

Traditions of Learning and Role of Teachers: An Indian Perspective

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Abstract:

A school teacher, also known as an educator, is a person who helps students acquire knowledge, skills or virtues through the practice of teaching. Informally, anyone can take on the role of a teacher (e.g. showing a colleague how to do a particular task). In some countries, teaching of school-age young people may take place in an informal setting, such as within the family (home schooling), rather than in a formal setting such as a school or college. Some other professions may involve a significant amount of teaching (e.g. youth workers, pastors). In most countries, formal teaching of pupils is usually provided by paid professional teachers. This article focuses on those whose main role is to teach others in a formal educational context, such as a school or other place of initial formal education or training. It also discusses the role of the teacher in Indian tradition and in modern education, using the examples of Guru Gobind Singh Indraprastha University and the Indian Institute of Technology Kharagpur. The paper concludes with the authors' observations, suggesting that education policy needs to be reshaped, with emphasis on improving professional training in government institutions and universities, and developing partnerships between industry and academia. Teaching is a highly complex activity. This is partly because teaching is a social practice that takes place in a specific context (time, place, culture, socio-political-economic situation, etc.) and is therefore shaped by the values of that specific context. Factors that influence what is expected (or required) of teachers includes history and tradition, social views of the purpose of education, accepted theories of learning, etc.

Keywords: Traditional Knowledge, Skills or Virtues, Social Practice, Education Policy

Introduction:

The conventional role of teachers has been to nurture and develop the potential of students and to impart knowledge and skills. They have been responsible for the directed flow of information from themselves as wise men to the students as recipients. However, with the changing demands of the world and the need for new skills and competencies, the role of teachers is evolving. Teachers now need to acquire new capabilities to effectively empower students to become lifelong learners and to manage complex ways of thinking and working that cannot be easily replicated by computers. In addition, teachers face increasing demands and responsibilities, including keeping up with technological innovations, dealing with students, parents and the community, and maintaining their own well-being and competence. The traditional role of the teacher is being challenged by the need for active student participation in the learning process and the shift to a more interactive and real-world learning environment. Rabindra Nath Tagore says: "The highest education is that which does not merely give us information, but makes our

life in harmony with all existence. Swami Vivekananda said "Education is the process of bringing out the potential that is latent in every human being". He enlightened that the essence of education is the concentration of the mind, not the collection of facts. Unless curiosity is recognized and given its due place, creativity will also take a back seat in the educational process. Thus, the ultimate aim of any teaching method should be to develop concentration of mind and to awaken curiosity for independent and logical thinking which will ultimately reach the higher level of research which is also a part of education, Menon (2002). Education is one of the most important tools for improving the quality of people, society and nation and it also helps to meet the challenges of rapid developments in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi believed that "illiteracy is an effort of the government to improve education": The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 provides for access to primary schools for children in the age group of 6-14 years within the defined area or limits of the neighbourhood. Section 6 of the Act provides that 'the appropriate government and local authorities' shall, within a period of three years from the commencement of the Act, establish a school within the area or limits of a neighbourhood, if it is not already established. In pursuance of Section 6 of the Act, the Central RTE Rules has notified the area or limits of a neighbourhood as one kilometre within which a primary school shall be established and 3 kilometres within which an upper primary school shall be established. The States have notified the area or limits of their neighbourhood norms in their State RTE Rules, taking into account their State-specific conditions, for the opening of schools. As reported by the States/UTs in their AWP, 2018-19, 97.15% of the country's habitations are covered by primary schools and 96.49% of the habitations are covered by upper primary schools. The remaining uncovered habitations are mostly small or sparsely populated in difficult areas where it is not feasible to open a school, for which provision is made for providing transport and escort facilities and opening residential schools and hostels. Furthermore, 88.24% of the settlements were covered by secondary schools within a distance of 5 km.

In addition, Section 12 (1)(c) of the Right of Children to Free & Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009 provides for admission of children belonging to Backward Classes (BC) and Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) in private unaided schools to the extent of at least 25 per cent of the strength of Class I or below.

The Ministry of School Education and Literacy has launched an integrated scheme for school education - Samagra Shiksha - with effect from 2018-19, subsuming the three earlier centrally sponsored schemes of Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) and Teacher Education (TE). The scheme views school education as a continuum from pre-school to higher secondary education and aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all. Under the scheme, financial assistance is provided to States and UTs for undertaking various activities to reduce the number of out-of-school children, including opening/strengthening of new schools up to the senior secondary level, construction of school buildings and additional classrooms, establishment, upgradation and running of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBV), establishment of boarding schools/hostels, free uniforms, free textbooks and undertaking enrolment and retention drives. In addition, special training for age-appropriate enrolment of out-of-school children and residential and non-residential education for older children, seasonal hostels/residential camps, special training centres at worksites, transport/accompaniment facility to bring out-of-school children into the formal education system will also be supported. Mid-day meals are also provided to students at the primary level. Further, under the student-oriented component for children with special needs, financial assistance is provided for

identification and assessment of children with special needs, aids and appliances, Braille kits and books, appropriate teaching and learning materials and scholarship for girl students with disabilities etc.

Contribution of NGOs to the spread of literacy: NGOs have played a pivotal role in promoting education and literacy across the globe. Their efforts extend to remote and underserved regions where governments often struggle to provide adequate resources. Through innovative programmes, they are making a difference

Indian learning systems:

In ancient times, India had the Gurukula system of education, where anyone who wanted to study went to the house of a teacher (Guru) and asked to be taught. If accepted as a disciple by the guru, the disciple would stay with the guru and help with all the activities of the house. This not only created a strong bond between teacher and student, but also taught the student everything about running a house. The guru taught anything the child wanted to learn, from Sanskrit to the holy scriptures, from mathematics to metaphysics. The disciple would stay as long as he wanted, or until the guru felt he had taught everything he could. All learning was closely related to nature and life, and was not limited to the memorization of information.

The modern school system was brought to India, including the English language, originally by Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay in the 1830s. The curriculum was limited to 'modern' subjects such as science and mathematics, and subjects such as metaphysics and philosophy were considered unnecessary. Teaching was confined to classrooms and the link with nature was broken, as was the close relationship between teacher and pupil.

The Uttar Pradesh (a state in India) Board of High School and Intermediate Education was the first board established in India in 1921 with jurisdiction over Rajputana, Central India and Gwalior. In 1929, the Board of High School and Intermediate Education, Rajputana was established. Later, boards were established in some of the states. But finally, in 1952, the constitution of the board was amended and it was renamed as Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE). All schools in Delhi and some other regions came under the Board. It was the Board's responsibility to decide on things like curriculum, textbooks and examination system for all affiliated schools. Today there are thousands of schools affiliated to the Board, both within India and in many other countries from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe.

Universal and compulsory education for all children in the age group of 6-14 was a cherished dream of the new government of the Republic of India. This is evident from the fact that it is incorporated as a directive policy in article 45 of the constitution. But this objective remains far away even more than half a century later. However, in the recent past, the government appears to have taken a serious note of this lapse and has made primary education a Fundamental Right of every Indian citizen. The pressures of economic growth and the acute scarcity of skilled and trained manpower must certainly have played a role to make the government take such a step. The expenditure by the Government of India on school education in recent years comes to around 3% of the GDP, which is recognized to be very low.

“In recent times, several major announcements were made for developing the poor state of affairs in education sector in India, the most notable ones being the National Common Minimum Programme (NCMP) of the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government. The announcements are; (a) To progressively increase expenditure on education to around 6 percent of GDP. (b) To support this increase in expenditure on education, and to increase the quality of education, there would be an imposition of an education cess over all central government taxes. (c) To ensure that no one is denied of

education due to economic backwardness and poverty. (d) To make right to education a fundamental right for all children in the age group 6–14 years. (e) To universalize education through its flagship programmes such as Sarva Siksha Abhiyan and Mid Day Meal.”

Recent Trends in Education:

The emerging trends in education technology for 2023 include mobile learning and digital content platforms, AI-powered learning environments, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR), gamification of learning, automated assessments, adaptive learning, and mobile learning.

1. Mobile Learning and Digital Content Platforms

E-learning platforms have become more popular after the Covid-19 pandemic hit the world. The platforms provide students access to high-quality educational content and instructors from anywhere in the world. Furthermore, digital content platforms offer an immense array of learning resources for students and teachers alike. As the popularity of digital content platforms continues to grow, the impact on how people learn and interact with educational content will no doubt increase.

2. AI-powered Learning Environments

AI-enabled technologies such as facial recognition, natural language processing, and machine learning are increasingly used in classrooms, making learning easier and more engaging. Furthermore, AI-powered learning environments can provide students with personalized learning experiences and enable teachers to tailor lessons to meet individual students’ needs. Hence, it would be safe to say that AI is rapidly being integrated into educational tools, and its impact will certainly be felt in the coming years.

3. Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR)

AR and VR can help to create immersive and engaging learning experiences, regardless of the environment. They will increasingly be used as a tool for immersive and experiential learning. This allows students to explore virtual worlds, practice tasks, and engage in simulations tailored to their individual needs. As both technologies become more commonplace, their impact on education will be hard to ignore.

4. Gamification of Learning

Gamification of learning is a trend already seen in many educational institutions. The primary goal of incorporating game design elements in an educational setting is to make learning more fun and engaging. Some examples of gamification in an education setting includes; earning virtual points for completing tasks, a virtual leader board to compete with peers, etc. By turning learning into an interactive and engaging experience, students are able to retain more information and build skills in a fun and engaging way.

5. Wearable Technology

As wearable technologies become more widespread and customizable, their impact on learning spaces will be prolific. Wearable technology can help track progress, provide performance feedback, and offer real-time personalized guidance. Furthermore, students can listen to audio lectures, receive class notifications, make voice notes, and more with wearable technology such as smart watches and VR headsets. This would make learning more accessible and effective and benefit teachers and parents.

6. Automated Assessments

The power of automation in the education field cannot be understated. Automated assessment tools will be increasingly used to evaluate students’ progress. This gives teachers and administrators better insights

into student performance and areas that need improvement. Automated assessment tools can also provide analytical data to help students identify weak areas and work on them. In addition, automated grading tools allow teachers too quickly and accurately grade assignments, reducing the time needed for this task.

7. Adaptive Learning

Adaptive learning will become a major emerging trend in education technology, allowing courses to be tailored to the individual needs of each student. More and more educational institutions are incorporating this innovative data-driven approach to facilitate customized learning experiences. This will help teachers meet the needs of a diverse student population and maximize student learning outcomes. It would also help teachers to customize individual learning paths and learning paces.

8. Cloud Computing

Cloud computing will continue to be an important tool for educators, allowing them to access and store data more effectively. It also allows students to save money on expensive books as cloud-based books can be accessed easily anywhere. As an emerging trend in education technology, cloud computing offers strong authentication facilities to ensure data security. It also facilitates easy collaborations among students and teachers.

9. Social Media in Learning

Social media impacts the way we learn. It has created new opportunities for learners to connect with each other and access and share knowledge. Social media has also had a significant impact on the way educators teach. It has given educators new tools to reach and engage learners. The use of social media in learning is still in its early stages, but it has left a significant impact on the way we learn. In the years to come, social media will continue to have a big impact on how we learn and teach.

10. Mobile Learning

Mobile devices are becoming increasingly popular for educational purposes, allowing students to stay connected with their learning wherever they go. And that is why more and more educational content is being optimized for mobile learners today. Portable devices like mobile phones and tablets are replacing traditional learning mediums because with mobile e-learning solutions, learning never stops.

Challenges and Issues in Education in India:

India is known for its educational brilliance. However, the Indian education system is criticized for its failure to create required employability for its students in relation to the industrial requirements. Hence, there are a lot of challenges being faced by the Indian education sector that requires immediate attention.

Teacher-Student Ratio:

According to the UNESCO's State of the Education report for India 2021, there are 11.16 lakh teaching positions that are vacant in schools. It clearly shows that there is a shortage of teachers in schools. Besides this, teachers are burdened with a lot of non-academic workloads which ultimately results in a divergence of their focus from teaching the students. According to a study done by the National Institute of Education Planning and Administration (NIEPA), teachers devote only around 19% of their time to teaching while the rest of their time is spent in non-teaching administrative work. Apart from it, when it comes to the Government sector, the Government teachers enjoy a lifetime guarantee of job security irrespective of their performance which results in no accountability from the-

ir side.

Allotment of Funds:

Funds are provided to the schools by the Central Government to the State Government. Every National Education Policy since 1968 has said that India needs to spend 6% of its gross domestic product (GDP) on education. The 2019-20 Economic Survey showed that in 2019-20, 52 years since that recommendation, India spent only 3.1% of its GDP on education. This is the data collected from a website. In addition, many corrupt mediators are there in between who keep the money aside for themselves and only a small portion of the entire fund is provided to the schools. This hampers the functioning of the schools in a great way. The requirements of the schools like libraries, labs, and other infrastructural facilities cannot be managed appropriately by the schools due to the lack of availability of money.

Expensive Higher Education:

According to a survey by Assoc ham, there has been a 169% rise in inflation in primary and secondary education from 2005 to 2011. Specialized institutions and colleges are expensive in India. Higher education for some courses is beyond the reach of the common man. For example, IIM charges Rs. 2 lakh per semester for MBA classes. Privatization of advanced education into the hands of greedy entrepreneurs resulted in high drop rates in the field of unaffordable higher education.

Lack of Infrastructure:

Lack of infrastructural facilities like poor hygiene, lack of toilets, drinking water facilities, electricity, playground, etc. is one of the major loopholes of the education sector. A survey was conducted in 2010 whereby approximately 95.2% of schools are not still under the complete set of RTE infrastructure indicators. According to the 2016 Annual Survey of Education Report, only 68.7% schools had useable toilet facilities and around 3.5% of schools in India had no toilet facilities.

High-Dropout Rates:

In the primary and secondary levels, dropout rates are very high. Students between the age group of 6-14 years leave the school before completion of their education. **According to the ASER report 2012, enrollment in the 6-14 years of age is over 96% in rural India but dropout rates are very high.** Various factors responsible for dropout rates are as follows- poverty, lack of toilets, and long distance to school, child marriages, patriarchal mindset, and cultural factors.

Neglect of Regional Languages:

In 2017-18, 14% of students who were enrolled in private schools in India's rural areas and 19.3% in urban areas selected a private school with the English language as the medium of instruction. English is the main medium of language in education. Standardized publications in Indian languages are also not available. As a result, students who are from rural backgrounds, Government schools, and those who are not well versed in the English language face a lot of problems in gaining knowledge and understanding the concepts.

Conclusion:

Education is a tool that empowers individuals in all aspects of their lives. It widens their knowledge, skills, techniques, and world vision. It also helps in inculcating moral and ethical values. Apart from all this, employment opportunities increase to a great extent along with the higher income prospects. Indian Education System has its share of issues as well as challenges that need to be resolved for the future of the country. Since the pre and post of British rule in India, a major shift can be observed in the Indian Education System and initially, children were educated in Gurukuls, which later were replaced by the modern education system. The Constitution of India committed to 6 Fundamental rights, of which one of the most important was the Right to Education, which allowed free and compulsory education to children between the ages of 6 to 14 years. The education system of India is mainly divided into pre-primary, primary, elementary, and secondary education, which is then followed by higher education. There are however many issues and drawbacks in the current system of Education in India.

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