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## Editorial

5

### Primary Pack

#### Training ourselves to see better

*Meena Kharatmal*

Science begins with observation. As Aristotle says, people value their sight among other things. The reason for this is sight makes knowledge possible for us and shows us the differences between many things. Observation therefore is a very important skill for school science learning. Here are a few simple activities which primary school teachers can conduct for their students to improve and sharpen their observation skills.

6

### Cover Story

#### The teacher has failed

*Simran Luthra*

Do teachers fail at any point during their journey as a teacher? Do they have self-doubts? How do they approach or view failure and achievement? Is the so called 'perfect teacher' a myth? Most articles by teachers showcase successful strategies for student and classroom management, but there are very few examples of 'teacher failure' or even training for teachers to cope with classroom failures. How can there be opportunities for teachers to encourage growth and achievement through failure? We present three varied viewpoints that breakdown this phenomenon of 'teacher failure'.



10

#### Looking beyond failure and learning

*Nidhi Qazi*

14

#### What we lose in the race for marks

*Sunanda Ali*

18

### A Step Ahead

#### Tackling thoughts of self-harm

*Neerja Singh*

20

### The Other Side

#### The native flavour in learning

*Anuradha C*

How do we integrate the knowledge of essential, native skills into the learning process of a student? While there is no disputing the fact that universally accepted subjects such as languages, math, science and social sciences must be taught, where and how do we teach children the skills required to cope with their native habitat? Formal learning must address this lacuna.

22

#### The scope of initiative

*Navya Iyer Kannan*

24

## Worksheet

### The world around us

*Sanjhee Gianchandani*

Global and cultural awareness is an important 21<sup>st</sup> century skill that needs to be inculcated in students. Global awareness refers to an understanding of how environmental, social, economic and political factors impact the world. And cultural awareness is demonstrating an understanding of other people's cultural values, beliefs and perceptions which might differ from yours. This worksheet aims to provide a glimpse of issues pertaining to both global and cultural awareness. It is targeted at students of grades 6 and 7.

27

### Cogitations

#### Controversies in disciplines are useful!

*Prakash Iyer*

35

### Finding My Own Path

#### The effectiveness of show and tell

*Manek K Mistry*

38

### A journey of learning

*Akshay Kumar*

## Technology and Education

### The principles of good programming skills

*Smitha Prasad*

Is coding easy? Can anyone become a good computer programmer? How can children learn what it takes to learn a computer language? Here are some excellent tips starting from being disciplined and learning the basics to paying attention to details.

42

## Classroom Management

### Mindfulness in a noisy class

*Sahana Srinath*

44

## Resources

### Make the world come alive through design

*CIPAM team*

Continuing our series on Intellectual Property Rights, this time, the author talks about how design can be the exclusive right of the creator. This means without the permission of the design owner, nobody can reproduce or create copies of the protected design.

46

### Event

#### Our stories, our selves

*Chintan Girish Modi*

48

### Teaching Practice

#### Fostering engagement in the classroom

*Aruna Sankaranarayanan*

50

### Action Research

#### Using data to improve learning

*Ishita Ghoshal*

Action research helps a teacher to enhance her reflective practices. It gives her a glimpse of the learning patterns, learning attitudes, gaps in learning and empowers her to use fact-based data to drive, explore and experiment to improve or innovate upon these patterns. The author illustrates this with an example from her own experience.

52

### Book Review

#### Stories of history and history as stories

*Proma Basu Roy*

54

### How city government schools work

*Chandrika Muralidhar*

### Question of the Week

*B R Sitaram*

58

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#### Cover Illustration

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# Learning from COVID-19

It's been a strange few weeks. As the panic around the new virus known as COVID-19 spread across the globe after having brought China to a virtual standstill, most institutions of learning in the country – schools, colleges, universities – decided to suspend face-to-face classes and let children stay home. Our social media feeds are full of stories about how communities in Italy are coping (including a viral video that showed people singing on their balconies) and how shoppers in the US are panic-buying such things as toilet paper! With the reports ranging from scary (overflowing hospitals and inadequate isolation facilities) to remote (everything is happening far from us), it was hard to get a sense of exactly how serious the issue is and how drastic our own measures should be. All the forwards on WhatsApp did not help, despite enthusiastic suggestions for remedies (homemade rasam and garlic pods) and claims of Indian immunity. With the WHO chief labelling the Corona outbreak a “pandemic” all doubt fled and there is general acceptance that we cannot ignore the warnings or the danger.

The resulting widespread disruption has been felt keenly across different aspects of life. While we may as a society be accustomed to unanticipated closures due to a variety of unfortunate circumstances ranging from natural disasters to conflicts, this time it has been quite different. We have come to adopt new behaviours and be more mindful of older prescriptions such as handwashing. Among the new terms that we have learned is “social distancing” – the practice of maintaining a healthy physical distance from others. It's not always easy or even possible to do this – think of crowded public transport and queues for railway tickets, or those who live in very small homes. But it has made us more aware of our own presence and that of others, and at least try to be respectful of community needs and fears.

Many social observers say that the effects of this pandemic will last a long time, and perhaps create

some permanent change – in public health systems, in social practices, and individual behaviours. Be that as it may, COVID-19 has offered and will continue to offer many teachable and learnable moments. When children come back into the classroom, there will be much to talk about, and many questions to explore, no matter what the subject. From the science of transmission to the mathematics of tracking, from the art and music of awareness raising to the organization and mobilization of communities, from the politics of government action to the economic impacts – there can be projects, debates, individual and collaborative explorations. What are the limits this experience has revealed about our own systems, and what are the stories of hope it has provided us?

Perhaps it won't be a fun summer for everyone, but there are lessons to be learnt – from our own observations and experiences, but also from those we are reading about, from across the world.

Stay healthy, stay safe!

*Usha Raman*

# Training ourselves to see better

Meena Kharatmal

Observation is one of the most important skills for school science learning even at the primary level. Textbooks also emphasize this objective of developing observation skills, among others, using simple activities. Using the context of general science in class three, we developed and conducted simple activities to meet this objective.

We organized a camp on activity-based learning, where 15 students between 10 and 11 years, from a nearby Marathi medium school participated. The activities were conducted in Marathi and students were provided with worksheets in Marathi.

The objective was to encourage students to observe animals. We conducted simple activities related to listing of animals, drawing from experience, observing animals, drawing by observation. The emphasis was on providing opportunities and encouraging students to develop observational skills. We illustrate these activities and provide glimpses of students' responses from their participation.

## Activity 1: Create a list of animals that you see in your classroom and school. Mention where you find these animals.

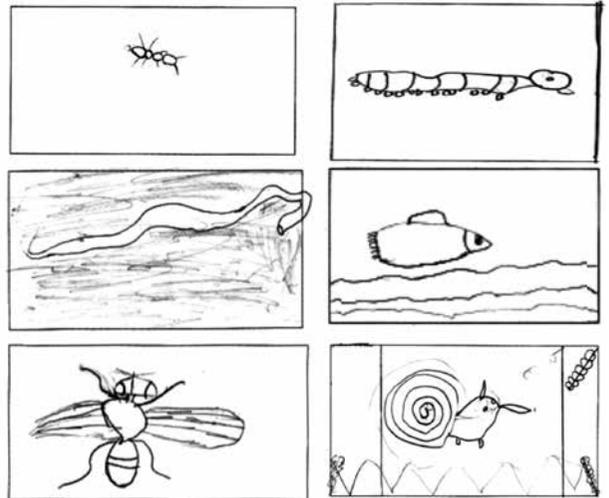
We began with seeking students' prior knowledge about animals and their habitat. We asked them to create a list of animals that they see in their surroundings, along with their place of living/dwelling. It was interesting that students listed some animals/insects that are usually seen on vegetables and fruits. For example, larvae in brinjal, fruit fly in banana. Even though ants naturally dwell in soil, since students were recalling from their experience, they mentioned seeing ants in sugar. Overall, each student listed at least 10-12 animals and their habitat. Below is a compiled list of animals in their habitat, translated from Marathi.

- snail, earthworm, snake, rat – soil
- fish, crab, frog – water
- crow, parrot, monkey – trees
- lizard – wall

Their responses indicated that they have seen animals in their surroundings, but did they observe these animals? The listing of animals was followed by drawing of the animals based on their experiences.

## Activity 2: Draw the animals that you have seen in your surroundings.

Young children like to draw! We used this interesting medium to understand the importance of observations among primary students. We shortlisted six kinds of animals/insects from their list – ants, caterpillar, earthworm, fish, fruit fly, snail. These are commonly found in our daily life and surroundings. Students were encouraged to draw any two animals/insects on the worksheets from their experiences. Some of these drawings are shown in Figure 1.



Illustrations courtesy: Meena Kharatmal

Figure 1: Students' drawings based on their experiences – Ant, Caterpillar, Earthworm, Fish, Fruit fly, Snail.

We noticed that though students were aware of the animals and their habitat, they were not clear about the details of the animals and their body parts. A summary of their drawings is as below:

- **Ants** were depicted with 4, 6, 8 legs, having four body parts.
- **Caterpillar** was drawn as having a long cylindrical body with asymmetrical segments and legs.

- **Earthworm** was drawn just like a hollow tube. Students mentioned that it was simple to draw, "just draw curves!" Their drawings missed the head end and tail end.
- **Fish** were drawn either without any fins, or without any scales. Some drew only one fin showing asymmetry. Students mentioned that fish was easy to draw and yet they missed essential body parts in their drawings.
- **Fruitfly** was a bit tricky to draw, so we suggested that they draw it like an insect, such as a housefly.
- **Snail** was drawn with spirals for its shell. Their drawings also showed legs, two eyes and two asymmetrical antennae. It was interesting to see that eyes were drawn as two dots, though the eyes are located on the tip of the antennae.

Students' drawings at this stage indicated their spontaneous thinking. It was interesting to note that students related some physical features of animals with some indicative shapes. For example, spirals for shell in snails, long tube like body for the earthworm.

However, their drawings also indicated that they missed crucial body parts while depicting the animals. For example, fins and scales in fish, number of legs in ants, etc. Therefore, in order to know their thinking process, we conducted a group discussion. We asked students how many legs an ant has and how many legs a crab has. Students mentioned that ants have 4, 6 or 8 legs, while crabs have 4 or 8 legs. This indicated that only a few students mentioned the correct answer. This led us to ponder whether students really observe at all! It is essential that all students have a correct understanding of animals and their body parts. We explained these details by showing photographs of animals.

### Activity 3: Observe the animals and draw.

This activity had six kinds of animals/insects – ants, caterpillar, earthworm, fish, fruitfly, snail – with 12 photographs (two for each animal). Each student was provided with both sets of at least two animals. The students' drawings were quite interesting. Most of the drawings resembled the animals they saw in the photograph closely. A compilation of the students' drawings based on their observations of animals' photographs is shown in Figure 2.

### A brief analysis of students' drawings based on observation:

**Ants:** These were accurately drawn with six legs. Small squares were drawn for the sugar. Perhaps

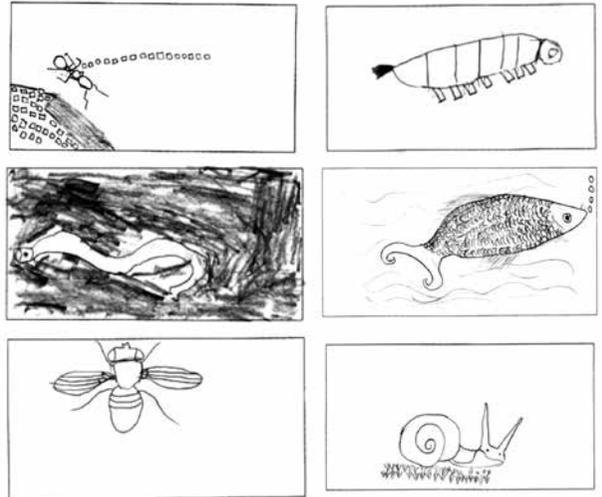


Figure 2: A compilation of students' drawings based on observations of animals photographs – Ant, Caterpillar, Earthworm, Fish, Fruitfly, Snail.

this was based on their discussion about the ants' surroundings.

**Caterpillar:** This was drawn as a long slender body with legs. In one drawing the segments and legs were shown accurately as in the photograph. In one of the drawings, the legs were shown on both the sides, adding their experiences to their observations.

**Earthworm:** A detailed drawing of the earthworm was still a challenge. Perhaps the segments were not visible. However, at least the head was shown in their drawings and a circle at one end of the body was drawn to show the mouth. After some probing they drew the earthworm in the mud to depict its surroundings.

**Fish:** Fish was drawn quite well. They had left out the scales of the fish in the beginning. But based on their observations, their drawing of fish showed fins, tail fins, and even scales. Some drew long curved lines on the body for scales. A few drew minute scales on the body. Students drew curved lines for water to show the habitat.

**Fruitfly:** This was drawn in some detail. The head, thorax, abdomen were drawn quite appropriately. Upon probing about the second pair of legs, they mentioned that they were overlapping with the wings. Though, in the fruit fly all the legs emerge from the thorax, the third pair of legs was shown emerging a little from the abdomen. However, this was corrected when they were asked to observe these details.

**Snail:** Children enjoyed drawing the snail as they said, "We have to draw circles and circles!" and that it was simple to draw. Snail's shell, body, tentacles were drawn and matched with the photographs. Even their surrounding of grass was drawn. Eyes were drawn as two dots although they were located on the tip of the tentacles.

The main objective, to encourage students to observe, was getting accomplished. We could establish this from their drawings, as there was quite a good amount of accuracy and detailing in their observation-based drawings. Students themselves noticed details while observing and drawing. Initially, they only drew the animals. Then they were prompted to also draw their surroundings. So they added mud, water, leaves, stones, sugar, grass, etc., in their drawings. In fact, just to show that "fish is alive, they drew bubbles coming out of its mouth!" The observing and drawing activity was fun and enjoyed by all the students.

This activity turned out to be quite participatory as we conducted discussions while they were observing animals. If we thought they were not looking in the right places we prodded them to. The students saw the difference in their drawings before and after observing the animal photographs.

This activity led us to understand how students think about animals. Now that they observed the details of the animals, they were keen to have a discussion on each animal. This indicates that providing opportunities for observation can lead to generating curiosity in animals. They asked several questions based on their observations of the animals. We asked them to list their questions on animals. We managed to provide answers to most of their questions in the group discussion.

### A brief analysis of students' questions

We believe that their detailed questions about body parts, development, growth were triggered because they had keenly observed the details of the animals. The kinds of questions asked by the students on the six animals were – "Where do they live?", "What do they eat?", "What is their colour?", "How many types of fish are there?", "How does the snail get its shell?", "How do fish swim?", "What is the earthworm's skin made of?", etc. A few questions were related to the eyes, legs, head, development, types, species. The general questions that emerged were based on their curiosity about the animal, while specific questions about body parts, etc. were raised after their observation of the animals in the photographs.

## List the questions based on the observed animals

### Ants

- Where do ants live?
- How many legs does ants have?
- What do ants eat?
- Ants are in how many colours?
- What is the size of ants?

### Fish

- Do fish appear in many colours?
- Why do fish live in water?
- How do fish see?
- What does fish eat?
- Why fish is small?
- How many fins do fish have?
- How many types do fish are there?
- How do fish swim?

### Earthworm

- Where does earthworm live?
- Why does earthworm live in soil only?
- What is inside earthworm?
- What does earthworm eat?
- Why does earthworm burrow in soil?
- Does earthworm have head, legs?
- Why does earthworm crawl?
- What is the earthworm skin made of?
- Earthworms are in which colour?

### Caterpillar

- Where do caterpillar live?
- Caterpillar are in which colour?
- How many legs do caterpillar have?
- Caterpillar develops into what?
- What is the size of caterpillar?
- In which types of vegetables does caterpillar occur?
- How many eyes do caterpillar have?

### Fruitfly

- Where do fruitflies live?
- What do fruitflies eat?
- Where are fruitflies found?
- How many legs, eyes, wings does fruitflies have?
- Fruitflies has which colour?
- What attracts fruitflies?

### Snail

- How many legs, eyes, tail does snail have?
- Why does the snail have shell?
- How does snail go inside the shell?
- Where does snail live?
- What does snail eat?
- How does snail climb a wall?
- Snail has which colour?

The curiosity of students was apparent by questions such as – "Why does the earthworm burrow in soil?", "How does the snail go inside the shell?" Now the students seemed to want to understand animal behaviour and survival mechanisms in depth. Even, "How do fish see?" was a wonderful question to ask by a primary student! These kinds of questions can also be seen as one way of transitioning from general to specific questions and from fact-based to process-based questions.

Although we have only demonstrated how drawing can develop observation skills among students,

teachers can use several other techniques as well to instigate observation. A simple way can be by using picture books. Teachers can create or select pictures from any book that has a story of a market place, a festival, a visit to a zoo, or village, town, etc., and ask questions that require observations in details. Often, children enjoy looking at pictures. Therefore, this can be used to ask inquisitive questions from the story. For example, if the picture is of a market place, then the questions can be – list the number of birds on the trees, list the varieties of fruits you see in the market, list the kinds of vegetables being sold, are there more varieties of fruits or vegetables, are there more men or women in the market, how many children (boys or girls) are visiting the market, etc. While trying to find answers to these simple questions, students will need not only to observe, but also count and compare things. Teachers can encourage students to carefully observe the picture and record their answers.

We use our senses of vision, sound, smell, taste, and touch for observation. Just by using the sense of sound, spotting of birds can be developed as an activity. Similarly, using the sense of touch, students can observe and find the types of texture, material, fabric, etc., of objects.

Teachers can hang a bird feeder on a tree and assign students to observe how many birds visit the tree for food, what kinds of birds visit, etc. Similar activity can be developed by keeping a vessel full of water and assign students to observe the birds. Teachers can encourage students to observe the kinds of butterflies that visit their school or garden. As students enjoy watching birds and butterflies, we can

make use of their interest to develop simple activities to encourage observations of our surroundings.

Some observations can be done over a period of few days. Students can be encouraged to plant a seed and observe its growth daily. Students can measure the amount of rainfall by collecting rain in a container over a period of time.

Observation requires us to create a record of the things and events that are observed. Students' observations from various activities can be collectively discussed to generate questions or classroom discussion around the topics related to plant growth, germination, types of birds, types of butterflies, rainfall, etc.

Developing observation skills is one of the goals mentioned in textbooks at the primary level. Observation skills can be developed by simple activities that students engage with and are fond of.

This workshop was also a learning experience for us. Applying simple activities for observing can lead to generating questions and raising curiosity in school science learning.

**Acknowledgement:** Happy to acknowledge the enthusiastic participation of the students!

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## Getting past the plastic: can you help us?

Subscribers who receive **Teacher Plus** in the post would know that we moved a few years ago from paper to plastic covers. The reason to move to plastic was that the paper covers often tore in transit through the postal system, often damaging the address label, so the issue never reached the intended subscriber and when the magazine was returned to us, we had no way of knowing which subscriber had missed the issue! During the rainy season, magazines were soaked through and damaged beyond recovery. So the obvious solution seemed to be to move to a sturdier packaging material, and this has indeed led to fewer returns and almost no damage in transit. But as we all know, plastic use has its own very serious problems, and we would like to find a way to avoid using it. Our current stocks of plastic covers will last us for another 5 to 6 months, and in the meantime, we would like to explore other ways of packing and mailing the magazine – one that will take into account weather-beating and other kinds of damage. If you have a suggestion that is sustainable and inexpensive (we are a small operation with very limited funds), do write to us! If you know of innovative folks who could help us, do let us know!

Write to [editorial@teacherplus.org](mailto:editorial@teacherplus.org) with your ideas, using the subject line: Beyond Plastic



# The teacher has failed

Simran Luthra

Urge you to look at the title of this piece again. Do the words make you uncomfortable in any way? Pause and re-read the words.

I'm not sure about you, reader, but when typing these words and having them stare at me across the laptop screen, something, rather a lot, didn't feel right. The words 'teacher' and 'fail' just shouldn't go together. There is almost something borderline disturbing about these words being strung together.

Why is a teacher failing so distasteful a thought? Are teachers supposed to fail? What are the implications of a teacher failing?

When it comes to students, we have come a certain distance in understanding that failure is a part of learning. Teachers, in fact, are increasingly being entrusted with the responsibility of fostering a growth mindset among learners. Motivational quotes and posters make their way into school corridors and classrooms almost to offset the effects of competition and academic pressure in mainstream schools. They address learners and admit that failure is an inevitable part of the journey, or in more clichéd words 'a stepping stone to success'. Glib as they might sound, there is at least an acknowledgement and normalization of failure for students.

This has become possible owing to the general focus on mental health and increased awareness of the negative impact of academic pressure on students over the second half of the last century. The discourse of teaching-learning over time is increasingly placing the onus of learning not just on students, but also on teachers as well, which perhaps was not the situation four or five decades ago. The words of Ignacio Estrada have become a popular mantra in teacher education, "If a child can't learn the way we teach, maybe we should teach the way they learn."

The truth is that teaching is highly (and I cannot emphasize this enough), *highly* complex work. Unfortunately in India it isn't recognized as such. The widespread attitude that 'Anyone can teach' actually does extreme harm than much good. But that is a topic for another article. The teaching process involves, to name just a few steps that come to mind immediately:

- understanding one's learners,
- defining the learning objectives and setting goals,
- presenting the subject matter (that one is an expert at),
- energizing learners and keeping up interest and motivation,
- employing effective assessment strategies,



Illustrations: Shreya Sen

- identifying gaps in learning,
- carrying out effective remediation.

Another extremely significant and real aspect of teaching that often gets overlooked is the emotional labour involved. Besides helping students achieve the prescribed and desired learning outcomes, teachers also have the unspoken task of mitigating the ill-effects of academic pressure and competition that students may very often experience independently or owing to their parents. At times it could even go beyond school-related concerns and be personal or familial challenges that a student is experiencing. However, even the act of motivating learners, helping them overcome failure by exploring different strategies, helping them develop a growth mindset as opposed to a fixed mindset, aren't simple, easy or straightforward tasks. They need resilience, persistence, clarity and genuine concern on the part of the teacher – all of which in turn require high levels of emotional energy of the teacher. Given the combination of the complexity of the task and the emotional labour involved, can failure be ruled out as a possibility?

While thinking about teacher failure and talking to various teachers, I realized that the phenomenon of teacher failure can be further broken down as failure on various fronts: a) pedagogical, b) emotional, and c) ethical. Consider the following descriptions:

- The most obvious front for teachers to make mistakes on is of course the pedagogical. Catering to different kinds of learners, with different learning styles, with varying levels of prior knowledge, understanding, and motivation, along with the task of making the correct choice of pedagogical technique given the time constraints, available resources and materials dictates how successful or not a teacher will be.
- A teacher is expected not only to understand the emotions of her students and function in accordance, but is also expected to regulate her own emotions. This is slippery terrain especially when one's workspace is a noisy classroom, consisting of immature human beings with competing interests and varying degrees of investment in what the teacher is trying to achieve. Losing one's temper, giving in to momentary outbursts are examples of emotional failure that many teachers feel extremely guilty about later and regard as a failure.

- A teacher is also very often faced with ethical dilemmas. Again, dealing with myriad personalities, having to take decisions in favour of someone and against someone else, caring versus maintaining formality, assessing what qualifies as a domain in which they can or should venture or stay out of, confidentiality versus school rules, drawing boundaries – these are just a few examples of the variety of ethical dilemmas that a teacher may find herself facing. Whether or not teachers recognize these instances as ethical dilemmas, the opportunity for a misstep or an inaccurate judgment is always lurking around the corner, ready to make teachers feel like failures if there is even a minor lapse.

So when it comes to teachers, just how much understanding and empathy exists for them when *they* fail,



is something that is worth exploring. With this end in view, I reached out to a few teacher friends who shared a little about the realities of failure and more importantly how it is handled, on their journeys.

As Feruzan Mehta, an ex-teacher and someone who has been the country-head for Seeds of Peace (This is a not-for-profit organization and works for leadership development among the youth) and has done extensive teacher training, shared, when asked about teacher failure: "Teachers have human frailties, like everyone else. In fact, this may even be considered necessary, because it is important to constantly question yourself if you wish to learn and grow; both personally and professionally. Complacency and over-confidence are perhaps the biggest obstacles to self-development." To say one can't fail at something is at a simplistic level, unrealistic; but Feruzan takes it a step further when she says that failure is actually necessary for growth. A lack of failure for a teacher, in fact, can mean that there is little happening in terms of reflection or experimentation, both of which are again aspects which are essential to the complex work that is teaching.

Pooja Makhija, pre-primary coordinator at Oakridge International School, Hyderabad goes on to point out: "With the way the education system is changing, there is a growing need for teachers to become risk-takers. Failure becomes an essential part of teaching as it helps the teacher to reflect, re-work, and make it happen. It's not about failure anymore, it's about trying new things and trying possible solutions to make it work."

When asked if teachers have self-doubts, Trupti Abhyankar, an ex-Teach for India fellow who taught grades 5 and 6 promptly replied saying "All the time." She went on to add: "As a new teacher, I have lost count of the times I looked at weekly test results or reflected on a particular student's behaviour and thought I'd made no difference whatsoever. In a culture where assessment data and marks are still used to determine a student's progress, the pressure of achieving these weighs heavily upon teachers. I taught for two years in a particularly challenging, low-income school and the first few months were full of self-doubt. The whole culture of setting classroom goals and pushing students (and yourself) to achieve them is great, but only until you don't make that the only parameter to assess students' progress."

Trupti's response points to how broad the scope of teaching-learning can possibly be. If students' academic progress is not the only or primary

parameter to go by, what else is there? Priyanka Das Sarkar, who teaches in an alternative school in Bengaluru shared: "I think the first thing is to understand what is termed as failure or achievement? Are your students getting good marks in the test achievement but are unable to express themselves and are also feeling low about themselves? For me, a student's mental health is of utmost importance and if he or she is feeling good, marks can be achieved unless they have a learning difficulty." What Priyanka is describing refers to the emotional labour aspect of a teacher's work. Academics is most often regarded as the primary area that teachers are expected to work on, but is it the most important area? And realistically speaking, is it the only area that teachers remain limited to?

Now reader, a lot of these things you may already know or better still, most likely have experienced. What then is the purpose of me attempting this (hopefully) comprehensive description of teacher failure? It is to present a case *for* the teacher to fail; because how can a teacher not fail?

The corollary to the idea of a teacher not failing, is the myth of the perfect teacher. A most dangerous myth, one that Feruzan responded beautifully to:

"The traditional view is that the teacher must be infallible; they must know it all and get it right, every time. This is an unrealistic and unfair expectation. But many teachers fall into this impossible mindset, with the result that when they fail (which is inevitable at some point), they react either by being in denial, or seek to gloss over the error, or quickly try and cover up their mistake.

"Another response is to be hugely self-critical. Teachers need to accept their own humanity and imperfections. As mentors, they are expected to be caring, compassionate and forgiving, which they often are. But since they are in this trap that they need to be above it all, they are often extra hard on themselves when they fail. Berating or beating one's self up can be extremely debilitating and stands in the way of progress. Teachers must learn to be kind to themselves too."

Feruzan describes two possible ways of dealing with failure: denial or dejection. These *must* be transformed into acceptance and self-compassion. The posters and quotes displayed on the walls of schools, meant to motivate the students and educate

them on the growth mindset, are as much applicable to the teachers as to the students.

Another pitfall of the myth of the perfect teacher is that it tends to be a monolithic discourse or a single story. As Trupti points out, “So much emphasis is placed on factors like scores, discipline, and the idea that a silent classroom is a good classroom. We’re big fans of standardizing everything – we want all students, all teachers to teach the same way, achieve the same growth, and all classrooms to function the same way. This may not be the scenario in alternative schools, but the schools that a majority of our students attend all fit the description above, in one way or another. School principals will pull up teachers for not getting better results, but how many of them would be open to the idea of allowing their teachers to experiment with student seating in their classes, or changing the way English is taught?”

So the onus of accepting and celebrating teacher failure is not just that of the individual teacher. It is that of the culture of the school and its entire ecosystem that includes the school management, parents and students. A key differentiator perhaps is the school culture that is set up by the leadership. Priyanka for instance shared about her school where “...they are open to discussing the issues with teachers. We have circle times with the students if they have any problem with the teacher, we have an annual feedback mechanism where everyone gives feedback to another. Initially it was difficult, but with time we understand it is for our and the community's benefit. In our school, failure is not looked down upon but seen as a way of learning and even senior teachers share their failures. This creates a culture of openness which helps everyone: the teachers, students and support staff. We have an annual retreat where we introspect upon our patterns and realize things about ourselves and others, which I feel helps in being comfortable with failure.”

Such a scenario is ideal, but rare. What is encouraging is that it exists. If education is a human endeavour aimed at preparing human beings for life, how can it possibly preclude failure, which is such an essential part of life itself? If teaching has to be honest and authentic, it would necessarily have to begin with the adult human being – the teacher – accepting and being comfortable with failure. There will be as many kinds of teachers as there are people; and that is where the beauty of the human element in teaching comes in. Every teacher is unique.

One thing is amply clear: if one is to explore one’s individuality as a teacher, one has to take risks, which might mean going against the traditional notions of what a perfect teacher looks like. In the process, failing is inevitable. How we look at failure then becomes key to whether or not there is to be innovation, both at the personal and professional level. Feruzan shared her insights on this:

“The teacher must necessarily first work on his/her own personal evolution and transformation. This involves introspection and accepting that perhaps a shift in one’s attitude is required in understanding what constitutes success/achievement and failure. Recognizing one’s strengths and building on them is important. Recognizing one’s weaknesses, accepting these and seeking ways to overcome them, equally so.”

We can thus look at failures individually and collectively, both within ourselves and in the community and the world in which we live and see what can be done to right the situation. Putting right what is wrong, is thus converting failure to success in the widest sense. Respect and care for yourself, respect and care for others and thereby take care of the whole world.”

What is needed then is a mindset shift in which the empathy and understanding of the process of learning which is applicable to students, is extended to teachers as well. ‘The teacher has failed’ isn’t a sad, unforeseen ending. Instead, it is a strong start to a fresh departure from older ways of doing things. It is the beginning of knowing oneself better and learning things anew. We fail only when we try. Let us instead then, fear the words ‘The teacher has not failed’.

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# Looking beyond failure and learning

Nidhi Qazi

If asked about the struggles of childhood, readers may remember some of their teachers who may have tortured them in the name of teaching. But the same readers may also remember those heaven-sent angels who shaped their perspectives, made learning possible and helped them become better humans. What a contradiction! How is it that our lives have been impacted by teachers in good and not-so-good ways at different points in life?

It is with this pain and these questions that I lived for years before venturing into the space of education. The pain grew immensely, the hatred escalated. But thanks to my M.A. Research Guide, who silently paved the way for perspectives unknown and unheard that soon there was no looking back. Getting to read educationists such as Prof. Krishna Kumar, Vimala Ramachandran and others opened a new world. This new world aimed at humanising teachers, understanding how this profession became the most-sought-after and what our histories have done to shape the image of teachers.

Today, I work wholeheartedly in the space of teachers' professional development. The interactions with this community are enriching and challenging. But what's bothersome is the shift in expectations from teachers in the name of professional development. A lot of people and organisations are talking down to teachers in the name of building the latter's professional capacity. Government training programmes are not far behind. They seem to push their teachers to accept their roles and responsibilities without understanding how these additional roles and responsibilities are actually viewed. Add to this, teachers are burdened with the moral responsibility of creating future citizens. But that's the sole purpose of teachers, isn't it? Then why bring this up as a concern?

There isn't any disagreement that teachers ought to take up the responsibility for building futures, but this cannot be done without building an adequate space where teachers can express their fears and failures. This profession will be reduced to mere symbolism if teachers are constantly pressurised to perform better.



Photos courtesy: Nidhi Qazi

The more the pressure, the better they will perform – right? Wrong! It is one thing to feel the pressure and another to actually work under administrative pressure which doesn't want to address the woes of teachers. The latter deprives teachers the opportunity to deliberate about their practices, pedagogic challenges, resulting which their needs go unheard. It is true several schools do bring this up and provide platforms, but they are in the minority. And no, it isn't about urban vs rural or private vs government or low-cost vs elite – this isn't about binaries. It is about platforms which aren't adequate and go beyond these binaries.

This article attempts to do that – offer a space where teachers candidly share their side of the story, their side of 'being human'.

## On facing failure as a teacher

Pushpa Shukla, a primary government school teacher from Gariyaband, Chhattisgarh, says, "Yes, I have seen failure in my journey. I still feel hollow inside due to this. The experiences are varied – maths in middle school, teaching science, not understanding the language spoken by children in smaller classes, not being able to converse in English. The middle school where I was posted for the first time had a shortage of teachers. Children and parents both expected me to teach in the middle school and the primary section, both of which were in the same

campus. I often organised various activities such as games and exercises, and taught subjects such as hindi, science, social sciences and sanskrit. But I was not able to help the children in maths as I was weak in maths and chemistry and I was afraid of these subjects. So I used to be sad and every year so many children from my school would suffer in these subjects leading to failures and drop-outs. This experience was painful."

On not knowing the children's language, Pushpa shares, "My first posting was in a region bordering Odisha and children spoke Odiya. I faced many difficulties in understanding them."

Dron Sahu, a primary teacher from Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh recounts, "There was a time when I was a single teacher of the school; handling classes 1-5 with 106 children. To make it worse, I was also responsible for the construction of the school-building. That was the time when I really wanted to leave my profession. A teacher should not be burdened with non-academic tasks, he/she needs to focus on teaching."



For Hridesh Goswami, a middle-school science teacher from Lalitpur, UP, failure is something that he often runs into. "When academically weak students do not respond as per my planning, and my efforts to bring them to mainstream do not succeed, it demotivates me, causing a lot of frustration. Our textbooks are filled with concepts and terminologies which children find difficult to understand. I try to show them some real life practical examples to get home the point. But it gets too difficult. Also, since one topic comprises sub topics, the linkages between those sub topics become quite difficult to deal with. For example, a topic like refraction and its sub-topics such as opaqueness and transparency, then concepts like phloem, xylem, so on and so forth. Such nuances are also not dealt with in detail in the textbooks.

Hence the lack of understanding when I was a student myself gets reflected in my teaching as well."

"Content-understanding has been my strong area for which I have always prepared before teaching but I have often failed in understanding children's psychology and the way they learn. It has been difficult for me to understand different strategies of teaching-learning that will work," shares Neelima Srivastava, a primary teacher from Durg, Chhattisgarh.

For Sweety Sharma, a primary teacher in Kurukshetra, Haryana, failure and achievement go together. "I know my children and their various learning needs and that has been an achievement but I have not been good at drawing. A class-1 teacher must be good at drawing and that's where my weakness lies."

### Moments of self-doubt

For Smridhi, a primary teacher at The Heritage School, Delhi, it is the diverse backgrounds of children that pose a challenge. "When we work with children who have certain concern areas, I feel doubtful what exactly will work best with them considering their backgrounds and other aspects. Also, there is an underlying concern that things that I am trying may fail, they may not work."

"The textbook language is sometimes incompatible with the context of the children, which causes self-doubt about my capacity to teach that topic. My lack of practical knowledge or practical utility of that concept or topic also creates this doubt," says Hridesh.

For Dron, when his children do not comprehend a topic or when they do not feel joyous, he begins to doubt his capabilities as a teacher.

Neelima goes into self-doubt when people, especially students, build expectations and she is not able to fulfil them.

### On responding to their own challenges and weak moments

In Pushpa's case, she chose a way out as, "I learnt the children's language from them, but I still fear maths and science."

For Sweety, addressing challenges can be easy when one is part of a learning environment. "The fact that I enjoy teaching lessens my challenges. Having said that, I keep myself in the learning sphere, by attending seminars, workshops, nourishing my

perspectives through books, social media and interacting with fellow teachers regularly and also visiting schools to see their good practices.”

Smridhi notes, “There is a range of strategies that I apply. But not every strategy works with each and every kid since they all are different, and come from different backgrounds. So, you never know what will work with a child. So, you have to keep applying and be open to the fact you may fail. And when there is a point where nothing works, you keep asking others, fellow teachers, surf the internet, or refer to teacher-training notes but sometimes all these also don’t help. At times, children listen when you talk to them with love, sometimes being firm works. Talking about the so-called difficult children, a teacher has to be open to the possibility of failing multiple times. All this is exhausting and takes a toll. Sometimes it takes one complete year to know what exactly will work.”

“I keep trying to create a joyful environment for children. I prioritise a joyous learning environment followed by teaching,” shares Dron.

### **Does the ‘ideal’ teacher exist?**

“To imagine an ideal teacher can inspire us towards professional excellence, but to see various skills and capacities associated with our profession flourishing in a single teacher, looks impossible. I am yet to come across an ideal teacher,” says Dron.

“No single person can be considered ideal. Every person’s virtues make her/him ideal and we should

accept only those things,” feels Pushpa.

Neelima vouches strongly for an ideal teacher. Her idea of ‘ideal’ is built on the premise of values and behaviours. “An ideal teacher does exist. A teacher must imbibe human values and also practice them and if not, then that person is not a teacher, in my view. A teacher is instrumental in developing a child and the society, and this can only be done on the foundation of strong values which a teacher must possess,” she opines.

### **How do schools and communities evaluate teachers and understand them?**

“If we work in a school for long, the staff members do judge each other in ways unsaid. They keep evaluating each other. As for the society, they evaluate us on the basis of two things – their child’s feedback and our behaviour with the community,” shares Dron.

Smridhi says that her school has been supportive and understanding. “My school gives space to fail and rise. Many a time I have failed but the school has never so far pressurized me. Also, there are instances when parents hold us accountable in harsh ways and shout at us, but our school tries to pacify them in neutral ways. They understand that humans can go wrong.”

“My challenges are not accepted with the required sensitivity and thus I fight my own struggles in my own way,” shares Neelima.





### On opportunities for growth and achievement through failures

“That failure can be endured and paves the way for growth is important. Only if this awareness is present in teachers, can they really look beyond their failure and learn something new. Online courses, subject-based teacher-trainings, discussions on education, or seminars can be some ways to bring about this awareness and growth,” says Pushpa.

“Mahatma Gandhi had proposed the theory of basic education. The present policy of merit-list has ignored the true purpose of education, and securing a place in the merit-list by rote learning is considered as an indicator of success. This has seen a deterioration in the quality of teachers and teaching. Making a plan for learning from mistakes and solving problems should start with teachers and involve the support of society and administration,” says Hridesh.

Hridesh further says, “A critical lacuna in our system is that no one asks us or discusses with us, our weaknesses. There is no space to talk about our failures. Since there is no acknowledgement, there is no redress. Time and again we are given training, but those have their decided agendas. None of the trainings, at least the ones that I have participated in, want to talk about teachers’ weaknesses and what struggles we are facing in terms of our conceptual understanding.”

Dron supports the need for the space to understand each other. “It is important to keep having a dialogue with fellow teachers on our failures and create a platform for sharing these and addressing the same. It is important to take each other into confidence that no one would demean you if you express your flaws. Further, our challenges should be taken seriously by the staff and the school administration. This means

we need to keep bringing up our grievances tirelessly for which we seek pointed solutions which would help us grow.”

“Teacher-trainings, apart from building conceptual knowledge, should also focus on personality development. This aspect will help us become better versions of ourselves and help us see failure as an important step for growth,” feels Neelima.

So while this article was a small attempt to give us a peak into the lives of teachers and see them as humans, the hope is that these views will help you accept yourselves and also to get talking on



issues and challenges around failure. The coming of Professional Development Communities (PLCs) into existence has also been a significant step in this direction, and there is hope that such work will continue to happen.

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# What we lose in the race for marks

Sunanda Ali

I would like to begin with an anecdote. During a recent discussion in our staffroom, a teacher made an observation. He said that students after receiving their corrected test-papers came for their 'milk-break' in a very excited state, talking loudly as to 'how many marks' they had 'got'. At lunch too, that day, he noticed that it was the main topic of conversation. This had disturbed him: that the marks overtook everything else; other things (the subject, interest in the concept, love of knowledge, pleasure in learning new skills) had no place in their minds. It was disillusioning (and maybe also illuminating) that despite the time, thought and effort spent on teaching

students, the only thing which seemed to matter was a numeral, the marks. Other teachers expressed similar discomfort. (At this point, we did not get into the adverse effects of marks like competition and comparison, we were concerned only with the effect of marks on learning.)

The teachers in our school had discussed this situation sporadically earlier; this time we all agreed that we wanted to do something to change the situation. The upshot of it is that we all agreed to stop giving marks to the students, we decided that the teacher will maintain a record of the student's summative achievement, but it would not be shared with the students. For this system to work however, we realized that we would have to do a few other things. We would have to discuss the test paper thoroughly in class with emphasis on the expected answers, and we would have to meet each student individually to give her a clear idea as to where she stands. About the other concern often reiterated – "If you don't give marks, how will you motivate the students?" – we felt we would have clear answers. We would give a lot of attention to instilling interest in the subject, to relating the concepts to the students' lives, to improving their learning skills. After a few more discussions, we ended on the note that we would see how this situation evolved, but that we had made a move in the right direction.

What has all this to do with success and failure, you may ask. The truth is that, at least in our country, success in academics is equated only with test scores. If a student has been doing well otherwise – has shown original thinking, capacity to go beyond the syllabus, and has contributed to class discussions with clarity and insight – she will still be considered a failure if her test scores are 'poor'. Only the final figure, the marks are important. Parents, students and teachers see marks as the only indicator of 'success'. Students' attitude and behaviour also change when marks are their reward: a teacher observed that students know when their 'internal assessments' are due, and they are on their best behaviour so that the teacher gives them more marks.

Teachers also measure their own success by their students' marks. They see themselves as having done



their job well only if their students score good marks. There have been cases where teachers have resorted to malpractice so that their students get good marks so that the management would be happy with them. Schools compete to secure the top positions in board exams. Newspapers carry photographs of toppers and this serves as advertisements for their respective institutions.

How does this affect teachers? They are aware that they need to be seen as infallible, that they are seen as the guarantee to their students' success, that they must never falter. Inspirational posters on how to use failure as stepping-stones to success are put up all over the walls, but teachers themselves can never fail. Cracks on their veneer of perfection are a threat to the whole edifice which will collapse like the proverbial house of cards. On the reputation of the teachers and their infallibility rests the reputation, nay, the very survival of the educational institution they work for. The teacher *must* be seen as knowing all the answers which must be 'taught' to the students which will ensure the students' success in exams.

In all this, learning is forgotten. The sheer joy of discovery a student feels when she 'gets' something,

the pleasure a teacher feels at opening windows to unending vistas of knowledge and all other joys of teaching and learning is hardly ever experienced in school where lessons are often a dreary process of 'completing the syllabus' and answering old question papers to ensure 'good marks'.

Harking back to the beginning; how did we, as a body of teachers respond to the challenge? In deciding not to give marks to students, we confirmed, that to us, deep learning is important, that marks take away the focus from, and even prevent learning, and that we need to find better ways of communicating to students where they stand 'vis-a-vis' the expected level.

In schools, we need to establish an atmosphere where teachers can accept failure, where they are not frightened to be seen as fallible. The school (the staffroom especially) should be a place where teachers are nurtured, and the principal must see this as her most important priority. The present situation where, once teachers do their teacher-training, they are sent into the classroom, most often not adequately prepared for the actual situation and to all intents and purposes alone, must end. On-going professional training where continuous opportunities for learning are offered is the ideal scenario. Teachers need to feel that they can fail, they expect to fail and can accept failure, but are given ample opportunities to learn from their mistakes. When teachers exhibit this attitude, students too benefit in multiple ways.

When all the stakeholders make learning a focus, and a priority, then success and failure fall into place. We understand that these are constructs at opposite ends of a spectrum and that all of us are in the gap between these two opposites and are always capable of moving towards our desired goals. This can happen best in supportive, non-judgmental environments. Our schools need to be this first. Other things will then follow.

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# Tackling thoughts of self-harm

Neerja Singh

It is staring us in the face today, this alarming new frontier that our kids seem to face. A quick search on the internet will throw up the disturbing new trend of self-harm and suicide among the young. According to the latest available data from the National Crime Records Bureau, a student commits suicide every hour in India. The world's second most populous country of over 1 billion has one of the highest suicide rates among those aged 15 to 29.

The suicides begin in school; continue in college and into the late 20s. Academic stress, highly competitive admissions to prestigious institutions and the whimsical job market are all contributing factors. Add to this the fear of disappointing their ambitious parents and falling behind their peers. Ironically enough, even those students who eventually do pass the entrance exams feel even more pressure to excel at university, often taking their own lives when it all becomes too much.

What is going on here? Do we have an inkling of what it is like to be in the shoes our children wear today? For instance, do parents and teachers realize that suicidal thoughts are becoming increasingly ordinary and pedestrian among young people? Kids today talk with one another, rather freely, about their thoughts of hopelessness and suicidal ideation. At times there may be a vision of plans, they might even think of how people might react once they are gone?

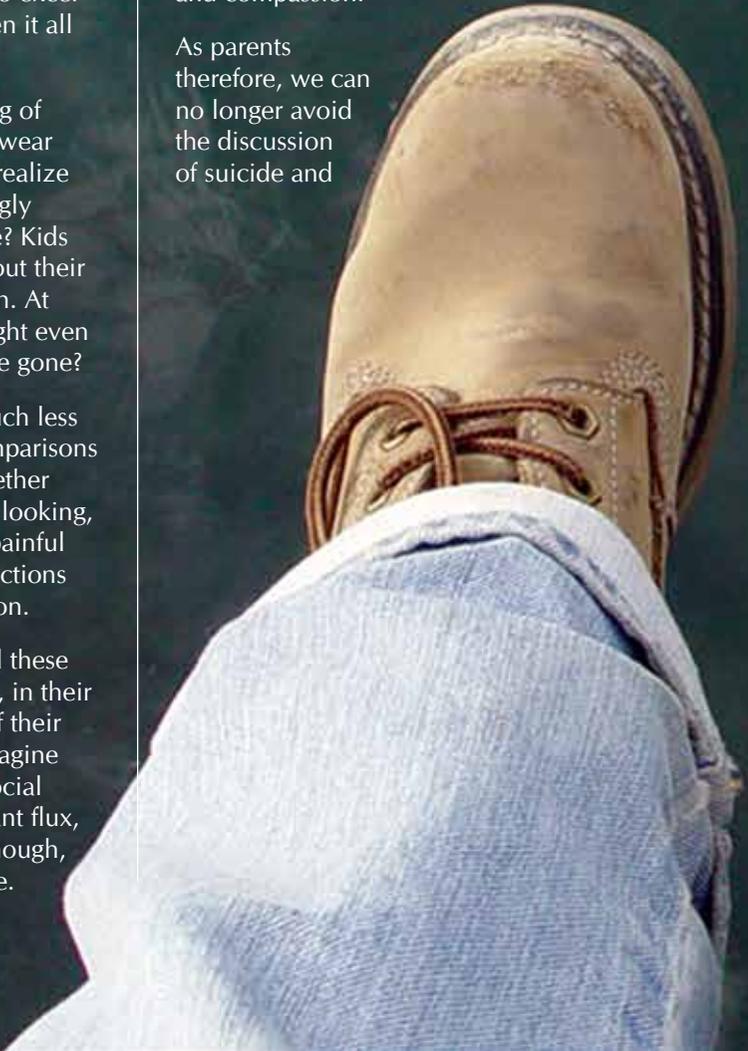
What were we like in contrast? There was much less self-awareness, less insecurity, and fewer comparisons to others. Who cared at age eight or nine whether other kids were smarter, more athletic, better looking, and so on? There was protection from these painful comparisons and insecurities by way of distractions and buffers that cloaked us in a cottony cocoon.

Kids today are exposed to the stimuli that fuel these comparisons every single day. It is right there, in their pocket or close by, waiting to remind them of their "imperfections," real or merely perceived. Imagine this diminishing of their minds, bodies and social capital entering the consciousness as a constant flux, the terrifying notion that they are not good enough, that they may be unloved or worse, unlovable.

Dr. Harish Shetty, a psychiatrist at Dr. L. H. Hiranandani Hospital believes that an inability to cope with small frustrations, failure and loss, often coupled with social alienation can prove critical for some students. Neerja Birla, the founder and chairperson of Mpower, a mental health organization, rightly points out that when it comes to mental health, Indian parents need to stop going into denial mode and issuing defensive statements like, "My child has no such problems!"

A survey by the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies\* reveals about four in ten students in India have experienced bouts of depression in the last few years. Schools and colleges are inept at dealing with nervous breakdowns among students. They do not yet foster a culture of understanding and trust, empathy and compassion.

As parents therefore, we can no longer avoid the discussion of suicide and



suicidal ideation with our children. There is more than one set of grieving parents out there who were wholly blindsided, unaware that suicide was even a thought in their child's mind. Most parents, quite understandably, will have fears that children will be suggestible, somehow, if we introduce the idea of suicide to them, that we might be planting the seed of an idea. Historically, there may have been a time when this was the case, and parents could protect children from that degree of hopelessness. Sadly, that time is quite long gone.

Knowing she has someone to talk with, someone who is open, non-judgmental and not too afraid, is precisely what the teen suffering suicidal thoughts most needs. A safety plan can be enormously comforting too. No suicidal person truly wants to die. Most have been known to describe a "suicidal fog" in which all feels lost and hopeless. Providing them an option, a "call me without reservation," tends to allow for just enough hope to provide a beacon through the fog, one that can be truly lifesaving.

There is a new quasi-suicidal thinking afoot, the idea that "I am not going to do anything to hurt myself, but I don't care if I wake up tomorrow, either." We need to be alert, and ask "Does this have to do with the way you feel about yourself? The world? The future?" Consider too:  
Is your child quieter than she used to be?  
Is she spending more time alone? Is she down and sullen?

Has her behaviour shifted dramatically? Does she suddenly seem buoyant and relieved after a period of depression? Any and all of these can be indications of suicide risk, with many more precipitants, of course. That "suicide fog" can sweep over a child in the wake of a bad test score, or fear of a disciplinary issue, or an aftermath of a sudden breakup. So, ask if she is okay and be receptive to the answer, especially if it is a no.

The bottom line is this: we are losing far too many young people to suicide – bright, talented, beautiful young people who cannot see past the moment. We can no longer keep this issue under wraps, vaguely cloaked in shame. The world our children are growing up in is a far harsher place than the one we came of age in. The right thing to do therefore is to balance the harsh messages our children receive constantly with gentleness. They need to know, now more than ever, that they have a soft, available place to fall.

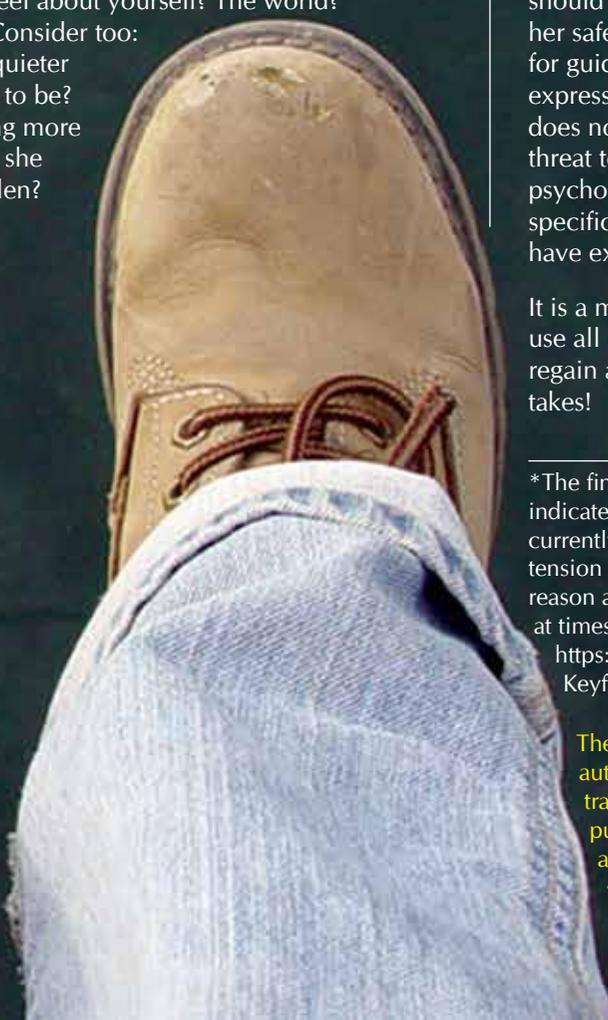
What will be your course of action therefore if your tween does happen to be suicidal? Should your child express that she is overtly suicidal in the moment that you ask, the immediate plan would be to call a suicide prevention helpline or get to one such centre should there be trouble connecting. This will ensure her safety right away and there will be professionals for guidance through the next steps. If your child expresses some degree of suicidal ideation, but she does not have a plan and clearly is no immediate threat to herself, the thing to do would be to seek a psychologist or licensed clinical social worker, with specific experience working with young people who have experienced this despair.

It is a mighty parent that has the presence of mind to use all of the tools at her disposal to help her child regain a sense of safety and well-being. Whatever it takes!

\*The findings of the 2016 Lokniti-CSDS Youth Survey indicate that around four out of 10 youngsters who are currently studying felt regular or occasional depression/tension during last couple of years. Loneliness may be one reason as in the survey 30% also confirmed feeling lonely at times.

[https://www.lokniti.org/media/upload\\_files/KeyfindingsfromtheYouthStudy.pdf](https://www.lokniti.org/media/upload_files/KeyfindingsfromtheYouthStudy.pdf)

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# The native flavour in learning

Anuradha C

**T**he urge to learn is driven as much by necessity and circumstance as by an inclination to learn. There is an innate tendency to acquire skills needed to survive in one's natural habitat. Ever watched the kids in a fisherman's colony? They learn to swim almost as soon as they begin to walk. Just like how tribal kids are ace tree climbers. This sort of hyper-local learning is critical to one's growth and well-being.

Formal education deals with teaching children some universally accepted subjects such as languages, maths, science and social sciences. The need for knowledge in these areas is fairly critical to humans in any geographical region. So there is no disputing the fact that these subjects must be taught and taught well. But where and how do we teach children the skills required to cope with their native habitat?

In earlier times, the joint family system was the dominant mode of domestic organisation. There was a lot of indirect learning that happened through grandparents, uncles and aunts. Rural society even today is more tightly knit, so kids can run up to the local weaver or potter anytime to watch them work. It's a favourite pastime in a world sans electronic gadgets as playmates. The skills one acquires in the process are precious.

Let me point to a few glaring instances from modern urban society where the lack of native connect mars the very identity and function of the object – be it in the field of art, architecture, food or literature.

## Architecture

**Now** – The sad reality of today's urban architecture is just concrete and glass monsters masquerading as homes, schools, hospitals, companies, malls. Be it in sweltering Chennai, moderate Bangalore, rainy Agartala or arid Jaipur. You just can't know the difference unless you step in or read the signboards!

**Then** – The Chettinad architectural style is especially suited for hot and arid conditions of rural Tamil Nadu. Plenty of windows, spacious and open inner courtyards, high ceilings – these are some of the defining characteristics, all designed to suit the local

climate. Contrast this with the Kumaon and Gharwal regions of Uttarakhand. The architecture here is characterised with the abundant availability of stone and timber. Cattle, fodder and storage is housed at the ground floor to bring warmth to the upper floors. The heights of floors and door entrances are kept very low to minimise cold air flow. Every house has a character and its function is to blend seamlessly with the local living conditions.

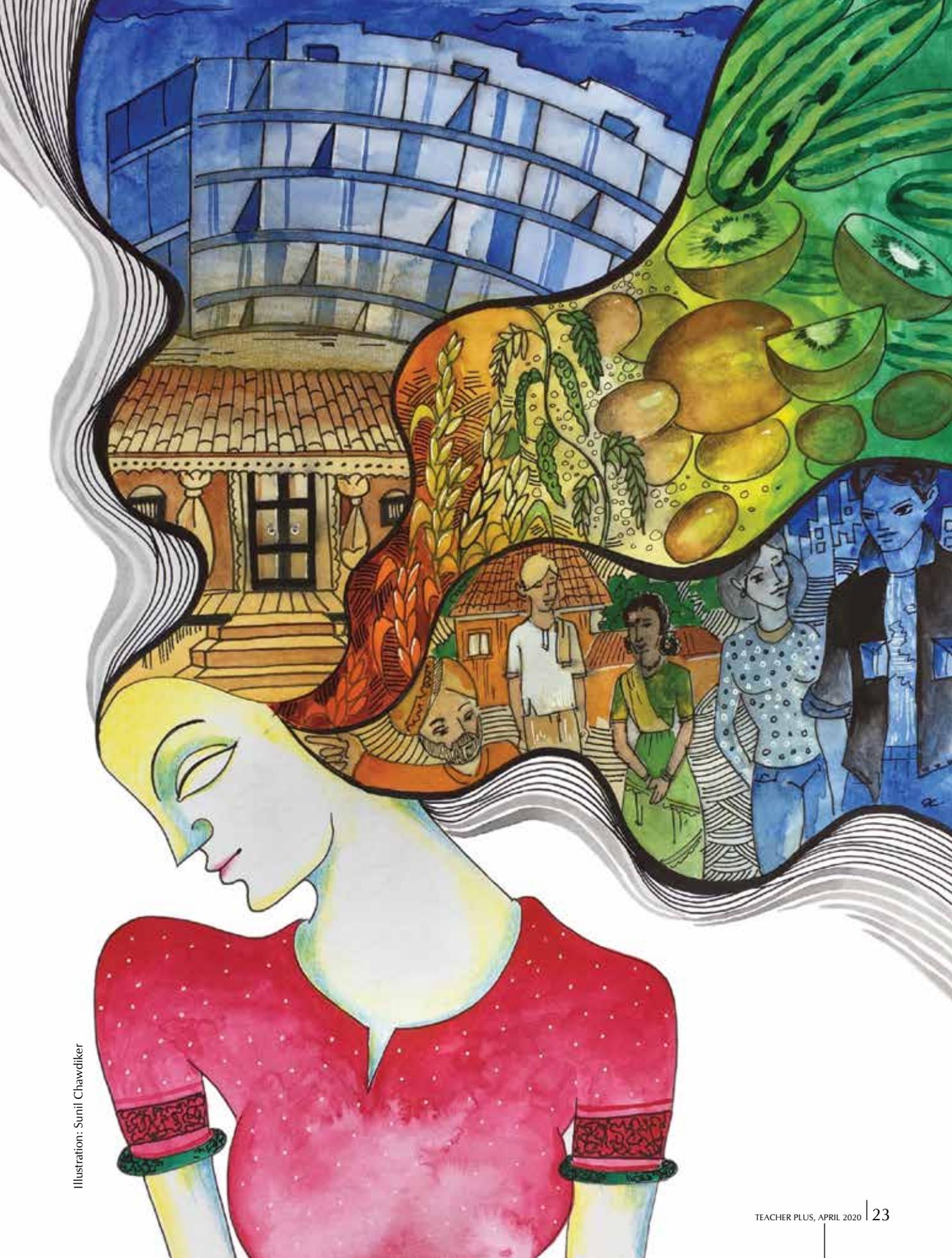
## Agriculture

**Now** – We have neglected the diversity in the consumption of our grains and pulses. The government, for its measure created an inequality by heavily promoting rice and wheat as staple cereals. Foods foreign to our climate and growth conditions such as kiwi, zucchini, and olives are imported from distant lands. Children read about daisies and lilies but remain ignorant about the local flora and fauna. The humble jasmine or marigold that grow in abundance in our surroundings lose out in the process. Greens such as drumstick leaves ('murungai' in Tamil) or mustard leaves ('sarson' in Hindi), which have a short crop cycle and are low cost but a rich source of nutrition are almost absent from the urban kitchen.

**Then** – For a tropical country like India, millets and pulses were the main stay of our diet. Seasonal fruits and local vegetables were grown at proximity to the dwelling places. Foods were low on junk value and high on nutrition, not that they lacked taste or finesse. The average Indian had a good understanding of fruits, vegetables and herbs suitable for consumption in different seasons or health conditions. Just try asking your grandmother for a home remedy for a minor ailment, she will give you a recipe in a flash!

## Clothing

**Now** – The craze to wear black in urban India is astounding! Synthetic fabrics in black colour might work well for fair complexioned men and women in cold, temperate countries such as in Europe. But in most of India we get sweaty and hot for many months of the year. Always sporting black shirts and tops paired with jeans might be 'cool' among the youth.



But aping the west blindly and shunning natural fabrics such as cotton, jute or even silk is a foolhardy choice.

**Then** – It's not for no reason that ethnic clothes in several parts of India – Rajasthan, Gujarat, North Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra – are just white cottons. It's the best suited for being outdoors in India. The practise of wearing vibrant colours and not pastels like in the west, is also due to our tropical climate. You might note that other tropical countries like Brazil or those in Africa also have similar clothing practices.

I have just picked three areas where the incongruence is obvious and pervasive. There are several other areas such as literature, art, languages, medicine, infrastructure and so on where the native flavour is a key missing ingredient. Some questions linger in my mind on how to achieve this:

**Question #1:** How do we integrate the knowledge of essential, native skills and knowledge into the learning process of a student?

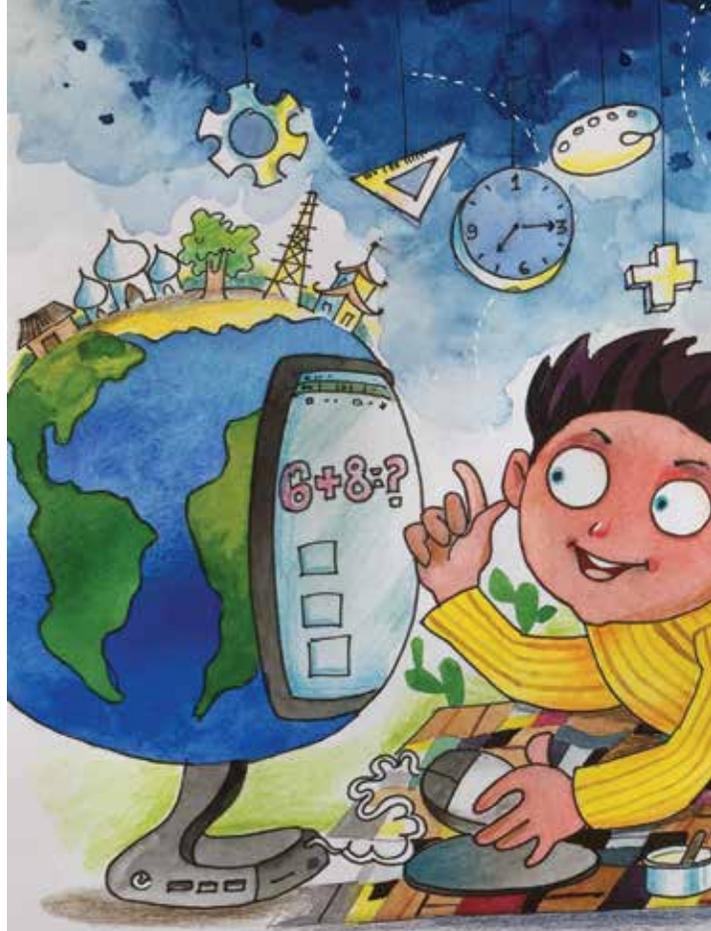
**Question #2:** A vast majority of the school / college syllabus is always going to be centralised and universal. But is it possible to earmark a portion of the teaching syllabus to the local administration so that hyper-local content specific to a region can be customised and taught?

**Question #3:** What if people want to acquire native skills such as weaving, cooking, pottery, painting, carpentry, farming or home medicine outside the schooling system? Can there be a simple and formal mechanism for this, under the ambit of the Skill India campaign as originally envisaged?

**Question #4:** How can we identify suitable teachers for these life skills? What qualification do we base their expertise on? We can't go by traditional graduation degrees or B.Ed certifications. So, how do we define qualifications for life skills?

Formal learning must address this lacuna of native skill education. Collective thought, governmental push and swift implementation will help in addressing this lacuna. Text book teaching must complement live experiential learning. The skills training on offer must be curated to suit the local habitat. How I wish!

The author is an IT industry drop-out after several years of slogging and money-making. She is now working freelance as a corporate technical trainer and content writer. She is hoping to channelize her passion for writing into a satisfying experience for herself and a joyous experience for her readers. She can be reached at <[anuradhac@gmail.com](mailto:anuradhac@gmail.com)>.



THE OTHER SIDE

## The scope

Navya Iyer Kannan

**W**hat is learning? Is it merely what happens in a school, in the classroom? Does it stop when one graduates? Is it something that only teachers can inspire in us? These are just few of the many unasked questions about learning and consequently, education itself.

Learning is a complex process, involving an inherent thirst for knowledge. Much of what we learn is absorbed unconsciously as we do not start off seeking to learn. We learn simply through observing people around us and imitating them. Some of the greatest lessons of our lives were conducted this way, long before



Illustration: Sunil Chawdiker

or she attends where the teacher teaches and the student listens. Or in many cases, doesn't listen.

When in a setting where students are given the opportunity to take charge of their own learning, and are given the space to plan their entire day and study schedule, they are given the freedom of setting their own goals and routines. This not only allows them to take ownership of their own education but also teaches them the responsibility that comes with this freedom.

I was fortunate enough to have had this opportunity, and I can say with conviction that this process of self-study and autonomous learning taught me independence and self-reliance, and helped me build a sense of confidence and persistence that I have found incredibly useful during and after my years in school.

The concept of self-directed learning (SDL) has come to be a topic of speculation and increasing conversation over the past few decades. However, self-study and autonomous learning – where a student takes initiative of his or her own learning – are slightly different. While self directed learning also shares the same goals or ideas of initiative and responsibility, the concept suggests that students from all age groups, either with or without guidance diagnose their learning needs, set their goals and then implement and finally evaluate the outcomes of specific learning methods.\*

On the other hand, autonomous learning is only for students of classes 11 and 12, aged 16 to 18. Self-study is a precursor to autonomous learning, where the student spends only a small amount of time in the classroom working entirely individually. The rest of the time, he or she participates in group discussions and regular classes. This occurs from classes 5 to 10, where the focus is also encouraging inquiry and helping the student function in a group rather than only facilitating independent study.

Initially, being entrusted with the responsibility of one's own learning holds many charms such as being able to take breaks at any point in time and to choose which subject to study when. However, there are some challenges that the student will certainly come across a few days into the process of autonomous learning:

\*Knowles, M. (1975). Self-Directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers

## of initiative

we went to school, or even – for that matter – before we knew what a school was.

Learning is also an ongoing process, which can be facilitated by teachers only part of the time. The rest of the time, ideally, the student should be the one taking the initiative to further this process and find new learning opportunities.

To take initiative of one's learning doesn't only mean deciding what to study or drawing up a study timetable. Taking charge of one's learning includes setting goals and building a daily routine for oneself. In a typical educational setting, there is a pre-existing timetable that a student follows, and classes that he

## Time management

When starting the day, plan in hand; it does not seem too hard to complete the list of tasks. At the end of the day, however, you will find that your first attempt at setting your goals was too ambitious and that you have either managed to finish only one task or have several incomplete tasks left.

## Dealing with distraction

When left to your own devices, so to speak, anything can be a distraction. Especially when you are called upon to monitor your own education, keeping yourself focused can be challenging. This is mainly because the teacher has always performed that task for you - telling you to pay attention and not to switch off. Keeping track of how many breaks you are taking and taking initiative to bring your own attention back to the task at hand will be very challenging for the first several days.

## Planning

After a few days of autonomous learning, you will have learned enough about yourself and your work habits to be able to make a realistic and detailed plan for the day as opposed to the rather vague ones that you had, during the initial days. Making the plan flexible and giving enough time for breaks and doubt clearing time with the teacher are also necessary.

The philosopher, J Krishnamurti, said that freedom and responsibility go hand in hand, and being able to take onus of one's own learning enlightens one about both the scope of and responsibility involved in having that freedom. Finding it difficult to stick to the process and feeling the urge to give up (probably several times a day) are also some regular challenges.

Taking onus of one's own learning helps one understand oneself, and one's strengths and limitations. Working with oneself, navigating through difficulties, academic or other, with the guidance of the teacher allows ample opportunity for self-reflection.

There is lesser dependence on the teacher to provide stimuli in case the student wants to learn, instead the student develops autonomy and independence, and takes ownership of his or her learning, thereby develops an interest in the subjects as opposed to tolerance or mere cooperation, as is sometimes the case.

The results of this learning transcend the classroom space, wherein the learner is encouraged to seek

newer learning opportunities in academic and other fields on his or her own. This could be due to the fact that instead of, being simply passive and receptive, as would be the case in a regular classroom, the student is more than just participative. He or she is actually in control and is engaging actively in the structuring of his or her own study schedule and work, urging them to make other such opportunities for themselves in the future.

Certain things to keep in mind are that successfully navigating through the process of autonomous learning cannot be managed single-handedly by the student, nor is the teacher expected to be absent throughout that period. Contact sessions where the teacher introduces a new topic or revises older chapters should continue to take place, and students should continue to go to the teacher to clarify doubts.

As mentioned earlier, another important feature of the autonomous learning process is the reflection period. At the end of each day, there should be a review session between the student and the teacher, where they discuss the day and any new learnings that have taken place, academic or otherwise. This is also the time allotted for the student to share any difficulties he or she may have experienced during self-study, and for the teacher to help the student plan more efficiently, if so required. The student can be encouraged to maintain a journal as a record of progress, challenges, and learnings that he or she has come across during the journey of autonomous learning.

The author is a student of Psychology, Literature and Journalism from Mount Carmel College and did her high schooling from Pathashaala PCFL-KFI. She is very interested in education and literature, and hopes to pursue both in the future. She can be reached at [<navyaiyer.kannan@gmail.com>](mailto:navyaiyer.kannan@gmail.com).

# The world around us

Sanjhee Gianchandani



**G**lobal and cultural awareness is an important 21<sup>st</sup> century skill that needs to be inculcated in students. Global awareness refers to an understanding of how environmental, social, economic and political factors impact the world. And cultural awareness is demonstrating an understanding of other people's cultural values, beliefs and perceptions which might differ from yours. This worksheet aims to provide a glimpse of issues pertaining to both global and cultural awareness. It is targeted at students of grades 6 and 7.

## Activity I: Let's search

### Festivals around the world

Can you find the names of 10 festivals from around the world in the word grid below?

C	H	M	O	E	I	D	A	S	R	L	R
V	H	A	I	C	A	E	T	O	O	A	I
L	A	R	O	M	A	S	I	N	A	T	O
D	H	D	I	K	S	G	T	V	I	O	C
I	K	I	O	S	E	R	F	E	S	M	A
W	I	G	I	S	T	E	R	S	R	A	R
A	I	R	C	A	R	M	I	V	A	T	N
L	R	A	B	E	D	H	A	M	T	I	I
I	C	S	G	I	D	Y	A	S	R	N	V
Z	A	R	D	H	O	L	I	S	E	A	A
X	A	Z	B	E	P	F	A	J	S	N	L
T	H	A	N	K	S	G	I	V	I	N	G
O	K	T	O	B	E	R	F	E	S	T	P

## Activity II: Let's comprehend

Here are some world events from 2019. Read the passages below and answer the questions that follow in one word or phrase.

### 1. Pulwama attack

Not even a single Indian can forget those back-to-back events that made Indo-Pak relations hit rock bottom. It all began when a suicide bomber of the Pakistan backed Jaish-E- Mohammed targeted a CRPF convoy in the Pulwama district of Jammu and Kashmir. India retaliated strongly by entering Pakistan's air space and reportedly destroying terror camps in the Balakot region. In the meantime, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman was captured. The entire nation prayed for his safe return. Pakistan eventually bowed to international pressure and the Geneva Convention for treatment of captured soldiers. Abhinandan was released and India once again reiterated Pakistan's role in setting up terror camps.

### 2. Notre Dame Cathedral tragedy, Paris

This was one of the most heart-breaking events, images of which will continue to haunt people for years. A major fire engulfed the cathedral wherein the spire and most of its roof was destroyed. Rare and extremely expensive historical and cultural artefacts were damaged. The reason for the fire could not be ascertained but it brought entire France to a standstill as people prayed for quick restoration of the historical building.

### 3. US-China Trade War

There were World Wars, then there was a Cold War. Now we are amidst what people call a trade war between the US and China. It all began to take shape in 2018 when US President Donald Trump



tweeted: 'Trade wars are good and easy to win.' However, Trump might not have a complete understanding about what kind of 'enemy' he's dealing with. The war continued in 2019 with Trump imposing heavy duties on Chinese items. China itself did what it thought was right as both sides claimed victory.

#### 4. Amazon Rainforests Wildfire

This was one of the worst global tragedies of 2019. Amazon rainforests that are considered to be the lungs of planet earth burned like oil wells. While there were talks about climate change and the need to save the environment, the news of Amazon fire came as a shock to the concerned people of the world.

#### 5. Anti-CAA & anti-NRC Protests across India and abroad

The controversial Citizenship Amendment Act that seeks to single out Muslims when it comes to giving Indian nationality status to persecuted minorities, has irked human rights activists in India and worldwide. Even the United Nations has expressed its concern over the Act and has urged India to address the issue.

Source: <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/here-is-a-list-of-the-major-events-that-indiatimes-covered-in-2019-503312.html>

1. Who is targeted in the Citizenship Amendment Act?

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2. What did Trump do to the Chinese items imported to the U.S?

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3. What was burnt inside the Notre Dame?

---

4. What was the name of the soldier captured in the Pulwama attack?

---

5. Which area is also known as the lungs of the Earth?

---

6. In which region did the Pulwama attack take place?

---

### Activity III: Let's unscramble

Arrange the following words in the correct order to make meaningful sentences.

1. planning / atmosphere / 2021 / is / a / a / plane / could / that / aerospace / Venus's / fly / in / company / build / US / to / through

---

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2. The / years / cruise / plane / the / skies / for / project / would / Venus / sulphurous / ambitious / project / see / through / of

---

---

3. a / the / to / off / to / from / get / in / USD / battle / plane / 1 / however / funding / order / NASA / get / faces / billion / ground / the

---



---

4. where / 50 / Venus / 70 / of / flown / it / a / the / the / that / on / Earth / of / would / surface / equal / pressure / roughly / to / above

---



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Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/story/planet-venus-plane-atmosphere-us-company-nasa-funds-253096-2015-05-15>

### Activity IV: Let's match

Match the names of the following countries to their national dishes.

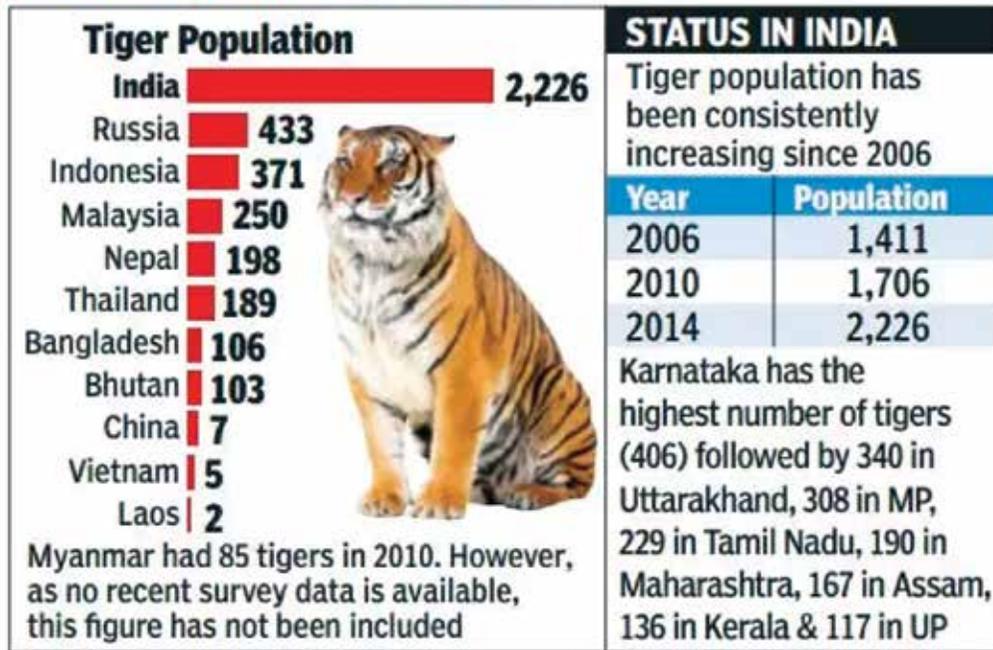
- |               |        |  |
|---------------|--------|--|
| 1. Canada     | [    ] | a) Crêpe: Thin wheat or buckwheat flour batter pancakes. Sweet fillings include chocolate sauce, jelly, preserves, spreads, or whipped cream.        |
| 2. France     | [    ] | b) Gallo Pinto: Kidney beans and rice cooked together until all the liquid has dried out.  |
| 3. India      | [    ] | c) Succotash: A salad-like dish consisting of corn, beans, sweet peppers, tomatoes, and other available vegetables sautéed in butter.                |
| 4. Costa Rica | [    ] | d) Biryani: Long-grain rice cooked with spices and meat. Often topped with fried onion flakes and boiled eggs. Vegetarian versions are also popular. |
| 5. Italy      | [    ] | e) Irish Stew: Mutton stew with potatoes, onions, carrots, and parsley.  |
| 6. Guinea     | [    ] | f) Pizza: Flat round bread topped with tomato sauce, cheese, and various meat/vegetarian/seafood toppings, and baked in an oven.                     |
| 7. Ireland    | [    ] | g) Poutine: French fries topped with a mildly spicy chicken or turkey gravy and fresh cheese curd.   |
| 8. Japan      | [    ] | h) Nasi Lemak: Rice soaked in coconut cream overnight and cooked with lemon grass, ginger and other optional spices.                                 |
| 9. Malaysia   | [    ] | i) Dal Bhaath: Stewed lentils topped with clarified butter and chili tempering; served with plain steamed rice.                                      |
| 10. Nepal     | [    ] | j) Ramen: Wheat noodles in a fish or meat broth with soy sauce flavouring.   |

### Activity V: Let's find out

Find out the meaning of these common words from different languages and also state the language they belong to.

- |                     |                               |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Bonjour: _____   | 4. Nein: _____                |
| 2. Grazie: _____    | 5. Comment allez-vous?: _____ |
| 3. Lo siento: _____ | 6. Võ hěn hảo!: _____         |

# THE ROAR IS BACK



(Source: Global Wild Tiger Status - April, 2016)

Look at the picture and answer the questions that follow.

1. Russia has double the tiger population than Nepal. (True/False)

---

2. Which state in India has the highest number of tigers?

---

3. Why is Myanmar not included in this survey?

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4. Which state in India has the lowest number of tigers?

---

5. What does the title 'The Roar is back' mean?

---

6. Laos has the lowest number of tigers. (True/False)

---

7. How many tigers were recorded in India in 2010?

---

## Activity VII: Let's sequence

Read a part of the UN Declaration **Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and then put the following paragraphs in order.

- a) We, the Heads of State and Government and High Representatives, meeting at United Nations Headquarters in New York from 25 to 27 September 2015 as the Organization celebrates its seventieth anniversary, have decided today on new global Sustainable Development Goals.
- b) This is an agenda of unprecedented scope and significance. It is accepted by all countries and is applicable to all, taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respecting national policies and priorities. These are universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike. They are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development.
- c) As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind. Recognizing that the dignity of the human person is fundamental, we wish to see the goals and targets met for all nations and peoples and for all segments of society. And we will endeavour to reach the furthest behind first.
- d) We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities.
- e) On behalf of the peoples we serve, we have adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative goals and targets. We commit ourselves to working tirelessly for the full implementation of this Agenda by 2030. We recognize that eradicating poverty in all its forms and dimensions, including extreme poverty, is the greatest global challenge and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. We are committed to achieving sustainable development in its three dimensions – economic, social and environmental – in a balanced and integrated manner. We will also build upon the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals and seek to address their unfinished business.

Source: <https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/1>

1) \_\_\_\_\_ 2) \_\_\_\_\_ 3) \_\_\_\_\_ 4) \_\_\_\_\_ 5) \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity VIII: Let's choose

Read the following passage and write the most appropriate word from the choices given below for each blank.

The Fourth of July has been a \_\_\_\_\_ *national / free* holiday in the United States since 1941, but the tradition of Independence Day \_\_\_\_\_ *occasions / celebrations* goes back to the 18<sup>th</sup> \_\_\_\_\_ *century / year* and the American Revolution. On July 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1776, the Continental Congress \_\_\_\_\_ *voted / contested* in favour of independence, and two days later \_\_\_\_\_ *people / representatives* from the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence, a historic document \_\_\_\_\_ *drafted / drifted* by Thomas Jefferson. From 1776 to the present day, July 4<sup>th</sup> has been celebrated as the \_\_\_\_\_ *birth / born* of American independence, with festivities \_\_\_\_\_ *ranging / arranging* from fireworks, parades and concerts to family gatherings and barbecues.

## Activity IX: Let's edit

The sentences below have one mistake each. Underline the mistake and correct it.

1. The Segway S-Pod is a vehicle designed for future smart cities, when cars are less common but folks still need to get around comfortably. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The pod itself is suspend between two wheels, giving the entire chair a floaty feel when you're nestled in its suede seat. \_\_\_\_\_
3. It's controlled with a flat, round joystick on the right armrest: press it in the direction you want to travel and release it to break. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Holding the joystick all the way on one direction makes the chair spin. \_\_\_\_\_
5. The CES model was capped at 7 mph, but the final version had hit speeds of 24 mph. \_\_\_\_\_
6. It travelling up to 43 miles at a time, and it takes just two hours to fully charge. \_\_\_\_\_
7. The S-Pod is scheduled to launch commercially at the end to the year, with a consumer version coming soon after. \_\_\_\_\_

Source: <https://www.engadget.com/2020/01/08/segway-s-pod-egg-scooter-ces-2020/>

## Activity X: Let's solve

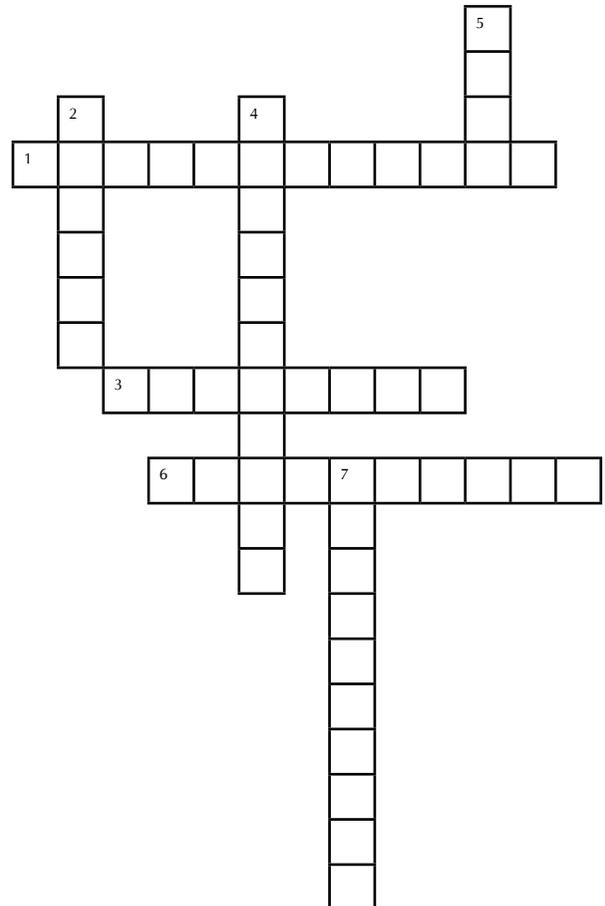
Complete the crossword below with names of the fruits based on the clues given.

### Across

1. A small, golf-ball sized red or yellow fruit with hard skin and tart, juicy seeds that you can scoop out with a spoon.
3. An elongated red berry that grows on a small bushy, tree. It's native to China and was historically grown as fruit for silkworm.
6. A small sized reddish pink fruit that is widely appreciated for its characteristic aroma, juicy texture, and sweetness.

### Down

2. A fruit from Mexico with orange flesh and black seeds.
4. A small orange berry that is sour and sweet, native to South America.
5. An oval shaped fruit with brown skin and light green flesh. It is sour to taste.
7. A large fruit, native to Africa, with green skin and red juicy flesh.



## Activity XI: Let's Understand

Read the passage on Coronavirus below and state whether the following statements are true or false.

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that can cause a range of illness from a common cold to more acute diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans.

Coronaviruses are zoonotic which means that they are transmitted between animals and people. Detailed investigations have found that SARS-CoV was transmitted from civet cats to humans and MERS-CoV from dromedary camels to humans. Research also suggests that several known types of coronaviruses are circulating in animals that have not yet infected humans.

Common signs of infection from this virus include respiratory symptoms, fever, cough, shortness of breath and breathing difficulties. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia, severe acute

respiratory syndrome, kidney failure, and even death.

To prevent the spread of this infection it is strongly recommended that one does regular hand washing, covers mouth and nose when coughing and sneezing, thoroughly cooks meat and eggs. Also, it is advised to avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing.

UN Humanitarian Chief Mark Lowcock released US\$15 million from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) to help fund global efforts to contain the COVID-19 virus on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March 2020. The announcement came as the World Health Organization (WHO) upgraded the global risk of the coronavirus outbreak to "very high" – its top level of risk assessment. The WHO has since turned it a 'Pandemic'. It has said there is still a chance of containing the virus if its chain of transmission is broken.

Source: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

1. Only animals can get infected by coronavirus. \_\_\_\_\_
2. The only illness that coronavirus can cause is common cold. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Humans have had nCOV since many decades. \_\_\_\_\_
4. These viruses were transmitted from cats to humans. \_\_\_\_\_
5. There are some types of this virus which exist only in animals. \_\_\_\_\_
6. One cannot die from an infection caused by coronavirus. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Regular hand wash can prevent this virus from spreading. \_\_\_\_\_
8. The UN has released funds to help contain the virus. \_\_\_\_\_
9. The risk associated with coronavirus is moderate. \_\_\_\_\_
10. Poorly cooked meat and eggs can spread coronavirus. \_\_\_\_\_

## Activity XII: Let's take a guess

Each country has its traditional costume. Can you guess the name of the country from the description of the costume given?

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 1. Babouches – These are designer footwear often with jazzy designs and sequins.     | 6. Gho – A knee-length gown worn to the waist with a belt.   |
| 2. Dirndl – It comprises a bodice blouse, full skirt, and an apron.                  | 7. Clogs – a shoe with a thick wooden sole.  |
| 3. Kilt – These are traditional skirts with a difference – they are worn by men.     | 8. Conical Hat – A large hat worn by women which have lines of poetry written on them which can only be seen in the light. |
| 4. Gele – A large and traditional head dress usually reserved for special occasions. | 9. Kimono – a long, loose traditional Japanese robe with wide sleeves, tied with a sash.                                   |
| 5. Lederhosen – A pair of leather shorts with H-shaped braces, usually worn by men.  | 10. Ushanka – fur cap with ear flaps that can be tied up to the crown of the cap, or fastened at the chin.                 |

Answers on page 43

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remember. Now they expect us to teach children how to connect facts, interpret them and agree with one of two opposing conclusions.

### Disciplines change, disciplines develop

**Anubhuti:** That is a historian's job, and hence a history teacher's responsibility. Historians go through archives and determine events that happened in the past. They connect the events and build a narrative. Later they might find an event they did not know of, or they think of a different way of interpreting an event. They check if it fits into the earlier narrative, and if not they change the narrative. This revised chapter on Rana Pratap seems to be doing that. Historical narratives evolve over time.

**Ira:** You mean history keeps changing because historians keep looking at the same events, and disagree over interpretations! We are at the mercy of historians. You are lucky you teach physics. Theories in physics are not going to be contested by other physicists. As if any scientist would say gravity doesn't exist anymore.

**Anubhuti:** But scientific theories could change too. Our experience of gravity may not go away, but our understanding of gravitational force could change. Physicists might find some new things that changes what they thought was the cause for gravitational force. Then they could give us a new theory, which we teachers then have to teach.

**Ira:** I don't believe this. Have scientific theories ever changed?

**Anubhuti:** For a long time, people said that about history too, but see how narratives change. In fact we can distinguish between different historians based on the view they bring into a narrative. Similarly there are contestations in science too. Ptolemy had developed a very good model of the geocentric theory and circular orbits that was accepted for hundreds of years. Copernicus contested this theory with the heliocentric theory which explained more natural phenomena than Ptolemy's theory explained, and much better. But then it took over 350 years and numerous experiments for Copernicus's theory (with some changes) to be accepted.

**Ira:** Ok, but we now know heliocentrism is true. Surely, this will not change.

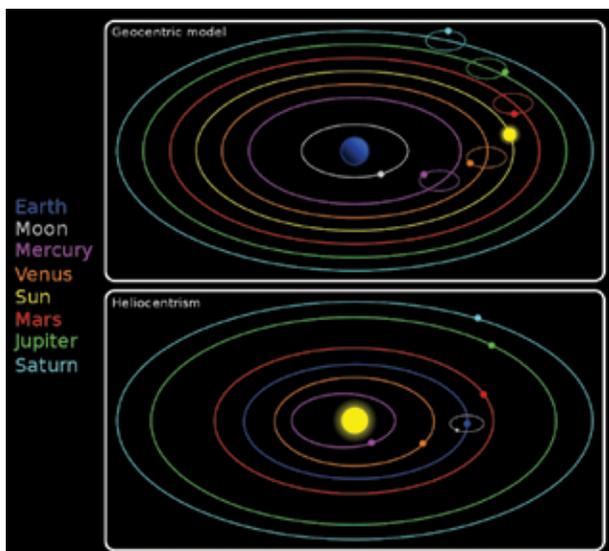
**Anubhuti:** Actually, it is not entirely impossible. Scientists can, and do, discover situations in which an accepted theory does not work. Other times they discover previously unknown natural phenomena that contradict an accepted theory. Then they examine the methods they used to arrive at the theory, and re-verify the theory. They could either find a fault in the method used earlier, or a mistake in the way the theory was derived. This could change either the method or the theory.

That's why Karl Popper recommended a change in the way we do science. For a long time science was based on the idea of verifiability (the job of scientific method was to verify if a proposed theory was correct or not). Popper argued that the scientific method should check for falsifiability (the scientific method should consider possible situations when a theory could be determined to be false). Falsifiability expresses the limits of a theory's veracity and allows the opportunity for it to be proven wrong. That is how disciplines develop. Similar changes happen in other disciplines, history too.

### Relationship between disciplines

**Ira:** Disciplines are so closely related to each other, and they keep changing. If disciplines keep changing then some day history will become social science, history could become geography. Who knows!

History and social science are so closely related, they are inseparable. When we enquire into the past, we do social science of the past. We find out how people lived, how society was structured, how monarchy worked, how early democratic societies functioned etc. We do the same in social science for the world today. How can we even say history and



Source: [https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/33/Geo\\_z\\_wb\\_en.svg/1024px-Geo\\_z\\_wb\\_en.svg.png](https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/3/33/Geo_z_wb_en.svg/1024px-Geo_z_wb_en.svg.png)

social science are distinct and independent of each other?

**Anubhuti:** Well, that is a problematic statement. Questions we ask of the past might come from social science of today. We see caste-based prejudices in our society today. Some historians ask, was caste there all the time in India? When did it begin? How did it work centuries ago? So social science might provide questions we ask of the past, but when we start enquiring about the past we do history, not social science. History is study of the past, whereas social science is study of the present. The method of social science could inform historical method, but finally to study the past we need the historical method. We cannot use the social science method to determine history. This is the way mathematics is necessary for science, but mathematics is not science. We cannot use the scientific method to determine mathematical theories.

**Ira:** New disciplines keep coming up, methods and questions asked by a discipline change, experts in a discipline keep fighting with each other. What do we educate children in?

### Beyond the politics of knowledge

**Anubhuti:** That is the question we need to ask ourselves. Are we educating children so that they understand disciplines and possibly become experts in some of them, or do we want to train them in politics of knowledge? If we see controversies as politics of knowledge, then we would teach them to take one stand or the other. If we do that we are reducing education to training or politics. But education is neither. An educated person has to know about all disciplines, and be trained experts in some.

**Ira:** That is interesting, but how does that help me deal with this changed history textbook?

**Anubhuti:** This history chapter you spoke of is presenting two different theories both using the methods of writing history. Students are bound to think, how do historians know that Rana Pratap won the battle? Why do other historians think the battle was inconclusive? This provides a great opportunity for us to teach students the method of history.

**Ira:** Alright, that is what you mean to say. I get it. I can use the controversy about the Haldighati battle to teach children how historians find out about



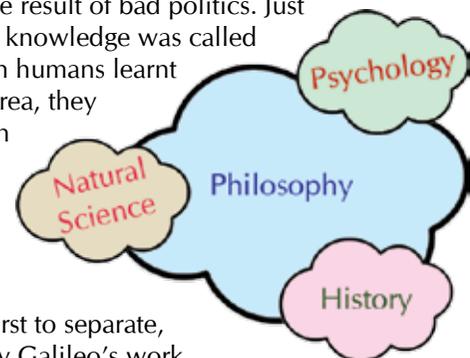
events, the methods they use to verify them and how they arrive at a narrative. Then we show how different historians come up with different narratives, each of them based on true events but different ways of interpretation.

You know, there could be much more to this battle than is written in the textbook. How did historians find out why Akbar attacked Rana Pratap's kingdom again? What is the

definition of winning and losing? What did winning mean to Rana Pratap and Akbar? We need to know the historian's method, their sources and their way of interpretation, so that we can teach children history rather than just a laundry list of facts that our favourite historian says.

As teachers we should be unbiased and lead children into disciplines. That way they will not be at the mercy of experts. But it feels quite strange that disciplines are so closely related to each other, they depend on each other, some of them like geography and biochemistry are a combination of two or more disciplines. What is the logic? Were they products of academic politics?

**Anubhuti:** "Well, some politics definitely happens among academics, but separation of disciplines was not always the result of bad politics. Just 500 years ago, all knowledge was called philosophy. When humans learnt more about one area, they realized that much more work needs to be done and we need different concepts and methods. Natural Science was the first to separate, initiated mainly by Galileo's work. At some point later social science became separate, then psychology. These are disciplines related to human beings. Gradually knowledge branched into many disciplines."



To organize knowledge for the curriculum, we do not have to follow this history of disciplines or their

Pratyaksha darshan

# The effectiveness

Manek K Mistry

politics. Paul Hirst, a philosopher of education, pointed out that human knowledge is organized in seven different forms. The seven forms are mathematics, natural science, human sciences, religion, ethics, aesthetics, and philosophy. Some of them sound like disciplines but they are not. Some of them map to multiple disciplines. Some disciplines map to multiple forms of knowledge.

These seven forms of knowledge are distinct from each other. They have distinct objects of study, concepts, and methods. A good curriculum has theories determined in each form of knowledge, in the initial years. In higher grades, concepts, conceptual relationships and methods of each form of knowledge are introduced. Then they are segregated into disciplines where students are trained in particular disciplines.

We teachers have to know the difference between different forms of knowledge and keep that in mind when we teach children, even in earlier grades.

**Ira:** This makes teaching and learning disciplinary controversies productive and exciting. But I have many questions about forms of knowledge. What are concepts, conceptual relationships? How are methods different in different forms of knowledge? Why? Why can't we get rid of these and just go with a theme based curriculum?

**Anubhuti:** Yes, we need to understand this better. Let's talk when we meet tomorrow.

*To be continued...*

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Many years ago, I worked as a part-time science and math teacher for fifth grade in a co-ed school in Mumbai. I was also completing a doctoral research project in botany at the time; teaching fifth graders till noon, working on scientific papers after that! Science fascinated me, I had little teaching experience and no training, but I had the backing of a principal who gave me a free hand as far as teaching science was concerned. The medium of instruction in that school was Gujarati till grade four and English from grade five, hence language was also an issue in understanding.

Most of my students were vegetarian and had not even touched an egg in their lives. It was while teaching biology that I realized the effectiveness of showing actual specimens – be it an egg, a mackerel ('fish have gills') or a small sand boa ('snakes, like fishes, have scales'). After seeing something just once, they would remember easily. Language, however, remained an issue; I counted some seven different spellings of 'gills' in one test!

Incidentally, this also taught me how indoctrination and beliefs influence behaviour; students who would hesitate to touch an egg or a dead fish, handled the live sand boa (loaned by a natural history society) without fear. Their parents had told them not to touch eggs and fish, but had not thought of snakes!

It was while teaching some concepts in chemistry, however, that I was firmly convinced of the importance of demonstrating simple experiments. They had to learn that carbohydrates are made of three elements – carbon, hydrogen and oxygen. As I was wondering how to go about it, a simple demonstration in the Maharashtra State Board textbook (often overlooked and ignored) caught my eye. It was simple, but no teacher I met had actually performed it, at most they just talked about it. The demo involved burning a little sugar (carbohydrate) in a crucible while holding a glass plate over it. The sugar would char to

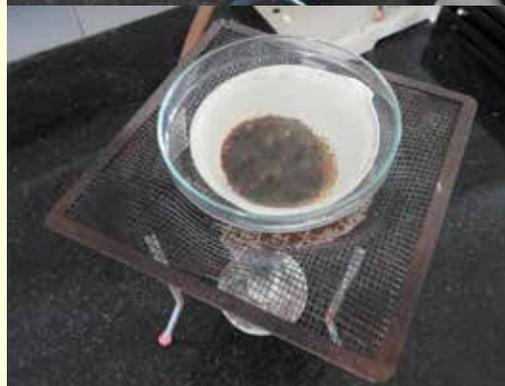
# of show and tell

form a black mass, something the 10-year olds found fascinating! That this black mass, similar to charcoal which they knew, is carbon was then an easy concept to remember. As the sugar chars, some liquid droplets collect on the glass plate held above the crucible. Let those who wish taste a few drops (ensure the glass plate is clean); it is a colourless and tasteless liquid, therefore most likely it is water. They had already studied that water is made of hydrogen and oxygen ( $H_2O$ ) and hence the constituent elements of carbohydrates were now clear. We performed this experiment over a small spirit lamp on the teacher's table in class to good effect. I went on with my teaching and forgot about it.

Months later, after a parents' day meeting, a mother of one of the students approached me and asked, "Sir, are you a scientist?" Surprised and, also a bit flattered, that this lady knew of my research work in botany, I said, "Yes, I am a research fellow, but how do you know?" "My son told me. He said our teacher is a big scientist, he turns sugar into coal and water!" she replied. It brought me down to earth. I realized that it was the burning of a tablespoon of sugar over a spirit lamp and not my scientific papers which made me a 'big scientist' in the eyes of these kids. I moved on to teach in college, but the kids kept in touch and would tell me that they used to pass in science without studying at home. I must admit that these were simple demos possible to show in class; higher concepts would require the infrastructure of a science lab.

I think the effectiveness of an actual demonstration does not diminish even now when so much information is available online. The importance of "pratyksha darshan", actually meeting a person or visiting a place, has been accepted in our culture too. I went on to teach biology and botany in college, but this early lesson was never forgotten. Practicals and field excursions (just an hour around campus once or twice a month) became an integral part of my teaching.

The author is a retired faculty from the Botany Department of St. Xavier's College (Autonomous), Mumbai. He can be reached at <[manekmistry@gmail.com](mailto:manekmistry@gmail.com)> .



Photos courtesy: Manek Mistry

# From 'onion peels' to 'critical analysis'

## A journey of learning

Akshay Kumar



Photos courtesy: Akshay Kumar

As a child, say till Class 8, I always topped the class. I could remember the names and dates, or answers to every possible question even without knowing their contexts and that came in handy. From memorizing the fact that Kalidasa penned *Meghdoot* (without even knowing who that person was or what that text was about) to writing a letter in a particular format, I could do it all and I would fare well in the exams. My initial forays to get familiar with conceptualized knowledge includes the slide I made on “peeling an onion” so as to see its cells in our biology lab. Earlier, we had only read about the process in our textbook with diagrams. It never made sense to me. When I actually made a slide by cutting the onion, followed by extracting the peel and adding chemicals/solutions such as safranin and glycerine to make it more visible, guided by the teacher, that is when I understood the actual meaning of learning. It embedded the fact within me – ‘If you read something you should be able to see (and do) it within your surroundings’.

Later, I went on to enroll myself to D.El.ed (Diploma in Elementary Education) for I didn't get admission into DU and my parents always wanted me to be a primary school teacher like them. During that time, we studied a subject – “information technology” and I began to understand theoretically how technology can be used within a classroom. My teachers never used technology in teaching and I actually believed that mugging up those huge explanations would boost my scores in the examinations. No one told me otherwise even while teaching in schools and designing lessons for the classes as part of that program. The phase passed and I became a language mentor during my graduation after a chain of rigorous interviews and workshops. I started facilitating my mentees from the first year of graduation in developing their language skills. One fine day, I explained the format of critical analysis to them. I explained it many a time giving examples on the board. I then gave them an assignment to critically analyze any of the poems from the choices provided. Everyone submitted their assignments in

the next class successfully copying the analysis from several websites. This saddened me. I had tried my best to explain the concepts in the class. I then came up with the idea of using videos to explain the same concept in the class. "Leave the critical analysis, let's watch a video" I said. I played the TED talk – "I've lived both as a man and woman" by Paula Stone Williams, where she says, "I was a CEO of a large religious non-profit organization, the host of a national television show, I preached in mega churches, I was a successful white American male." The opening sentence itself struck them since they were listening to a woman. They were laughing at the instances where Paula was being sarcastic as they too could relate to the Indian counterparts in terms of gender differences and roles.

Later, I asked them about what they thought was being talked about in the video. They came up with answers such as gender differences, queer experiences, treatments and perceptions towards a different gender. Then I helped them in eliciting sub-points in these responses. Then I discussed the video dissecting it into parts explaining how Paula was taking a stand/viewpoint and proving it with enough experiences and evidences. And we moved back to the structure of critical analysis. Their faces gave away their surprise for they had never actually thought of analyzing the video from the critical, objective perspective without delving into the content.

To enable a stronger, sounder conceptualized learning, I asked them whether they liked films or not. They enthusiastically affirmed and almost created a havoc suggesting names of multiple films. Then I played another video – "Not a Movie Review: *Toilet*" by Sucharita Tyagi. The video was a review of the film *Toilet Ek Prem Katha*, and



again talked about gender issues. In the video, Sucharita declares her purpose: underlining the loophole in the story which is the depiction of male and female roles. When she talks about the male protagonist saying, "Badtameez kehdo madam, Bhaisahab mat kaho" (Call me rude Madam, but don't call me Brother) and the scene of a girl going around him, it instantly attracted the students since they could see such occurrences even in their class and were, therefore, all giggling over the scenes and explanations.

Again, we noticed the structure of the video explaining the loopholes and the things which worked positively. Sucharita taking a stand again reminded them of the format of the critical analysis where we try to prove our stand about the given text/video, etc., with enough evidences from it. They were actually looking empowered.

This helped them work on the poems that I had given them and they came up with many interpretations. We all learned the implications of what we discussed on the board and read in the textbook. That was a fulfilling classroom teaching-learning experience for me since they learnt the concept of critical analysis with some actual application of it and I learned how I can actually use technology within the classroom to enable quality and more retentive learning.

Today, I am studying in the English and Foreign Languages University and I never feel the lack of applicable learning within my classroom because even if my teacher is talking about different kinds of syllabus, he/she would actually go ahead and bring the samples of the same and discuss everything related to it using both inductive and deductive methods wherever applicable. Or if I learn about the nuances of a speech, we actually write and

deliver speeches consisting of those elements like the introduction, title, ending, factual data, metaphors, main content etc. As a teacher trainee, I feel the importance of attaching concepts to the things around us and how they can impact learners, teachers and the entire teaching-learning process to a huge extent.

The author is a first year Master's student of English Language Teaching at English and Foreign Languages University. He wishes to empower individuals and society through his work in the respective discipline. He can be reached at <[akshayeflu@gmail.com](mailto:akshayeflu@gmail.com)>.



# The principles of good programming skills

Smitha Prasad

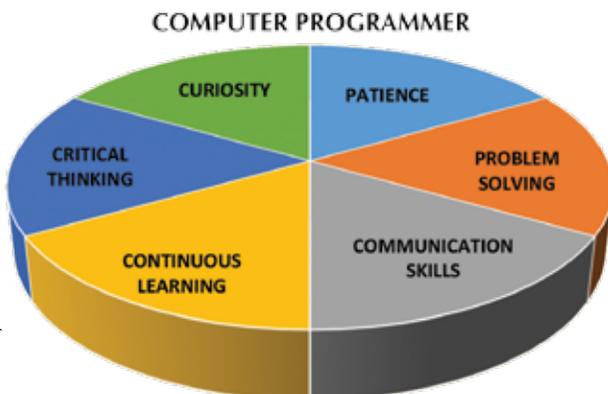
Often parents ask me, “It must be really difficult to write computer programs, isn’t it? My child wants to become a computer programmer? Can he/she do it?”

I keep telling people, if your child wants to write computer programs, let the child do it. I can’t say whether it is easy or not but definitely if you are passionate and curious enough about solving problems, then I am sure you are moving in the right direction. As I keep thinking on these lines, these are some things I did while I learnt to code on my own.

As a student I was a very bad programmer. Can you believe I used to memorize the programs? I never understood the basics as I never bothered to read and understand them. I even mugged up a semicolon and a full stop... without knowing why they were used. If my programs worked it was sheer luck. They were at the mercy of my memory! Most of the times my codes ended up with a lot of errors as my memory showed me no mercy.

Now when I teach my students, I keep telling them how important it is to learn the basics well so that they don’t face the difficulties I faced as a student.

Here are some tips to code at ease.



Images courtesy: Smitha Prasad

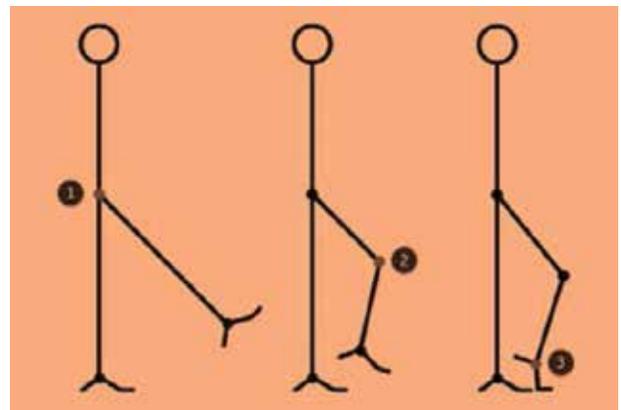
**Learn the basics:** There is no substitute. It is a little boring to learn the syntax and language basics when you start. But you have to learn it thoroughly as it will take you a long way and coding will become as easy as playing.

**Curiosity** about computers and how technology works will definitely make you successful as a programmer. So just start the voyage.

**Develop the ability to solve problems yourself:** All programming languages have documentation and specifications that can be easily understood about how the language works. When you see something you don’t understand or recognize, immediately ask someone or Google it! Reading the documentation helps to build your skills as a programmer. The fun of programming is in solving problems.

Break down the problem into smaller units.

A simple algorithm to walk will be something like this:



1. Lift your left foot.
2. Move it forward.
3. Put it down.
4. Lift your right foot.
5. Move it forward.
6. Put it down.

If these instructions are repeated then they make you walk!

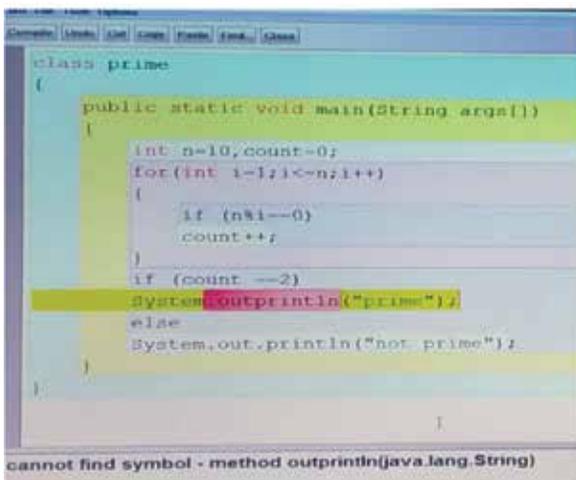
Whenever you start working on a problem you will definitely encounter a whole “stack” of them. And when you think you have resolved one problem, there is another. Remember you are making progress, but there are always new problems to face. As you progress, if the code works, great, if it doesn't, find a new way.

**Be persistent:** Don't give up easily. Your first program may not work. Don't be disappointed. Keep writing code and keep trying.

**Keep celebrating every small win:** Whenever you solve a problem and the program that you struggled with runs successfully, no matter how small, always take pride in your accomplishment and enjoy your success. The feeling of success will make you confident in solving more problems.

**Think innovatively and be creative:** There are numerous ways to solve a problem, and through knowledge and experience, you will develop an understanding eventually about which solutions are better.

**Pay attention to detail:** A successful programmer will never overlook little things. Computers are precise machines. You need to provide the necessary commands precisely in the way a computer expects. If you don't, nothing will work. A space, dot, bracket, or semi-colon is important. When the computer gives an error message, you have to be able to look at that message and understand exactly what it is telling you. It may be a simple typing mistake and if you miss details, you could spend hours tracking down a problem.



## Logical Error

```

int a=5;
int b=10
double average=a+b/2;
output will be 10.0 instead of 7.5
    
```

Programming may not be a very easy task at the beginning but certainly if you practice you can learn. So just begin the journey and start coding if you are interested in learning to program.

The author is an Electronics and Communications Engineer. She is now a computer science teacher at The Brigade School, Bengaluru. She can be reached at <[smithagprasad@gmail.com](mailto:smithagprasad@gmail.com)> .

**Worksheet Answers**

Activity I: 1) Christina 2) Latomatina 3) Thanksgiving 4) Oktoberfest 5) Rio Carnival 6) Eid 7) Mardigras 8) Easter 9) Diwali 10) Holi

Activity II: 1) Muslims 2) Imposed heavy duties 3) Historical and cultural artefacts 4) Abhinandan Varthaman 5) The Amazon Rainforests 6) Balakot

Activity III: 1) A US aerospace company is planning to build a plane that could fly through Venus's atmosphere in 2021. 2) The ambitious project would see the plane cruise through the sulphurous skies of Venus for years. 3) However, the plane faces a battle to get USD 1 billion in funding from NASA in order to get off the ground. 4) It would be flown 50 to 70 km above the surface of Venus, in a region of the atmosphere where the pressure is roughly equal to that on Earth.

Activity IV: 1) g 2) a 3) d 4) b 5) f 6) c 7) e 8) j 9) h 10) i

Activity V: 1) Hello (French), 2) Thanks (Italian), 3) I'm sorry (Spanish), 4) No (German), 5) How are you? (French), 6) Great (Mandarin Chinese)

Activity VI: 1) False 2) Karnataka 3) No recent data is available 4) Uttar Pradesh 5) Growing numbers of tigers

Activity VII: 1) a 2) e 3) d 4) c 5) b

Activity VIII: national, celebrations, century, voted, representatives, drafted, birth, ranging

Activity IX: 1) are 2) suspended 3) brake 4) in 5) will

Activity X: Across: 1) passionfruit 3) mulberry 6) strawberry

Down: 2) papaya 4) goldenberry 5) kiwi 7) watermelon

Activity XI: 1) F 2) F 3) F 4) T 5) T 6) F 7) T 8) T 9) F 10) T

Activity XII: 1) Morocco 2) Austria 3) Scotland 4) Nigeria 5) Germany 6) Bhutan 7) Netherlands 8) Vietnam 9) Japan 10) Russia



Photos courtesy: Sahana Srinath

**M**indfulness is a state of being; of being in the present without any thoughts/feelings about the past or the future. It is about focussing attention in the present and being aware of one's current thoughts, feelings and state of mind and body. This will be very beneficial in a classroom set-up as it ensures that the children and the facilitator alike are present in the now.

The points below highlight some key benefits that mindfulness can induce:

- Reduced anxiety and stress.
- Reduced impulsive behaviour.
- Improved self-regulation.
- Improved awareness of self and others.
- Improved calmness.
- Improved attention.
- Increased interest to learn.

### So, how do we incorporate this into our classrooms?

Oftentimes, we find children and, sometimes, even ourselves pre-occupied with invasive thoughts because of which we end up feeling dissatisfied with the session. Other times, the noise in the classroom makes us feel that the learning flow is disrupted, both for the children and the teacher. However, incorporating mindfulness can make a huge difference here.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

## Mindfulness in a noisy class

Sahana Srinath

Some simple ideas that can bring about a marked difference in how we interact with children and how they respond to us are:

**Communicate your call for attention!** Unless we effectively communicate that we are calling for everyone's attention, any effort is futile.

- **Use a sound:** Whenever you feel that the noise is disrupting, having a sound that calls for attention works well. Get your group used to a sound (a bell/a knock/a jingle, etc.), so that, whenever it is heard, everyone's focus shifts to that.
- **Sing an action rhyme:** Singing an action rhyme and ensuring that everyone joins in also helps. This usually works well with younger children.
- **Harness the power of silence:** Sometimes, just keeping quiet or placing an object in the middle of the room and saying nothing can be effective in converging the group's attention.

Once you have their attention focussed on an object/sound/action, introduce the group to a mindfulness activity to further bring their mind and body into the present.

- **Participate!** Always remember to participate as much as possible; this approach makes the child feel at ease and encouraged to get involved.
- **Accommodate these activities even when the group is calm!** It is, in fact, beneficial to do these activities even when the children are already calm or quiet because it helps them learn and internalize these ideas and even use them voluntarily when they feel overwhelmed.

**Some mindfulness activities that can be incorporated into a classroom are:**

- **Five deep breaths:** Tell the children that we will all close our eyes, put our hands on our stomach and take five deep, slow breaths. Guide them to breathe in and out and to notice how their stomach rises and falls. This is a sure shot way of bringing everyone into the present.
- **Pebble focus:** Keep a set of pebbles handy with you. Distribute them (in groups or individually) and ask the children to observe them and think of

three things that they can understand/derive from them. They can share this with the group in turns. Pebbles can be replaced with any other object as well.

- **Draw your emotion:** Mindfulness includes awareness of what we're feeling as well. Children sometimes have difficulty naming their feelings, but drawing them can be a great way for a child to pay attention to what he/she is feeling at a given moment. This also serves as an entry point to work with them and really understand what might be distracting them.
- **Simon says!** This classic game integrates mindfulness of the body and mind in the simplest yet fun way. Tell them that we will all do different actions by saying "Simon says" followed by the action. They are to do the action only when they hear "Simon says." If you name an action without saying "Simon says," one need not do it. You can even give the children turns to call out actions.



*Giving them object(s) and asking them to explore what they can derive from them is a great way of focusing in the present.*



*Drawing out how they feel is a great way for a child to pay attention to what he/she is feeling at a given moment.*

When we speak of incorporating mindfulness, it is for both the students and the teacher. A mindful student adds energy to the classroom which becomes infectious but this coupled with a mindful teacher makes the session fun and fulfilling for everyone. More importantly, the benefits of mindfulness go beyond the classroom; it improves the overall quality of life, so children or adults, mindfulness is for everyone!

The author has a background in community-oriented work and believes in the power of people's ability to self-actualize. She enjoys spending time and engaging with children to empower them to do the same. She can be reached at [sahana@cilre.com](mailto:sahana@cilre.com) .

# Make the world come alive through design

CIPAM team

Through the past couple of editions, we have familiarized ourselves with the dynamic, exciting and wondrous world of Intellectual Property (IP). Young innovators and creators in India are actively tinkering with the world around them and have been presenting disruptive ideas to the world on an almost daily basis. This has led to an increase in the relevance of IP education for students.

Teachers around the globe are now encouraging their students to protect what they create. We now know that technological inventions are protected under the IP right known as patents. For the protection of brands under which goods and services are provided, trademark registration is beneficial. And finally, when it comes to safeguarding our literary, artistic, musical and cinematographic expressions, a copyright registration can help us live worry free.

In this article, we are going to discuss one last major private IP right which can prove beneficial for students. This IP right is called Design. Every morning we kickstart our day with design – from the objects around us to the spaces we operate in, our eyes are met with thousands of new designs! Design is an up and coming area of business and a great demand exists for creative designers in the field of product design, textile design and industrial design amongst others.

## What is a design?

A 'design' is a shape, pattern, arrangement of lines or colour combination that is applied to any article. The Intellectual Property Right of design is a protection given to eye-catching features that are not functional or useful. For example, a bottle having a unique shape with labels and embellishments can be registered as design. Did you know that unique patterns on textiles and clothes can also be protected under design?



Textile Fabric  
Design No: 286143

Just as is the case for patents, trademarks and copyrights, design is also an exclusive right of the creator. This means without the permission of the design owner, nobody can reproduce or create copies of the protected design.

## Introducing the subject to students

Distribute a plain sheet of paper and art supplies amongst the students. Now show them the following image –



Ask the students to design their own version of any one of the above mentioned objects – a shoe, a chair, a pen or a rocket! Once the students complete their designs, invite a few of them to share and describe their design with the entire class. Applaud the students for their efforts and tell them that they have all produced ideas for products that can be registered as a design!

## What can be protected under design?

Not every design can be registered. For a design to be registered in the country, we must take care of the following few points –

- The design should be new or original, not previously published or used in any country.
- Design means the shape or pattern applied to an article. Therefore, calendars, greeting cards, stamps and cartoons cannot be protected as designs.
- The design should be applied or applicable to any article by an industrial process. And so, normally, designs of artistic nature like painting, sculptures, etc., which are not produced in bulk by an industrial process are not granted registration.
- The features of the design in the finished article should appeal to and be judged only by a person's eyes. A mere functional or mechanical feature cannot be registered as a design. For example,

a key having its novelty only in its shape at the portion intended to open the lock cannot be registered as a design under the Design Act. It is both functional and mechanical.

Always remember, anything that can be registered as a trademark or copyright cannot be registered as a design.



Wall Ornament  
Design No: 281932

Catalogue Stand  
Design No: 285780

Perfume Bottle Cap  
Design No: 286025

Some designs registered with the Indian Design Office

### Term and benefits of a design

We are familiar with the fact that IP Rights are granted for a particular term. A design is not registered forever. This exclusive IP right is given to the creators initially for 10 years. On completion of these 10 years, the registration can be extended for another 5 years. Thus, the total term of a design registration is maximum 15 years.

With a design registration, the IP owner can exclude others from making, using, reproducing and selling their design. If someone tries to steal your creation or copies it without your permission, the design registration gives you legal rights to take action against such an individual or organization. A registered design can only be used after getting a license from its owner for an agreed fee.

### How to register a design?

To register a design, an application is to be made to the Controller for the registration of designs. Here

is what students need to know about filing such an application –

- All information on filing a design can be obtained on the website of the Design Office – [www.ipindia.nic.in](http://www.ipindia.nic.in).
- The application can be filed offline, at one of the four IP offices in Delhi, Chennai, Mumbai or Kolkata. All these applications are forwarded to the Kolkata office for processing.
- The application can also be filed online at the above mentioned website.
- Every application for registration shall be filed in Form-1 along with the prescribed fee, stating the full name, address, nationality, name of the article, class number and address.
- The application shall state the class in which the design is to be registered and the article or articles to which the design is to be applied.
- The application needs to be submitted with a fee. Once the application is filed, it is examined by examiners in the Indian Design Office. After passing through the examination stage, a design is registered to the applicant!

Always remember – do not disclose your design to the public before getting it registered!

In recent years, the government has given thrust to design in higher education by establishing four new National Institutes of Designs. The NIDs are institutes of national importance which provide quality design education to budding designers of the nation and nurture them into competent professionals. Design is a field of endless possibilities and opportunities and is now seen as a tool for improving human lives.

Now that the students are familiar with all the four basic Intellectual Property Rights, towards the end of the conversation, the teacher can play the following game of *Riddle me that* with the student –

RIDDLE ME THAT

Faculty/trainer may recite and have the participants solve the following riddles

---

1

You can't get me without being 'inventive'!

2

I have to be inherently distinctive & one of a kind!

3

In order to own me, all you must do is create a work that is original!

4

If your design is functional, I am out of your reach.

5

What do you get if your new product or process involves inventiveness, non-obviousness & industrial production capability?

For more information and online resources to talk to students on the subject, teachers can visit the website [www.cipam.gov.in](http://www.cipam.gov.in).

The Cell for IPR Promotion and Management (CIPAM), is set up under the aegis of the Department of Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce and Industry. CIPAM addresses the identified objectives of the National IPR Policy. If any school is interested in organizing an IPR awareness session for their students, they may write to [<cipam-dipp@gov.in>](mailto:cipam-dipp@gov.in).

# Our stories, our selves

Chintan Girish Modi

“Get rid of the idea of a perfect story. There is no such thing. We are here to tell stories in ways that feel most comfortable to us,” said Anooj Bhandari, a multi-disciplinary performance artist, restorative justice professional and community organizer from New York City, while leading a personal storytelling workshop in Mumbai on January 25 and 26, 2020. It was hosted by Storycellar, a Mumbai-based storytelling community, at The Retreat House in Bandra West. I enjoyed participating in that workshop, and what struck me most was Bhandari’s facilitation style. I will touch upon specific aspects of it so that teachers reading might be able to pick up some ideas for their classrooms.

My fellow participants were educators, artists, entrepreneurs, activists, counsellors and other professionals. During our introductory circle, Bhandari remarked, “As we go around, I invite you to share your pronouns. This is a way of indicating how we want to be referred to. I consider this important because we cannot assume people’s gender identity based on appearance, especially if they are from the queer or trans community.” I wish more workshops in India begin to embrace this practice, not because it comes to us from the United States of America but due to the space it offers queer, trans, non-binary and genderfluid people to have their gender identities acknowledged and affirmed.

Bhandari has been writing, directing and performing as a member of the New York Neo-Futurists, a



Photo courtesy: Chintan Girish Modi

performance arts company off Broadway, and working as an instructor with an organization called The Moth that is dedicated to the art and craft of storytelling. I appreciated their inputs on what might make a compelling story. Some of these elements included being authentic, identifying one’s main purpose for telling a story, understanding what one had to lose or gain in a story and letting the audience in on that, working with sensory details to help listeners connect with the story, focusing on moments rather than ideas, and being prepared to sit with one’s discomfort. I liked the fact that they drew our

attention to the emotional aspect of storytelling instead of teaching about structure in a mechanical fashion that began with the exposition, moved on to the climax, and ended with the resolution.

This discussion between participants was followed by a writing prompt: “What are the changes that you’ve been through that have impacted how you view the world?” The answer had to be articulated in this format: “I used to be \_\_\_\_\_, and now I \_\_\_\_\_.” We could come up with as many statements as we wanted to. Bhandari wanted the exercise to be a tool that would show us how we as individuals have changed over time, and this realization could be a potential source of stories to develop and share. They gave us an example to get us started: “I used to be someone who wanted to leave my mark on the world, and now I just want to do no harm.” I wrote: “I used to be a goody two shoes kind of person, and now I am not so obsessed with being liked.”

Before fleshing out our personal stories, we had a conversation about 'community agreements' that would guide our interaction with each other as group members. We committed to offer the gift of attention, treat every person with respect, honour individual life choices, resist the temptation to talk down to someone or give unsolicited advice, watch our biases come up, and remember that it was alright to opt out of any activity that felt unsafe. "I encourage you to challenge yourself but on your own terms. You know yourself better than anyone else here, so choose what you need to work on," said Bhandari. Is this something you would like to explore with your students?

We were asked to make a list of moments in our lives that stand out as special because something in us transformed as a result of what happened. Immediately after, Bhandari shared some guidelines to help us with detailing: 1. What was your world like before this story? What did you understand as true? Who were you, and what do we need to know about that person? 2. How does your story begin? What happens to set everything in motion? What is a scene that you can really pull your audience into? 3. What are your stakes? How did you realize what was going on around you was important? What are the things that happened that changed the dynamic of your story? 4. What is the moment that really created a shift in you? How did you feel in that moment, and what caused a shift? 5. How does the world look now in comparison to the start of the story? What do we need to know about the world you live in now?

Bhandari also spent some time talking about how storytellers can use sensory details to make their audience feel more intimately involved in the story being told. They asked us to mentally inhabit the moment we were thinking about, and note down what it looked like, smelt like, tasted like, sounded like, felt like (physically) and felt like (emotionally). I had underestimated how useful this visualization exercise can be when one is faced with a block. It helped me reconnect with the feelings of vulnerability and tenderness that I had experienced during the original event. This recollection certainly enriched my story.

Once we were ready to tell our stories, Bhandari had some thoughtful suggestions about the process of giving feedback. They wanted us to begin by asking the storyteller how it felt to tell that story,

then follow up with specific points of appreciation about moments that were memorable or language that resonated or feelings that were evoked, and conclude by articulating what one felt curious about while hearing the story or what one would have loved to know more about. These guidelines took the stress out of the situation, and made the workshop environment safe and welcoming. Using such frameworks of peer feedback can go a long way in building trust, cooperation and friendship in our classrooms so that students learn to work together instead of being adversaries trying to outsmart each other and win the teacher's favour. What do you think?

The author is a writer, educator and researcher with an M.Phil. in English Language Education. He can be reached at <[chintan.prajnya@gmail.com](mailto:chintan.prajnya@gmail.com)>.

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# Fostering engagement in the classroom

Aruna Sankaranarayanan

Muthu Sir flashes a photograph of gently rolling hills on the smart board and poses a question to the class, “Is there any evidence in this picture that the land was sculpted by glaciers?”

Predictably, Ashi’s and Raunak’s hands shoot up like rockets. As the duo has already answered earlier questions, Muthu Sir waits for other hands to go up, however tentatively. “Look carefully. Do you see any evidence of snow or ice?”

“No, Sir,” blurts Vinay, without even raising his hand.

“Hands please,” reminds Muthu Sir, but coaxes Vinay to elaborate. “Then what do you see?”

“Hills, Sir, with grass,” the boy obediently chimes in.

“That’s correct. Can you describe the shape of the hills, Harmeet?” persists the teacher.

“They are...not steep,” Harmeet haltingly answers.

“That’s right,” encourages the teacher, “they are gentle hills. “Can anyone compare the two sides of the hill in the middle?” he cajoles.

Minu raises her hand gingerly, “They are different.”

“Yes, can you tell me how?” the teacher presses on.

Minu stares at the board and then looks down at her desk. Muthu Sir calls on Amir to elucidate.

“Sir, one side is slightly more sloping...like an inverted spoon,” the boy responds.

“Exactly,” avers Muthu Sir, “now what glacial feature resembles an inverted spoon?”

Niti perks up, “A drumlin, Sir.”

“Excellent, Niti. Now, Minu, can you describe the shape of the hill?”

“Sir, it’s like an inverted spoon,” she responds more confidently this time. “And, the hill is a drumlin which has been shaped by a glacier.”

“Great answer,” encourages Muthu Sir as he soldiers on, “Is a drumlin caused by glacial erosion or deposition?”

The above exchange in a fictitious Grade VII classroom exemplifies a few crucial “techniques” that master teachers employ. In his book, *Teach Like a Champion*, educationist Doug Lemov has distilled his detailed and astute observations of master teachers in action into 49 techniques. While Lemov acknowledges that “Great teaching is an art”



and individual teachers may have distinctive styles, he provides useful and actionable tools that teachers may deploy to enhance their teaching. In this article, I describe three techniques that teachers may use to set high expectations and deliver engaging lessons to all students.

The first, which Lemov calls “No Opt Out,” involves returning to a student who fails to answer a question accurately the first time. In the above scenario, Minu does not respond when Muthu Sir asks her how the two sides of the hill differ. Instead of humiliating Minu when she exhibits diffidence to answer the question, the teacher shifts the spotlight to other students. However, he does not forget that Minu hemmed and hawed when he posed this question. So, after a few exchanges, he returns to Minu and this time, she gives a complete answer.

This practice of returning to a student who does not answer a question or gives an incorrect response imparts several crucial lessons. Learners recognize that their state of not knowing something is temporary and can be repaired. Further, shy and hesitant students gradually build confidence as they also experience the thrill of giving the right answer in front of their classmates. Thus, pupils don't bracket themselves so readily into categories like “those who know” and “those who don't.” Third, the teacher also signals to students that you cannot get away by looking away or not answering. Students will realize soon enough that their teacher is bound to return to them, and hence are likely to pay attention with a razor-like focus. Without belittling anyone, the teacher communicates to the class that he expects all students to give the right answer, albeit in their own time.

Another technique that Muthu Sir employs is “Stretch It.” Muthu Sir does not rest with a single right answer. He stretches his students to examine the picture and refine their thinking. Once they are able to recognize and name a drumlin, he urges them to extend their thinking. And, this is a powerful method for “differentiating instruction” according to Lemov. Asking for further explanation, an alternative way to answer a question, a more precise word or evidence to support a claim are some of the ways in which you can get students to dig deeper and seek further. Ending a class with an unanswered question also gives students fodder to mull over. You can then begin the next class with the challenge you raised the previous time.

An engrossing lesson also demands that students get an effective “cognitive workout”. In a technique called “Ratio,” Lemov suggests that the teacher keep in mind the amount of work she is doing vis a vis what she expects of students. Instead of relying on the typical chalk and talk method, where the teacher exerts herself for a significant duration, an educative lesson is one where students are “on-task, focused, and productive” for the most part. In addition to posing questions, teachers may periodically ask students to state the key points, summarize what they are discussing or provide multiple examples to illustrate a concept. By facilitating active learning, the teacher also garners students' attention. The teacher also has to be conscious of calling on different students instead of relying on a predictable few to provide answers. This ensures that the entire class is awake, alert and attentive.

By adapting the techniques of No Opt Out, Stretch It and Ratio, teachers convey that they expect all students to be actively engaged and gaining and growing during a class.

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Photo courtesy: [www.flickr.com/photos/lenp17/](http://www.flickr.com/photos/lenp17/)

# Using data to improve learning

Ishita Ghoshal



Photos courtesy: <https://www.kispune.com/>

A teacher always plans a lesson but hardly records her students' experiences, her own experience of the lesson or the learning that occurred for both. A teacher is trained to structure and plan her class, but is not often trained to reflect whether her lesson plan has met its objectives and if it didn't why it didn't. It is common practice among teachers to think about the quantitative outcome of learning but reflecting upon one's plan, methods, practices, environment, reasons for variations in expectations and outcome and other micro dynamics of teaching-learning is almost never done.

Action research is a tool that can aid the teacher in enhancing her reflective practices. It gives the teacher evidence of learning patterns, learning attitudes, gaps in learning and empowers her to use fact-based data to drive, explore and experiment to improve or innovate upon these patterns. Let me illustrate this with an example from my own experience.

Even in high school we often find that students' writing skills leave a lot to be desired. Sentence structure, grammar and expression are inappropriately used in writing. My class was no different.

We form opinions reading students' work and make judgments or suggestions to improve their writing based on popular generic practices and beliefs. For instance, when a student's writing is poor a teacher will say that he/she does not read enough, needs to think in English to write well, must increase vocabulary, share answers or writings of students who have better skills, etc. But none of these practices has been specifically diagnosed as the cause of a child's poor writing skill. Hence, I chose to first understand why my students weren't writing as well as they should have been. But before I concluded that this was the problem, I collected samples of their writings in other subjects, asked what other teachers and the students themselves thought about their language skills.

After my one-on-one conversations with my students and other teachers, I found that the students lacked appropriate vocabulary and expression to write. The reason was that they didn't know enough to express.

Further data collection revealed the root cause to be lack of quality reading, since the students had never been exposed to the varied language nuances enough through reading to know their usage and



functions in different kind of situations and contexts. Reading exposes students to how words can be used in a variety of sentences and to emote or express various moods. Fine expressions in written language can only develop through reading. This introspection was done using the data collected to understand the causes leading to poor writing skills in students. Data based analysis was then followed by a phased intervention to help improve reading. Based on my additional research on how reading can improve writing, we also analyzed all the good material we were reading so that the students could imbibe good writing techniques.

Students now started reviewing their writing pieces progressively and also moved from one technique to another as well as tried their hand at different genres. Over a period of 7-8 months students showed an inclination to read and developed an attitude to challenge their own writing each time.

Had I not bothered to find the cause of poor writing, I would have assumed that my students didn't know how to write. Based on this assumption, I would have asked them to think in English, refer the thesaurus for more words and expressions of similar kinds, practice writing more and would have left the students struggling to write. Such judgment would not have given specific and corrective results.

This is how action research can help identify and resolve an issue in teaching-learning practices and bring improvement consistently and permanently.

The author teaches English and is Principal, Kothari International School, Pune. She can be reached at <[principalkispune@gmail.com](mailto:principalkispune@gmail.com)>.

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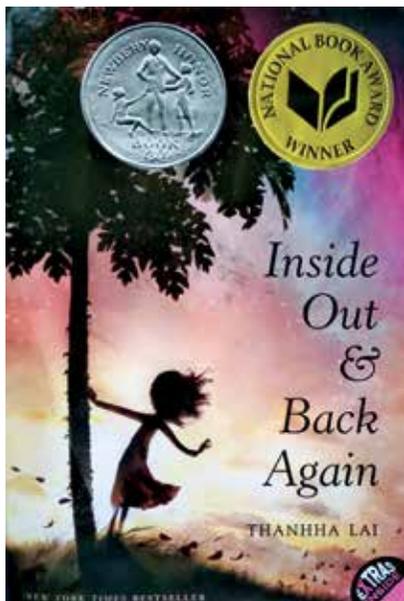
# Stories of history and history as stories

Pruma Basu Roy

Lyndon Johnson told the nation  
Have no fear of escalation  
I am trying everyone to please  
Though it isn't really war  
We're sending fifty thousand more  
To help save Vietnam from the Vietnamese  
(‘Lyndon Johnson Told the Nation’, Tom Paxton)

In 1975, when America sent their ships to Vietnam to save the people from the Vietnam War, 10-year-old Ha, her mother and three brothers got on to the ship and sailed to Alabama, leaving her city Saigon for the first time and forever. *‘Inside Out and Back Again’* is Ha’s story, written by Thanhha Lai. It is a fictionalized autobiography, where Ha narrates in a powerful yet tender voice, through short, free verses, and layered with humour and memory. It covers one year of her life, from one *Tet* (Vietnamese New Year) to another.

The book opens with remembering early monsoon, which sets the dominant mood for the readers at its immediate best for the rest of the book.



**Inside Out and Back Again**

Thanhha Lai

Publisher: HarperCollins

Year of Publication: 2011

Pages: 262

*‘We pretend  
the monsoon  
has come early.*

*In the distance  
bombs  
explode like thunder,  
slashes  
lighten the sky,  
gunfire  
falls like rain’*

The bruises that geopolitical movements have caused lie only in the hearts of those who suffered. Thanhha Lai is able to share this trauma by immersing the reader in relevant time and space. She unfolds the soft-deep attachment and detachment of the young girl with her worlds old and new, using a carefully crafted, matter-of-fact style. Through every page of the book, the craft of her telling is special, the most solid memories are kept light, embedded in longing, using metaphors that strike so much that one is left with re-reading many parts of the book.

*‘My biggest papaya  
is light yellow,  
still flecked with green.*

*Brother Vu chops;  
the head falls;  
a silver blade slices.  
Black seeds spill  
like clusters of eyes,  
wet and crying.’*

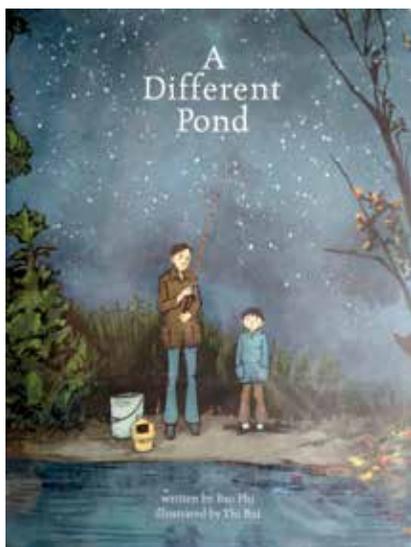
Ha’s struggle is interspersed with humour which offer an escape from her grim reality. The occasional light heartedness is rich and is sure to make the reader laugh if not loud! When the family moves to Alabama, the children begin to learn English. Ha has a tutor who helps with her difficulty to make meaning of this new language. But of course, she is not happy and finds no logic in the rules. The first rule she learns –

*‘Brother Quang says  
add an s to nouns  
to mean more than one*

even if there's  
already an s  
sitting there.  
Glass  
Glass-es  
All day  
I practice  
squeezing hisses  
through my teeth.  
Whoever invented  
English  
must have loved  
snakes.'

Though the elements of emotion and memory remain the same, they travel through the story and take new forms at different times of Ha's life. The question of identity, gender, ethnicity – from feeling smart in the homeland to feeling weak and small in the foreign land seems like a tectonic shift of the human mind – as an individual, and at the same time a representative of an entire community.

In another part of America is a young boy who goes fishing with his father and listens to stories of fishing and different ponds in their homeland, Vietnam, in a brilliant picture book, *'A Different Pond'*. Written by Bao Phi and illustrated by Thi Bui, the book is about the Vietnamese culture of fishing in a different land which over a generation they have grown to



### **A Different Pond**

Bao Phi

Illustrator: Thi Bui

Publisher: Capstone Young Readers

Year of Publication: 2017

Pages: 32

A few books on migration that are good to have in the library –

1. Mukand and Riaz by Nina Sabnani
2. Stitching Stories by Nina Sabnani
3. A Different Pond by Bao Phi, illustrated by Thi Bui
4. The Name Jar by Yangsook Choi
5. Grandfather's Journey by Allen Say
6. One Green Apple by Maxine Trottier, illustrated by Isabelle Arsenault
7. Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey by Margriet Ruurs, illustrated by Nizar Ali Badr
8. Sitti's Secret by Naomi Shihab Nye, illustrated by Nancy Carpenter
9. The Arrival by Shaun Tan
10. Inside Out and Back Again by Thhanha Lai
11. The Night Diary by Veera Heeranandani
12. Sea Prayer by Khaled Hosseini

call home. This is the story of Bao Phi's family who migrated to Minnesota from Vietnam in 1975, the same year as Ha.

The book centres around fishing as a part of livelihood and not sport. Fishing, seen in the light of the struggling immigrants and a retention of culture that helps keep pace in a country that is growing economically is a bonus to family income. The young boy who remembers Vietnam only through the stories that his family shares, tries to hold on to their tradition while at the same time wonders what life could be in the distant homeland.

The illustration is splendid! Fishing before dawn, against what remains of the night sky still studded with stars perhaps reveals the dark beauty of the family's struggle who work multiple jobs to make ends meet. The style and confident lines bring out the expressions of each face to strike an empathetic chord with the reader. With much sensitivity, Thi Bui takes the reader to understanding the quietness of the time of the day before dawn, and the silence between father and son while fishing. The colours of pre-dawn tranquillity and the changing sky engulf the reader within the essence of the narrative to its fullness.

Both *'Inside Out and Back Again'* and *'A Different Pond'* are a reiteration of memory and life as a Vietnamese refugee in America. The two meet at the crossroads of similarity, similar elements juxtaposed in different light. For instance, while Ha deals with English and the rain in a way that is difficult and strenuous, the young boy while driving to the bait store with his father remembers how a school mate

thinks his father's English is 'a thick, dirty river' while to him it sounds like 'gentle rain'. In both books we also find losing of a loved one to the Vietnam War and the scars that it leaves behind. The devastation is common, while one is bold and telling, the other is quiet and expansive.

The books are an interesting and important keep for the library where the scope of using them for teaching history and social science are plentiful. Not only that, it can be used to draw children to understanding the history of refugees in India and the constant migration within the country, drawing in similarities from global to local. For example, books like *Mukand and Riaz*, published by Tulika is a great book to open the topic of migration and friendship across borders, and *Stitching Stories* on adaptation and struggle under new circumstances. Exposing children to thematic reading across diverse texts may help in deepening their understanding of ideas, events and circumstances. Not only that, it often sparks children's interest for information regarding the concerned theme, which can act as a catalyst for subject learning. It would be a loss to not explore history and other subjects that live through literature and books beyond textbooks. History textbooks do not offer the lived experiences of people of the times and everyday detail that stories like these offer. Often, the perception of 'memory' is not strong enough as the perception of 'facts' which textbooks rely on.

Also, it may be important to note that no history of war, migration and partition discusses children in any way, be it during the war time or after. The inclusion of books that speak through struggle, devastation and loss can enable the teacher or the librarian to bring forth a humane dimension to understanding history. They also include a child's perspective or point of view that makes history relatable to children.

While inclusive reading needs much enhancement, it is not simply with a sense of improving content. What remains important is for children to know about the lives of others and situations in particular to make them relatable. The role of the facilitator can be to consider the advantage of relatability and connect the dots.

Like Thanhaa Lai, Bao Phi and Thi Bui built their nests in a changing world with memory and courage, we hope that their stories will plant a seed of empathy in the young readers' minds and help them grow as compassionate citizens of the world.

The author works with books, libraries and reading with the Parag initiative of Tata Trusts. She can be reached at [<promabasuroy@gmail.com>](mailto:promabasuroy@gmail.com).

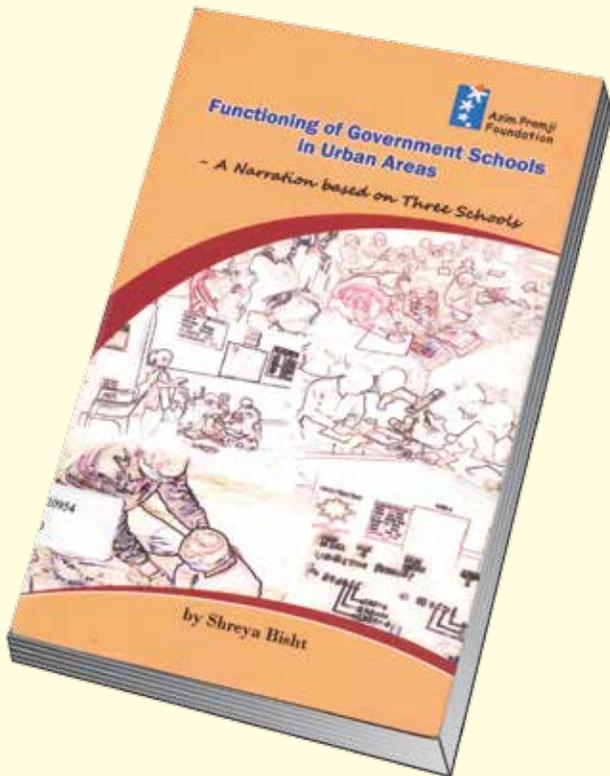
## How city

The functioning of government primary schools through the eyes of a keen observer – the schools being those from an urban setup. *Functioning of Government Schools in Urban Areas – A Narrative based on Three Schools* endeavours to present a holistic view of the functioning of government schools. It sincerely attempts to stay true to the observations made, the interactions carried out with the stakeholders and succinctly captures the minute aspects of the various working arms of the school. At the outset it can be considered as a handy book that appraises the reader, who could be of three types – one, a teacher who already knows the way the system functions, two, a novice teacher who is entering this field or a teacher who is not familiar with this system. To the first kind it could support them in their already existing practices. The novice teacher can draw from the narratives and the third kind of teacher can draw insights into the role of a teacher within the system. Various aspects that comprise the working of a school have been included, all primarily based on observations made. The contents of the book are organized starting with the assembly in school and ending with teachers' perspectives and concerns. The author takes the reader through classroom dynamics, mid-day meal (MDM), school as part of the community, special events and interactions.

For the purpose of the study, the author chose three schools in an urban Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) where the stakeholders are the teacher, head teacher, students, MDM functionaries and some other educational functionaries. Based on this, the tools for the study were observations and informal interactions with the stakeholders. There was initial resistance from the schools towards this study until official permission from the CRC was obtained. The author was the sole observer and would visit each of these schools according to the schedule created by reaching

# government schools work

Chandrika Muralidhar



## Functioning of Government Schools in Urban Areas

– A Narrative based on Three Schools

Shreya Bisht

Publisher: Azim Premji Foundation

Pages: 130

the school well before it started and would leave after everyone left.

On reading the book, one notices that extensive observations have been made in the area of classroom dynamics, school as a part of the community and of the special events. One of the observations made across the schools was about the intensity of the classroom processes before MDM and after it. The classes before were oriented to serious learning of subjects and the focus after was on non-academic activities. One very pertinent reflection from the author is about the inclusion of Children with Special Needs (CWSN) – there is an

understanding and sensitive approach to inclusion in the traditional sense (children who were mentally challenged, hearing impaired, Down's syndrome) – she feels that inclusion needs to also be about age, personality and religion.

The community plays a significant role in moulding and influencing the kind of school that is present in a certain area. The interplay between the community and the school teachers/students is comprehensively articulated in school as part of the community. The SMC (School Management Committee) meetings are highlighted too. A comparison is drawn between the attendance of parents at these meetings – parents in urban schools rarely attend them as opposed to parents in rural government schools. Celebrations like the Republic Day, Bal Mela and Bal Ganana are events for parents to visit the school and see their children participate and showcase their learning in different ways. Another important aspect for successful school oriented processes are the interactions of the stakeholders with each other – teacher-student; teacher-teacher; teacher-head teacher-bhojan mata; educational functionaries with teachers – the author brings out all these relationships with relevant examples based on her interactions with them. The book ends with Notes which include the contextual terms used in the government school system which helps, especially, the reader who is unfamiliar with them.

A prevalent vein that is seen through the book is the reflections and opinions that the author includes with subtlety so as to not interrupt the narrative. The language used is simple making it accessible to readers with a primary level knowledge of the English language. It's a book which can be used extensively by teachers for an overall comprehension of the government school system.

The author is an Assistant Professor at the School of Continuing Education – University Resource Centre at the Azim Premji University, Bengaluru. She works in the field of science education, teacher preparation and curricular material development. She can be reached at [chandrika@azimpremjifoundation.org](mailto:chandrika@azimpremjifoundation.org).



# QOTW?

## Question of the Week

B R Sitaram

Here are the answers to last month's questions!

**1. Our textbooks say that the spring equinox is on March 21. However, this year, the spring equinox was on March 20 (at 9:20 am). How come there is this difference?**

Actually, the date of the equinoxes and solstices varies for a very simple reason: we pretend that the earth takes 365 days to go around the sun and once in four years slows down to 366 days. Nothing of the kind happens: Every year, the earth takes exactly the same number of days (slightly less than  $365 \frac{1}{4}$  days) to go around the sun. As a result, every year, we make an error of  $\frac{1}{4}$  days, which accumulates to 1 day at the end of four years and is then made to 0 again due to the leap year. An error of  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a year (which can accumulate to  $\frac{3}{4}$  days) can change the actual date of the equinoxes. For example, if in a particular year the equinox was on March 21 at 3.30 am, then in the previous year, it would have been 6 hours earlier, i.e., 10:30 pm on March 20! In addition, the dates of the equinoxes and solstices also slowly change but that is a much slower change (about a day in every 70 years).

**2. Which law or laws of physics are violated or can be violated by living organisms?**

None whatsoever! Every object, living or non-living, has to obey the laws of physics! (And chemistry, of course!)

**3. Why did the British Government announce an award for a method to measure the longitude of a ship, while no such award was announced or made for determining the latitude of the ship? (The longitude award was announced in 1714 but was never awarded; however, many persons got financial assistance in carrying out research to solve the problem.)**

Finding the latitude is trivial: all you need to do is to look for the pole star or the sun at noon and find its

altitude. Longitude is completely different. In a sense, 0 latitude is fixed: it is the equator, defined by the intersection of the earth with a plane perpendicular to the earth's axis. Longitude, however, is arbitrary, to the extent that the 0 of longitude can be chosen arbitrarily. The only guaranteed way of finding longitude is to determine the time (e.g., of noon) at a location and know what the time is at 0 longitude. Say it is 15 minutes past noon at Greenwich when it is noon at your place, then you are 3.75 degrees west of Greenwich. So, you need an accurate chronometer, which will tell you the time in Greenwich, no matter where you are in the world!

**4. Your friend's daughter has just been to the moon on an exchange visit for a few months and has sent you a painting of the lunar sky with the sun at the centre. What is the most important novel feature that you will notice as soon as you look at the picture?**

The most striking feature would be the sky, of course: it would be black! Also, you will be seeing stars all around the sun! Of course, there is no atmosphere on the moon and hence sunlight is never scattered: you can see sunlight only if you look directly at the sun! Stars would be visible, as sunlight would not interfere with your seeing them.

Please send in your answers, comments, etc., to [zeal.qotw@gmail.com](mailto:zeal.qotw@gmail.com).

There are no questions in this edition, as this will be the last column in the series.

# Opportunities for Teachers and Teacher Educators



**Azim Premji Foundation** is a not-for-profit organization working to improve quality and equity of school education in India. Our vision is to contribute to a just, equitable, humane and sustainable society. We are looking for individuals with a passion for school education.

## Role 1: Teacher, in Azim Premji Schools

You will help students develop as sensitive and engaged citizens. Our schools are in **Barmer, Dhamtari, Kalaburgi, Sirohi, Tonk, Uttarkashi, Udham Singh Nagar, Yadgir** and planned in **Bengaluru**.

Opportunities exist for trained Pre-Primary Teachers, and trained Graduate & Postgraduate Teachers for Primary and Upper Primary in: English, Hindi, Kannada, Math, Science, Social Science, Special Needs, Music and Sports.

**Eligibility:** Bachelor's degree in your subject and teaching degree (B.Ed., D.Ed or D.El.Ed) with at least 2 years teaching experience. Ability to teach in English coupled with knowledge of local language is a must.

**To apply:** Visit [http://bit.do/teacher\\_azimpremjifoundation](http://bit.do/teacher_azimpremjifoundation)

## Role 2: Teacher Educator, in our District Institutes

You will work with Government school teachers, helping them build their professional abilities and become better teachers. Our current focus is on Primary School teachers alongside our work with teachers in Upper Primary Schools.

Our District Institutes are in:

**Chhattisgarh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Telangana and Uttarakhand.**

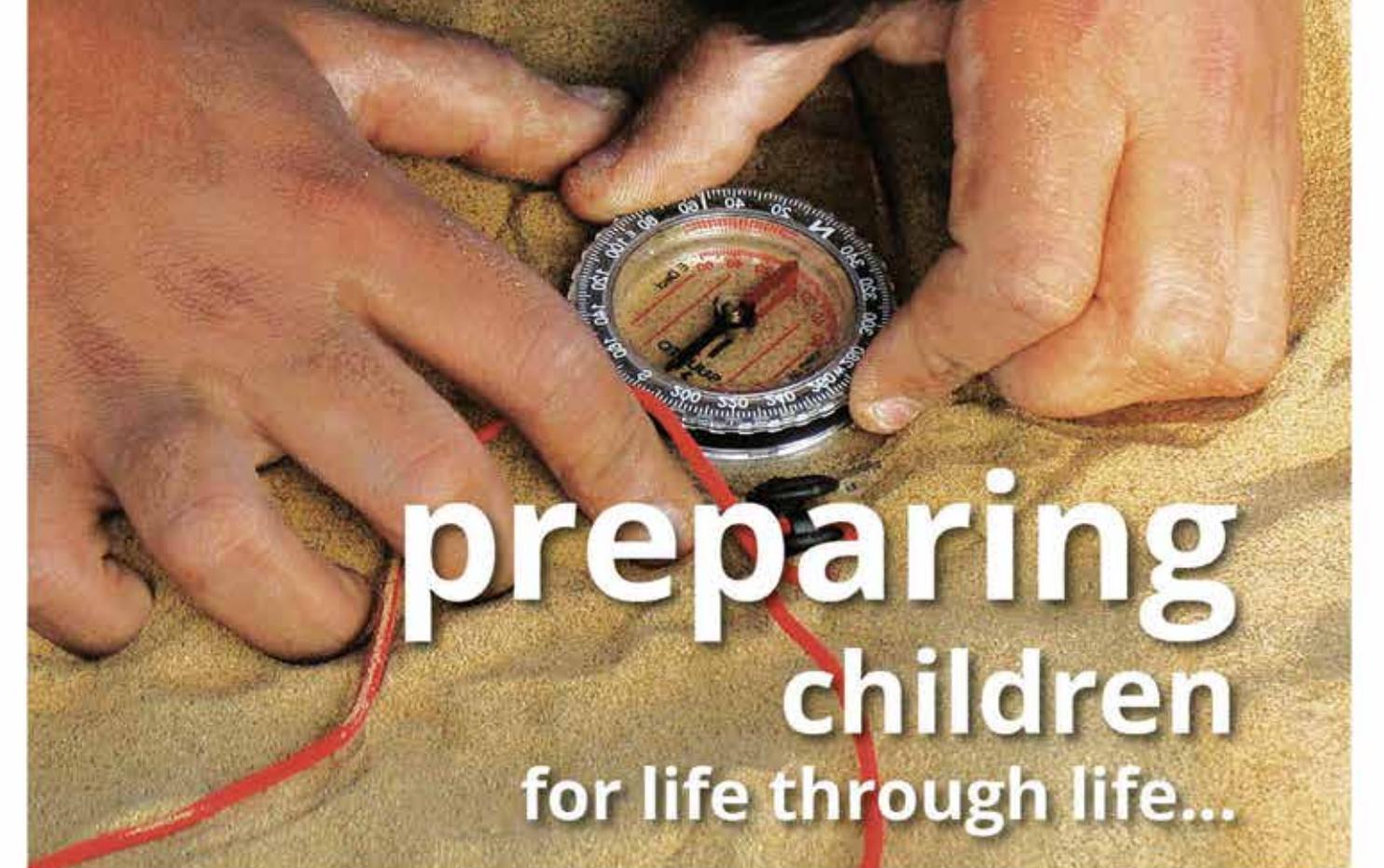
**Eligibility:** Graduation or Post graduation with a minimum of 2 years teaching experience. Candidates with substantial on-field experience in education NGOs may also apply.

**To apply:** Visit [http://bit.do/teachereducator\\_azimpremjifoundation](http://bit.do/teachereducator_azimpremjifoundation)

**Written Test Date: Sunday, April 26, 2020**

Salary: Min. Rs.31000 p.m | Could be higher for candidates with commensurate qualifications and experience

Visit <https://azimpremjifoundation.org/career-list> to find our contact numbers and know more about our roles | Website: [www.azimpremjifoundation.org](http://www.azimpremjifoundation.org)



# preparing children for life through life...

# Khoj

2020

Learning  
Expeditions  
for Children

**Disha India** conducts **KHOJ Learning Expeditions for Children** where we use challenging, engaging and real experiences to overcome physical, emotional & cognitive limitations in children and help them experience the abundance in self & the world around.

On a **KHOJ Learning Expedition** children explore, experience and connect with the real world for deep learning. The big idea is to connect teaching & learning in schools with real life and prepare children for real life through life.

KHOJ Expeditions are designed based on the curriculum needs, life skills that need to be developed and the habitat/context in which we do expeditions.

Some of the schools that have experienced KHOJ Expeditions are The Heritage Xperiential Learning School (Gurgaon), Bombay International School (Mumbai) Mercedes Benz International School (Pune), Daly College (Indore) and Delhi Public School (Surat).

Every year around 1200 children experience KHOJ.

## EXPEDITION DETAILS

Duration : Expeditions are of 5 to 7 days  
Grades : Students of Grade 4 to 10  
Time : Any time during the academic session

Write to us at [psr@dishaindiaeducation.org](mailto:psr@dishaindiaeducation.org) or call +91 9810646129  
For details, download the brochure from the website.



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