I would have taken up a ‘girl’s subject’*. This reflects the hidden curriculum where the teachers manoeuvre the

students to take up subjects as per the commonly accepted gender based patterns and not on the basis of their interests. Due to the strong influence of teachers who seemed to be following stereotypical norms based on gender, students tend to take decisions that may not be their *original choice/ interest*. One government school offered meal planning to boys which exhibits attempts of the school to break the old chain of gender based distinctions and providing interest based opportunities to all children irrespective of their sex.

On the other hand, children from the private schools talked about the wide range of innovative activities offered by their schools. When enquired, they shared that all these activities were offered to both boys and girls. Both boys and girls involved in private schools were seen busy with activities such as gift wrapping, flower making, learning music and attending personality development classes.

#### **F) Health and Physical Education**

In the present research, the children were asked about the participation of boys and girls in health and physical education activities. Children from the government schools shared that sports activities were not an integral part of the school curriculum and also talked about poor infrastructure (lack of space, ill maintained sports ground, broken nets/baskets etc.). They shared that girls by and large played hop scotch, athletics, *kho-kho*, badminton, *elastic*, *gallery*, *staapu* while boys usually played cricket and volleyball. Girls from a couple of schools also spoke about the secondary treatment meted out to them and about being ignored in sports activities by the sports teachers. Boys on the other hand were encouraged to take part in sports activities in most schools.

Among private schools, sports activities were offered to both boys and girls. There were more girls seen in squash, badminton, basketball, *kho-Kho* whereas boys showed more interest in volleyball, football, swimming etc. However, these differences were not forced upon them and all students were given an equal opportunity to pursue sports of their choice and receive coaching irrespective of their sex. Sports activities were an integral part of most private schools where they were

looked upon as significant component for physical and mental development of children.

### **Emerging Discussions**

Current analysis of school practices from a gender perspective corroborates the belief in the role of schools in providing a cultural context in reinforcing gender biases and stereotypes. Through an exploration of opinions of teachers and students across various domains, it reveals several sex based distinctions being followed by schools. Children take on gendered qualities and traits and acquire a sense of being a male or a women during gendered socialization in family as well as school. The social context of the school becomes prominent as it is within the social environment of the school as an institution within which the children interact. The ‘situational’ characteristics at school interact with the already ‘internalized’ personality traits and behavioural dispositions (within the family) to create and further reinforce gender distinctions. The same seemed to be very evident particularly during the analysis of classroom activities, punishment system and professional aspirations of teachers for boys and girls in the present research. Teachers’ opinions reflect distinct and rigid gender based biases against boys and girls. The impact of such biases on the day to day classroom processes would result in denying the girls the opportunities to become leaders and over indulgence of boys as class monitors. Gender differentiation is also reflected in co-curricular activities- art education as well as health and physical education that tend to compartmentalize the boys and girls into separate entities through its hidden curriculum.

Children emerge as the most vocal and articulate set of respondents. They not only gave extremely unbiased and progressive standpoints, they also questioned traditional norms and gendered expectations, were vocal about exploring their own dreams and aspirations irrespective of their sex. They were highly aware and vocal about gender issues in society. They strongly opined about their views on different issues and unanimously emphasized that academic performance was not linked to any sex based distinctions. Anyone irrespective of his/ her sex, who would work would achieve positive results.

Current research also reveals certain progressive trends in the form of unbiased and open viewpoints of most teachers from private schools and few from government schools who negate the role of sex in any manner in the overall personality development of children.

## **Conclusion**

Discriminatory social institutions – social norms, practices, formal and informal laws – have gained prominence as a useful analytical framework to illuminate what drives gender inequalities and development outcomes. Schools provide a social context that is likely to reinforce a patriarchal mind-set among children. The need of the hour is to adopt holistic and multipronged strategies that encompass diverse stakeholders ranging from families, communities, teachers' training institutes, school administration, media, policy makers for micro as well macro interventions. Commitment to a critical reassessment of the hierarchical constructions of knowledge would logically translate into more analytical, participatory and pro-active pedagogical strategies in the classroom. Learner centered, experiential knowledge and reading against the grain become critical aspects of this approach, as do curricular and pedagogic practices, that equally reflect the life worlds of both girls and women, make visible the invisible, and carry within them the seeds of a just social transformation (NCERT, 2006).

The ultimate aim of a progressive gendered project within the school system as an institution has to be focus upon developing *human* qualities among children in order to enable them to achieve substantive citizenship. Aim has to therefore focus upon developing individual capacities, bringing about self-exploration among students that would lead to individual empowerment. Such responsible and gainful citizenship would indeed pave way to individuals who would indeed play an active role in transforming the collective life of a democracy with a deepened understanding of, commitment to, and capability to uphold the constitutional values of justice, equality, citizenship and freedom at the collective level.

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**Drops in separation could only fade away, drops in CO-OPERATION made the ocean, which carried on its broad bosom the ocean greyhounds. -M.K. Gandhi, Mahatma, Vol. 8, p.97**

## **Reflections on Draft National Education Policy (2019)**

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### **Introduction**

The Draft National Education Policy (DNEP), 2019 is a serious effort of the interdisciplinary committee chaired by Dr. Kasturirangan (Scientist), former Chairperson of India Space Research Organisation, Bangalore and team that included Prof. Vasudha Kamath (Educationist), Prof. Manjul Bhargava (Mathematician), Prof. Ram Shankar Kureel (Social Scientist), Prof. T.V. Kattimani (Tribal Studies), Sri. Krishna Mohan Tripathi (Education Administration), Prof. Mazhar Asif (Minorities Studies), Prof. M.K. Sridhar (Knowledge Commission) and Dr. Shakila T. Shamsu (MHRD, GoI). It discusses content, modalities, infrastructure and support services for academic excellence from early childhood education till the post doctorate research. The draft emphasises integrating vocational education into all schools, colleges and universities. It highlights the need for adult education, promotion of Indian languages and transformative education.

Part I of the draft on **School Education** focuses on the foundational learning-foundational literacy and numeracy, reintegration of dropouts and universal access to education, curriculum and flexibility in course choice, three language formula: local, Hindi as a National language and English as a link language. There has been opposition for Hindi as a National language from some of the Southern states, West Bengal and the North Eastern states. Another mind boggling challenge is investment in school education by the state to improve quality of education and How to motivate teacher to give their best to the students

to make school education equitable and inclusive of all marginalised sections-SC, ST, minorities, children with disabilities. The draft recommends efficient resourcing and effective governance through school complexes in which cluster of schools would operate and make an optimum utilisation of teachers with varied specialisations and infrastructures such as laboratories, playgrounds, libraries. The draft also flags Regulation and Accreditation of School Education by introduction of System architecture and roles in school education system, accreditation for autonomy with accountability, protection of rights of children and life-skill education for adolescents.

Part II provides a framework for **Quality Universities and Colleges: A New and Forward Looking Vision for India's Higher Education System** with the help of institutional restructuring and consolidation, a more liberal education to energise undergraduate, graduate, post graduate and research programmes. The draft also discusses optimal learning environments and support for students by introduction of innovative and responsive curriculum and pedagogy, Student support for learning and development, open and distance learning: curriculum and pedagogy for enhancing access and opportunities for life-long learning, internationalisation of higher education and putting faculty back into the heart of higher education institutions. For energised, engaged and capable faculty, the DNEP, 2019 aims to establish National Research Foundation (NRF), funding research proposals through rigorous peer review, building research capacity at all universities and colleges, creating beneficial linkages among government, industry, and researchers, recognising outstanding research funded by the National Research Foundation through awards and national seminars. It also aims to restore integrity to teacher education, move teacher education into multidisciplinary colleges and universities and upgradation of professional education and promotion of education technology in teaching-learning efforts by setting up of National Educational Technology Forum. Department of Science and



Technology (DST) and Indian Council of Social Science Research (ICSSR) like funding agencies also will also function in addition to NRF.

### **Major Issues for Debate**

The draft has recommended replacement of University Grant Commission (UGC) with UGC will be National Higher Education Regulatory Authority (NHERA). It classifies the higher Educational institutions in 3 categories:

Type I- Research Universities will include all

Type II- Teaching Universities

Type-III- Teaching Colleges

All Type I, II, III institutions will have B.Ed., four year programmes to link higher education with school Education. Human Development Resource Cells will be merged with Universities and will be multi-disciplinary in nature. National Research Foundation (NRF) will have power to grant competitive funding for outstanding research proposals across all disciplines and even private institutions also will get funding for projects. There will be a common examination for MBBS at the final stage of exit also as National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET).

National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (NHERA) shall be the sole regulator for higher education, including professional education. All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE), National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) will be transformed into Professional Standard Setting Bodies (PSSBs). Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) will be given special preference. Open and Distance Learning (ODL) also will be covered under National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) and only qualified institutions will be permitted to conduct ODLs. The

recognition by NAAC will in terms of “Yes/ No”, instead of Grading. Levels will be introduced between Assistant, Associate and Professor cadres. Boards will be constituted to grant autonomy for colleges/ Type I, II, III institutions.

When it comes to Regulatory Structures and Mechanisms, the draft is more in favour of centralisation of governance in education and recommends Common regulatory regime. The draft acknowledges the special needs of the marginalised sections (poor, SC, ST, OBC, minorities, persons with disability), but does not offer concrete steps in terms of affirmative action of the state and leave the agenda of educational investment to philanthropic institutions.

### **Critical Reflections on DNEP, 2019:**

The DNEP echoes the prevalent view that public resources for education in developing countries should be reallocated from higher to lower levels of education is backed by massive budgetary allocation for universalization of primary education. There may be a case for maintaining and even increasing spending on higher education, as long as public funds can be directed to research and other “public good” functions of institutions of higher education. Current measures of social returns to primary, secondary and higher education do not reflect unmeasured social benefits at each level; since we do not know the relative size of these benefits across levels, we do not know the true ranking of social returns across primary, secondary and higher education. The true social rate of return to certain components of higher education, such as research and postgraduate training in science and technology, and creation of other skills where social returns probably exceed private returns (such as public administration) is probably high, and in some settings, may now be as high or higher than the social rate of return to primary and secondary education. Moreover, achieving and sustaining adequate levels of quality to capture these social returns

requires minimal stability in public financing, arguing against major reallocations away from higher education. But this does not argue for more public spending on all higher education programs. On the contrary; within the envelope of total public spending on higher education, reallocation away from public spending on undergraduate training makes sense, since such training probably has low cost compared to private returns, and can be accomplished by greater reliance on private universities and by increasing tuition and other fees in public universities, while ensuring equitable access through loan and scholarship programs.

### **A Knowledge Economy Framework**

A Knowledge Economy is one that utilizes knowledge to develop and sustain long-term economic growth, thus the Knowledge Economy framework focuses on four pillars which it suggests are needed to support a successful knowledge economy.

The first pillar of the framework is an **economic and institutional regime** that is conducive to the creation, diffusion, and utilization of knowledge. A regime that provides incentives that encourage the use and allocation of existing and new knowledge efficiently will help to foster policy change. The economic environment must have good policies and be favourable to market transactions, such as being open to free trade and foreign direct investment. The government should protect property rights to encourage entrepreneurship and knowledge investment.

The second pillar is a **well-educated and skilled population** that creates, shares, and uses knowledge efficiently. Education, especially in the scientific and engineering fields, is necessary to achieve technological growth. A more educated society tends to be more technologically sophisticated, generating higher demand for knowledge.

The third pillar is a dynamic **information infrastructure** that facilitates the communication, dissemination, and processing of information and technology. The increased flow of information and knowledge worldwide reduces transactions costs, leading to greater communication, productivity and output.

The final pillar is an efficient **innovation system** of firms, research centres, universities, think tanks, consultants, and other organisations that applies and adapts global knowledge to local needs to create new technology. The generation of technical knowledge leads to productivity growth.

The Knowledge Economy framework suggests that to be effective knowledge economies in which knowledge is created, disseminated and used well, economies have to have four pillars in place. Policy advice would focus attention on which of the pillars is in particular need, in terms of appropriate policies, institutions, investments and coordination so that countries can develop a knowledge economy and sustain long-term economic growth.

### **Education-Economy Interdependencies**

The 1986 education policy had resolved to raise investment in education such that it will reach at least 6% of GDP by the year 2000. This unfulfilled resolve was incorporated in the UPA's Common Minimum Programme in May 2004. Yet, as percentage of GDP, India spent less on education in 2005-06 (less than 3.5% of GDP) than what it spent in 1985-86 when the policy was passed by the Parliament. This is despite the fact that the Government had levied 2% Education Cess and raised almost 35% of the resources for Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan from international funding agencies.

What the country needed in 1991 – five years after the 1986 policy – was a firm resolve to first rapidly fill up the **cumulative gap** resulting from continued underinvestment and then maintain the elusive

investment level of 6% of GDP in the following decades. Nothing short of a radical departure was long wait in order **to energise and restructure the entire education system along with its curriculum.** Yet, what the global market forces persuaded the Indian State to do in the 1990s was precisely the opposite of what was directed by the Constitution and resolved by the Parliament in the 1986 policy. The undeclared but operative strategy was to *“let the vast government education system (from schools to universities) starve of funds and, consequently, deteriorate in quality.”* As the quality would decline, resulting in low learning levels, the parents, even the poor among them, would begin to withdraw their children from the system. A sense of desperation and exclusion from the socio-economic and political space in the country would prevail. More importantly, the people’s faith in the Constitution and the capability of the State to fulfill its obligations will be shaken up, thereby leading to a cynical view of the nation-state. This will lay the groundwork for appreciation of market as a means of solving people’s problems. The neo-liberal economist and advocates have long striven for precisely this goal: measured weakening of the State and increasing credibility and power of the market.

### **Economic Analysis of Education Interventions: Equity, Equality & Efficiency Dimensions**

In mainstream economic analysis, education is seen as a production process in which *inputs* (e.g., students, teachers, and textbooks) are combined to yield desired *outputs* (e.g., student learning) within the education sector, and larger societal outcomes outside the sector (e.g., increased earnings in the workplace or greater social equality), under the prevailing educational technology (encompassing pedagogy, curriculum, and school organization) and input prices. A major application of economic analysis is to inform decision-making in education in order to improve efficiency in educational production; that is, producing more desired education outputs and outcomes given

educational resources. Analytically, educational efficiency can be distinguished as internal efficiency and external efficiency. Internal efficiency relates educational outputs to educational inputs, while external efficiency relates educational outcomes to educational inputs. Analysis of educational efficiency is not confined to economic concerns only, since educational outputs and outcomes also pertain to social and political dimensions of national development.

The internal efficiency of education is improved when more education outputs are produced at given education resources or fewer education resources are used in producing the same amount of education outputs. Thus educational economic analysis is centrally concerned with the production of education outputs and with education costs.

There have been different views on whether increased economic growth and improved social equity could coexist. Using the experience of eight East Asian economies, the World Bank concluded in a 1993 publication that growth with equity was possible. This study made a guarded but positive assessment of the role of education: education was only one of many contributing factors to growth with equity but appropriate education policy did matter, especially in terms of adequate investment in education and the focus of government policy on lower levels of education. The financial crisis that began in 1997, however, underscored the importance of non-education factors that could affect the health of the economy in these nations.

Earlier efforts in promoting education for poverty reduction have been accompanied by high hope and disillusionment. The urgent need for poverty reduction in the developing world is reflected by the World Bank's redefining itself as a poverty-reduction organization. There is common understanding in the early twenty-first century that "quality basic education for all" is an important part of the overall strategy for poverty reduction. But education alone is not sufficient; rather a multisectoral approach involving related interventions in agriculture, education, health (including addressing the AIDS epidemic), credit

market for small producers, and other social sectors, is needed. Poverty reduction also requires targeted interventions. Women are one of the most important targeted groups because they are often subject to multiple disadvantages in the developing world. Increasing educational access and improving quality for girls could have profound economic, social, and political benefits for women and for society

Since mid-sixties (Kothari commission), Economists have recommended serious consideration of vocational education through imparting skills in partnership with industry.

### **Education as consumption and as investment education as a private and social investment**

#### a. Human Capital Formation

Returns to investment in education based on human capital theory have been estimated since the late 1950s. In the 40-plus year history of estimates of returns to investment in education, there have been several reviews of the empirical results in attempts to establish patterns. Many more estimates from a wide variety of countries, including over-time evidence, and estimates based on new econometric techniques, reaffirm the importance of human capital theory.

According to human capital theory, education is a form of human capital that could raise the productive capacity of individuals in economic production. Empirical studies in agriculture found a positive and significant relationship between productivity and education. At the macro level, education was also associated with economic growth. Spending on education can be seen as an investment activity with both costs and benefits, and thus subject to a cost–benefit analysis A review of rate of returns studies, such as the 1994 study of George Psacharopoulos, found that in developing nations education had a high rate of return and that the return was higher at lower education levels. Paul Bennell, however, has criticized these studies, in terms of appropriateness of method and quality of data. Some analysts, such as

Ronald Dore, point out that educational expansion in a depressed economy could lead to unemployment of the educated or over-education. Nevertheless, there is increasing consensus across nations that human capital, particularly in terms of problem-solving skills, communication skills in a diverse setting, and the ability to adapt to change, can enhance economic competitiveness in the global economy of the twenty-first century. There is also increasing attention to investment in preschool education and in education for sustainable development.

#### b. Human Development Approach

The human development approach emphasizes that people's ability to read and write, be knowledgeable, capable and healthy should be considered as ends in themselves, with positive effects on labor productivity, physical environment and reduced poverty as welcomed consequences. It further indicates that human development sees education as a value in itself and as a means. As a value in itself, education counts for developing human personality, self-learning ability, objectivity, tolerance and the willingness to participate in all aspects of human development. As a means, education is a powerful instrument of achieving and sustaining economic growth, reducing poverty and enhancing equity. (UNDP, 2001).

- Education, human development and the capability approach  
Developing children to be self-governing adults
- Developing economic participation
- Developing human flourishing
- Developing citizens with a sense of justice and reciprocity
- Putting human beings at the centre as ends not means, enlarging choices

#### c. Education as Social Infrastructure

A comprehension of infrastructure spans not only these public works facilities, but also the operating procedures, management practices, and development policies that interact together with societal demand. The social infrastructure in India includes the education system in India,



health care, the management of the education and health services in India that form the basic social infrastructure definition. This priority aims to improve the infrastructure for skill-based education and lifelong learning. The activities provide support for developing infrastructure related to formal and non-formal education, including ICT development in schools, development of higher education institutions, non-formal learning spaces and multi-functional community centres.

### **Conclusion**

Making effective use of knowledge in any country requires developing appropriate policies, institutions, investments, and coordination across the above four functional areas.

Education has been a major influence on economic growth. Greater efficiency in the use of resources would increase the rate of return to investment in education. During the closing decades of the twentieth century, emphasis in developing nations regarding educational development was placed on three broad outcomes of education: contribution to economic growth and competitiveness, improvement in social equity, and poverty alleviation.

While dealing with privatization of higher education, we need to address some crucial mind-boggling issues regarding role of higher education per se. Is it to create a concerned and informed citizenry? Or to meet the expected future needs of economic and social development in the country? Or simply to meet the labour requirements of international capitalism? Can a balance be achieved between these aims? Lofty goals of DNEP can be realized only we answer these mindboggling questions by treating education as 'public good' not as 'commodity'.

**Real education has to draw the best from the boys and girls to be  
educated. M.K. Gandhi, EWE, p. 32**