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EDITORIAL
ALTERNATIVE STRATEGIES TO BRING IN A CHANGE
FOR IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION

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All nations make efforts to improve their educational system. Resources available in a nation and the efficiency in optimum utilisation of these resources result in improvements of the system. In UK, House of Commons, UK, Committee of Public Accounts, (2018), p.4 stated that "In 2017 there were 112 institutions termed 'alternative providers' offering higher education. These institutions do not receive government grants directly but do access public funding through student loans which are used to pay their fees." In a study of US situation, nine strategies for world class education system, suggested by Tucker (2016, pp.7-13) were:

1. Provide strong support for children and their families before students arrive at school.
2. Develop world-class, highly coherent instructional systems.
3. Provide more resources for at-risk students than for others.
4. Create clear gateways for students through the system, set to global standards, with no dead ends.
5. Assure an abundant supply of highly qualified teachers.
6. Redesign schools to be places in which teachers will be treated as professionals, with incentives and support to continuously improve their professional practice and the performance of their students.
7. Create an effective system of career and technical education and training.
8. Create a leadership development system that develops leaders at all levels to manage such systems effectively.
9. Institute a governance system that has the authority and legitimacy to develop coherent, powerful policies and can implement them at scale.

Many developed nations have been allowing alternate [providers in addition to existing conventional providers. Referring to UK higher education system, A few suggestions to make the education system flexible and innovative and appropriately prepare future-ready students across levels of education and segments of income in India may be:

1. Modification of Acts Related to Central and State School Examination Boards and Councils for following strategies::
1.1 Giving autonomy to schools to develop and implement curriculum
The Incheon Declaration giving stress on quality assurance in education recommended provision of flexible learning pathways, as well as the recognition, validation and accreditation of the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired through non-formal and informal education, is important. (UNESCO 2015a, p. 8). Various education commissions and committees at international level have argued for learner-centered education and

granting more decision making power to schools. "Granting more decision-making power to schools can have a positive impact on learning outcomes when leveraged properly. However, it has also made the role of school leader more challenging and complex, with school leaders reporting heavier workloads." (OECD 2018, p.2). The process of giving autonomy to schools in OECD countries started in early 1980s. OECD (2018, p.3) mentions following scenario found in OECD countries:

> "The level of decision making, and degree of autonomy also depends on the type, or domain, of decisions being taken. Significant differences within and between countries emerge when comparing domains. On average across OECD countries and economies, schools or local governments make 63% of decisions related to the organisation of instruction – but only about 20% are taken in full autonomy. In the Czech Republic and the Netherlands, schools take all the decisions about the organisation of instruction, but mostly within a framework set by a higher authority. Decisions on planning and structures, and personnel management, tend to be more centralised – on average, about 50% of planning and structure decisions and 35% of personnel management decisions are taken at the central or state level. Even when these decisions are devolved to the local or school levels, they rarely have full autonomy. There is also a clear difference in where the authority lies for decisions about the allocation of resources compared with decisions about their use." (OECD 2018, p.3).

A World Bank study on challenges of school autonomy in Brazil, Canada, Colombia, and England (UK) stated that

> "Principals in autonomous schools are called upon to constantly negotiate between top-down demands (achievement levels, legal agreements and regulations, constituency relationships) and internal, or bottom up demands (teacher's professional development and personal needs, student learning and behavior)." (Rodriguez & Hovde 2002, p.7).

A school head may get the joy of carrying out innovations in content to be taught and teaching techniques to be involved but also faces additional responsibility.

The curriculum and its textbooks need to differentiate between a school having Wi-Fi and a school not having electricity, a school having highly educated parents and a school having first-generation learners, the school having students getting benefits of private tuition and others just attending school with poor quality food at home, the students wishing to pursue higher education and the students wishing to get restricted (limited) to school education.

A learner-centered curriculum necessitates options for students to study a subject. Free progress system of education followed at the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education allows students at secondary stage to choose subjects for their study. This institution provides education up to the degree stage. A letter issued at the end of the degree course mentions subjects completed, not marks or grades secured by the students and this

course completion letter is considered as equivalent to a degree by the central universities for allowing them to appear at PG entrance tests.

Governments in order to provide textbooks for students of compulsory education classes undertake textbook productions so that textbooks can be of quality and are available in time. Textbooks contain certain topics that need periodic updating at intervals. Due to error in estimation, there are instances that such textbooks may continue, even with outdated facts and figures. Privatisation of textbook production for compulsory classes may double the expenditure to be borne by the government, On the other hand, government carrying out textbook publishing is a serious obstacle for a flexible and innovative school curriculum. "Companies involved in textbook publishing, assessments, online learning content and education technologies can dominate education systems and affect core provision." (UNESCO 2020, p.3). In India, the huge machinery employed by the national government through NCERT and school boards and councils and textbook bureaus at the state levels making such textbooks compulsory for their schools once printed continues for a number of years till the books are exhausted even if data in them are obsolete and outdated. Nations interested in learner centered education go appropriately prepared text books which are to be selected by the schools keeping in view the nature of the student population.

In order to make innovations bring life into the school education system, ten ideas for 21st century education listed by Hampson, Patton, and Shanks (2013) are: 1. Open up lessons; 2. Think outside the classroom box; 3. Get personal; 4. Tap into students' digital expertise; 5. Get real with projects; 6. Expect (and help) students to be teachers; 7. Help (and expect) teachers to be students; 8. Measure what matters; 9. Work with families, not just children; and 10. Power to the student. There have been efforts to measure innovations. Increase in educational innovations has led to an explosion of evidence on how people learn. Innovations in developing 21st-century skills are much needed, but these skills work best in conjunction with strong foundational abilities. According to World Bank (2018, p. 209) for an open system of education the principles for encouraging innovation and agility in approaches to improving learning may be:

1. Adopting a more iterative and adaptive approach to the design and implementation of policies;

2. Identifying promising solutions from within the education system, as well as the global knowledge base;

3. Developing the capability of education agencies, an enabling environment, and autonomy to encourage innovation.

4. Establishing   information systems that provide rapid feedback to support implementation.

Government institutions may go for developing an enabling environment and incentives for innovation and a more iterative approach and the Civil society and private sector providers: may go for experimentation with different approaches to improving learning.

Vincent-Lancrin et al. (2014, p. 12) stated that in case of all participating countries in international surveys such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS, key findings included " large increases in innovative pedagogical practices in areas such as relating lessons to real life, higher order skills, data and text interpretation, and personalisation of teaching." Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted by OECD stated that

> "The ability of teachers to innovate could be demonstrated through a range of actions: a new way to organise the classroom into teams, a hands-on activity associated with the real life of students, and the use of classroom presentations in student groups to assess learning and collaborative skills, etc. However, in order to try new approaches to facilitate student learning, teachers' openness to change is essential." (OECD 2019a, p.4)

OECD conducts PISA at intervals. Latest PISA has placed Singapore at the top position. OECD (2019b, p. 250) reported about the achievement of Singapore with respect to its range of commitments for innovation, including the introduction of a Programme for Active Learning at primary level and Learning for Life and Applied Learning Programmes for students at secondary level. However, in the case of Singapore credit for high level performance of school students need also to be given to the shadow education system available on extra payment. Tan (2017, p.315) pointed out that "The phenomenon of parentocracy has contributed to educational inequalities in Singapore as children from more privileged home backgrounds have access to more educational resources and opportunities." The Education Commission (2019, p. 20) stated that in order to address individual needs of learners, schools and systems need to explore innovative learning configurations, including technology-assisted learning, so that learners have access to a wider variety of knowledge sources and ways of learning.

1.2 Allowing students not wishing to appear at school board examinations, to leave school with a course completion letter mentioning the subjects studied and not indicating any grade in any subject, and mentioning attributes such as regularity in attendance, sincerity, etc.

Private tutoring has resulted in a parallel education system in unorganised sector. It is nor deep rooted not only in underdeveloped and developing countries but also in developed countries. Dang and Rogers (2008, p. 197) reported that "The evidence that private tutoring raises achievement in the United States is overwhelming." In India, as resources vary from one segment of the country to another and also the number of teachers per primary classroom size varies from one primary school to another, instead of the rights to education act of the central government. State governments providing subsidised food for workers in urban areas and adequate ration for poor families do not have funds to fill up teacher vacancies. Schools not having an adequate number of teachers cannot implement the same curriculum that is applicable to schools having at least one teacher per class and this situation necessitates a different curriculum for individual schools based on available material resources, level of education of parents and guardians, utilisation of shadow education facilities, and other factors.

1.3 Allowing any individual to appear at the examinations in one or more than one subject to measure his/her learning level

Modes of effective learning vary from one individual to another. One can learn by listening to a talk, another can learn by writing what was heard by him / her, etc. Besides there has been a plethora of self-learning and learning outside school opportunities.

> "Learning-related support goods and services: Supplementary private tutoring, especially to improve performance in high stakes examinations, is a widespread phenomenon that is often overlooked in analyses of non-state activity in education. It has recently been making inroads even in high-income countries. It can be provided in homes or online, through small or large tutoring companies, or as part of an extended school day in schools." (UNESCO 2020, p.3).

India, since there has been much advances in self-learning and home learning opportunities in form of learning with the help of mobile, internet, etc. in addition to attending coaching classes or learning at home with the assistance from parents or tutors and need for giving a boost to lifelong learning efforts the education system needs to transform itself to a lifelong learning platform by allowing subject wise examinations and not insisting on school attendance as a condition and also to go for subject wise examination and certification for regular school students.

2. Going for Appropriate changes in the Constitution to Bring All Types of Minority Managed Schools and Private Schools Covering Kindergarten to Class 8 (Age Groups 3 To 14) and Bring Appropriate Changes in Right To Education Act to Increase the Level of Equity in School Education

The scenario of privatisation and voucher system in school education in the United States was highlighted by Trevino-Mintrop et al. (2018, p.8) as follows:

> "Supporters of vouchers and privatization believe that they will expand alternatives to traditional public schools, especially for students who do not have access to a quality education, and that competition will inevitably motivate schools to improve quality. Opponents believe that school vouchers and privatization will take money away from the traditional public-school system, with the effects of exacerbating inequalities, benefiting only a few, and leaving the majority of students behind. In addition, they argue that public tax money would be funnelled to sectarian interests (religious schools, for example); democratic governance would weaken; and a shared national culture and sense of citizenship across class, ethnicity, and religion would erode."

Boninger, Molnar and Murray (2017, p. 3) reporting on schoolhouse commercialisation in the United States stated that

> "As schools continue to integrate technologies into every aspect of school life, those technologies are being harnessed to amplify corporate marketing and profit-making, extending the reach of commercializing activities into every aspect of

students' school lives. Although marketers' school-focused efforts are often billed as "innovative" and "out-of-the-box," many of them are little more than repackaged marketing strategies that over the years have been seen again and again."

To take care of non-equity in the US school education, Mead, and Eckes (2018, p.17) suggested that

"States must ensure that each of its educational programs provides equal educational opportunities. To the extent that states have determined that voucher programs and charter schools are part of the menu of educational opportunities, those programs must also ensure equitable access to both students and employees. To do anything else is to return to the days of separate and inherently unequal education."

In India, there is too much gap between schools for the rich and schools for the general public. There are also low fee charging schools in the vicinity of the government schools. Provision of a few seats for lower income groups is not an appropriate panacea to ensure appropriate level of equity. Taking over these schools by the State governments may lead to having two separate sections-English medium and state language medium and also to increase in teacher salary. Since pre-independence days, there are high fee charging Public Schools, which have various facilities, including swimming pools, horse riding etc. that mainly catered to the sons and daughters of royal families. In order to increase the level of equity, such schools may be nationalised and admissions to such schools may be based on a talent test open to all, as is being done in case of Navodaya Vidyalayas. English mediums may continue to be allowed in these schools.

3. Carrying out Modification in Acts Related to Teacher Qualifications and Teacher Training at the National Level and Authorise the States to Take Appropriate Steps to Encourage Alternative Mode of Teacher Training by Empowering Selected Schools to Select and Appoint Individuals with or without the Traditional Teacher Training Qualification and Train Them on the Job in Their Own Way

Towards the end of the twentieth century, the United States empowered selected schools to adopt the above strategy of school-based teacher selection from among individuals without any teacher training and train them on the job. The State has Harvard University, which has a famous department of education that also administers teacher training programmes. Harvard University has not been able to produce any documentary evidence that proves that university-trained teachers are better than school-trained teachers.

A similar situation is also in the United Kingdom.

"The latest initiative in England, School Direct, which was formally commenced in 2012, has resulted in teacher education becoming school led as well as school based. This new and expanding one-year postgraduate route often runs in parallel with the previously existing one-year university-led model but has demanded that the academic element of training is fitted more directly around the demands of immediate practice in schools. Here trainee teachers spend most of their training

period in schools under their direction, with universities providing accreditation but a smaller component of training." (Brown,, Rowley, & Smith 2015, p.5).

According to US Miami–Dade County Public Schools Research Services (2012, pp. 7-8) characteristics of effective alternative certificate routes include (a) High standards and rigorous screening of candidates; (b) Strong academic coursework component, (c) Opportunities for practice teaching before candidates enter the classroom, (d) A comprehensive system of support provided to teachers after they enter the classroom, and (e) Community partnerships. According to this study, a few examples of noteworthy alternative certification programs are : (a) Teach for America (TFA), (b) The New Teacher Project (TNTP), (c) The American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE), (d) New York City's Teaching Fellows Program and (e)The U.S. Department of Defense established Troops to Teachers (TTT).

Cardichon et al. (2020, p.10) referred to preparation of high-quality teachers through teacher residency programmes which have been successful in United States in recruiting talented candidates into high-need fields and locations and enabling such residents receive training under the mentorship of an accomplished master teacher while earning a credential and a master's degree from a partnering university and allowing such candidates work as paid apprentices under the guidance of skilled expert teachers (not faculty members of teacher training institutions) .

As in India, teacher training programmes are being run by one or two faculty members posted as regular teachers in many Departments of Education of Central Universities, State Universities, and State Government Teacher training institutions. It is likely that such types of teacher trainees are coming out through fraud strategies, and on entering the teaching profession, they will harm the school students more than untrained teachers. On February 25, 2020 at the Economic Times New Age Education Symposium held in Mumbai city, a head of a school claimed that he can train teachers in a better way than being imparted by formal teacher training programmes. There are broadly two categories of schools which may be authorised to select and appoint individuals with or without the traditional teacher training qualification and train them on the job in their own way. First category may be high quality schools selected on the basis of specified guidelines. Second category may be government schools which do not have one teacher per class and have persons in the locality who can be taken as a volunteer teacher or a part time or temporary teacher, whose remuneration is paid by the school managing committee or a philanthropist in the community or by the concerned state government.

4. Empowering the Universities and Other Examining Bodies to Allow Any Individual With or Without any Admission in Any Teacher Training Institution to Appear at the Conventional Bachelor of Education and Diploma in Education Examinations
As since a few years, there are many Bachelor of Education degree holders coming out from many departments of education of Central Universities and Colleges of Education of State Universities and state governments although these institutions did not have a

faculty member who had studied the method of teaching at his /her degree stage, in which the candidate passed practical test of teaching school students, justifies the hypotheses that practical work training can be self-learned, there need not be any compulsion on pursuing a regular course with stipulate percentage of attendance to appear at Bachelor of Education examinations and hence, the law governing teacher training be amended accordingly.

5. Empowering Universities and Other Examining Bodies to Allow any Individual with or without Any Admission in Any College or University Department to Appear at the Conventional Bachelor or Master Level examinations

Current world scenario is dominated by a shadow education system, running parallel to formal system and although widening the gap in educational opportunity between haves and have nots, have contributed to extra learning opportunities for a section.

> "Supplementary private tutoring, especially to improve performance in high stakes examinations, is a widespread phenomenon that is often overlooked in analyses of non-state activity in education. It has recently been making inroads even in high-income countries. It can be provided in homes or online, through small or large tutoring companies, or as part of an extended school day in schools." (UNESCO 2020, p.3). "Companies involved in textbook publishing, assessments, online learning content and education technologies can dominate education systems and affect core provision." (UNESCO 2020, p.3)

The World Education Forum 2015 pointed out that increased availability of, and access to, diverse sources of knowledge have led to expansion of less structured and more innovative learning and rapid growth in recognition of the importance and relevance of learning taking place outside formal institutions (UNESCO 2015b, p.15). In the Indian situation, there are many Indigenous storytellers who are highly learned in Sanskrit literature without having any formal degree not to speak of school leaving certificates. Learning levels of such scholars can get a boost by giving them opportunities to appear at various Sanskrit Graduation level or Post Graduate level examinations. Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education, Puducherry issues a letter at the end of the degree course that mentions subjects completed, not marks or grades secured by the students and this course completion letter is considered as equivalent to degree by the central universities for allowing them to appear at PG entrance tests.

6. Ensuring Adequate Funds for Strengthening Government run Primary Education by Diverting Funds for Higher Education and Facilitating Privatisation of Higher Education along with Appropriate Machinery to Ensure Quality and Check Profiteering

Privatisation of higher education is now a reality even in socialist countries.

> "Over the past three decades, the idea of privatization in education has been widely embraced by governments around the world and often supported by certain inter-governmental organizations whose ideological commitment to privatization stems from the proximity of their mission to market ideologies and economic concerns.

This has been accompanied by the interests of powerful transnational corporations in promoting privatization and even the attitude towards the privatization of education of many socially-committed nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and governments of socialist persuasion, such as Vietnam and China."(Rizvi 2016, p.2)

OECD (2019c, p.2) pointing out speedy rise of private funding by tertiary educational institutions stated, "Between 2010 and 2016, private expenditure on these institutions increased more quickly than public expenditure." UNESCO (2020, p.3) stated that "The share of students in private universities is as high as 73% in Brazil and 80% in the Republic of Korea. It has increased in countries such as Finland and Mongolia but decreased in Colombia and Portugal." However, Sørensen and Taneja (2016, p. 105) disapproving the attempt to go for Private Public Partnerships (PPPs) stated that "The only sustainable alternative to privatisation is to strengthen and transform public education through sustained and adequate financial commitments to free, quality, equitable and accountable public education for all." Eats (2016, p. 96) pointed out that there may not be any harm in utilising services of private organisations willing to "to invest in solutions to education problems.

In India, since many state governments have been failing to make adequate financial provision to ensure at least one teacher per class in its government primary school, it shall be futile to discuss equity and privatisation of higher education. Again, several private universities have been able to get students from developing and underdeveloped countries, as these students consider the quality of higher education is better in India than in their own countries. Some of these universities have also established linkages with a few universities in developed countries. However, state and central governments may need to strengthen their mechanisms to control the profiteering motive of these universities.

7. Formulating Policy on the Basis of Evidences Collected for Various Types of Suggestions Generated in the Policy Formulation Process and also to Take into Account the Widening Educational Achievement Gap Between the Poor and the Rich Justification

World Education Forum 2015 gave stress on the role of evidence in formulation of policy for improving access, retention and quality of education and to provide more cost-effective provision of quality education, taking into consideration rising demands for education and increasing pressures on limited financial resources by allowing smart and effective investment (UNESCO 2015b, p. 25). Developed nations are having evidence-based education policies. Arakawa and Kayashima (2016, p.81) reported that Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Research Institute (https://www.jica.go.jp/ jica-ri/) since its establishment in 2008. has been furnishing evidence-based policies and practical recommendations to several sectors. "Designing and implementing policies based on evidence is a key aspect of the whole teacher education pathway" (OECD 2019d, p.22). In India, the current process of policy formulation has come out two drafts with certain new ideas which have not pointed out supporting evidence. For instance, the latest policy draft document stipulates replacement of one or two year B. Ed. Programmes, although no study is available in the public domain that indicates four year B.Ed. course after +2 is better

than one year B.Ed. course after a degree. The draft policy document proposes a four-year Bachelor of Liberal Arts course, to be introduced in addition to existing three-year degree courses, although in developed countries one finds shorter duration degree courses. The rapid change engulfing the world education system was highlighted as follows:

> "The unprecedented digital transformation of the global economy and society is likely to increase the complexity of the modern world, as well as the speed of change, largely because of increased connectivity and more educated individuals worldwide. These two elements – complexity and speed of change – mean that connecting education to the trends shaping the world we live in has never been so urgent" (OECD 2019e, p.13).

The educational strategies suggested by the international bodies may need to be analysed in underdeveloped and developing countries keeping in view their own geographical condition, material, and human resources. For instance, UNESCO stress on integrated education of the disabled by making disabled children study in the school closest to their homes may not get implemented in areas which do not have public transport facilities. About two decades ago, the author had gone for inspection of the IED scheme. On the day of the visit, the IED resource teacher was missing, as were many students, who come from nearby villages. The author paid a visit to the home of an absentee, who stays in a village 5 Kms away from the school. The student's guardian was a tailor, and he did not have time to take the child to the school personally, although he produced the passbook that indicated payment of money for transport. Hence, perhaps in such situations, instead of payment of transport charges, hostels for physically handicapped may be essential.

8.Improving Quality of Educational Governance
Educational governance is carried out a various level. In India, educational governance system varies from one State to another. However, "Strategic knowledge governance involves identifying evidence gaps, coordinating and systematising existing evidence, and building new evidence." (OECD 2019d. p.13).

9. Increasing Funding for School Education
As the present standard of educational governance in poor states does not allow a teacher per class in primary schools, should central legislations governing school education including the Right to Education Act be modified to give autonomy to States to charge tuition fees and fees for mid-day meals from non-poor families?

10.Improving Quality of Teacher Training Based on the Evidences from the Field
Many advanced nations collect evidence from the field to take appropriate steps for improving the quality of their education system. Our nation may go for following types of evidence collection strategies:

1.1 *Rating school teacher education institutions based on performance of their products in TETs*
Planning Commission (2012, p.85, Art. 21.162) stated that "With focus on outcome, teacher education institutions could be rated on the basis of the scores in the eligibility tests."

1.2 ***Rating school teacher education courses based on performance of their products in TETs***

The nation has now varieties of teacher education courses of varying durations after higher secondary stage. To decide the continuation of all these courses, it is essential to have an evaluation of these courses by comparing performance of their products who have taught in schools for at least three years.

10.3 Rating performance of teacher educators teaching method subjects

(a) **Content knowledge level:** The teacher educators, who have been teaching method courses, can be broadly put into two categories – (a) Faculty with degree level content knowledge and (b) Faculty with post graduate level content knowledge. The performances of these two categories can be compared by studying performance of their products and comparing the opinion of concerned teachers about their own teacher educators who guided them on teaching that method subject.

(b) **School teaching experience level:** The teacher educators, who have been teaching method courses, can be broadly put into two categories – (a) Faculty with prior school teaching experience and (b) Faculty without school teaching experiences. The performances of these two categories can be compared by studying performance of their products and comparing the opinion of concerned teachers about their own teacher educators who guided them on teaching that method subject. The institutions which have these two categories of teacher educators may also go for comparing their supervisory performance by comparing their observations on lessons supervised by them.

(c) Rating performance of teacher educators Supervising Internship Programmes

The teacher educators, who have been supervising internship programmes can be broadly put into two categories – (a) Faculty with M.Ed./ M.A.(Education) degree and (b) Faculty without M.Ed./ M.A.(Education) degree. The performances of these two categories can be compared by studying performance of their products and comparing the opinion of concerned schoolteachers about their own teacher educators who supervised their lessons. The institutions which has these two categories of teacher educators may also go for comparing their supervisory performance by comparing their observations on lessons supervised by them.

(d) Rating performance of teacher educators having (a) M.A. (Education) and (b) M.Ed.

The faculty of teacher educators, who have been working as assistant / associate professors and professors of Education can be broadly put into two categories – (a) Faculty with M.A,. degrees and (b) Faculty with M. Ed, degrees. The performances of these two categories can be compared by studying performance of their products and comparing the opinion of concerned school teachers about their own teacher educators.

11. National Performance Standards for Teachers, Teacher Educators and Teacher Education Institutions for School Stage

Planning Commission (2012, p.85, Art. 21.163) suggested development of "national performance standards for teachers, teacher educators and teacher education institutions.

12. Improving Process of Selection, Licensing System and Performance of School Teachers

1.1 *Successful internship for three years as a condition for teacher license*

Planning Commission (2012, p.85, Art. 21.163), while suggesting teacher license system suggested exploring, "possibilities for internship for three years before getting a 'license'"

1.2 *Renewal of teacher license every 5 years*

Planning Commission (2012, p.85, Art. 21.162) stated that "Teachers could be required to renew their certifications periodically so such that they continue to invest in their own development. Planning Commission (2012, p.85, Art. 21.163), while suggesting teacher license system suggested that "teachers should have avenues open for retraining for other jobs they may want to take,"

13. Periodic Evaluation of Performance of School Teachers

Planning Commission (2012, p.85, Art. 21.163) proposed that "A well-defined system of teacher performance appraisal (based on teacher competencies, teacher performance, efforts made by the teachers to transact learning-related processes in the classroom and learning levels) would be introduced in stages." Planning Commission (2012, p.85, Art. 21.163) suggested introduction of "a system of teacher evaluation based on attendance, effective teaching, evaluation of classroom work and so on,"

14. Establishing a National Mission on Teachers and Teaching

Planning Commission (2012, p.85, Art. 21.164) stated that

> "During the Twelfth Plan, a National Mission on Teachers and Teaching would be launched so that issues of teacher education are dealt with in a holistic manner. This would also strengthen institutional mechanisms for strengthening vertical and lateral linkages. This would consolidate and strengthen ongoing programmes related to teachers and teaching through effective coordination and synergy by significantly enhancing the investment."

The proposed national mission may establish a National Centre for Teaching Quality in School Education in the Department of Teacher Education in NCERT and National Centre for Teaching Quality in Higher Education in the Inter University Centre for Teacher Education of the UGC located at Varanasi.

Activities of these missions at the national level may be:

a) Initiating a mentoring Programme for beginning teachers

b) Developing support materials for use by institutions in providing support to beginning teachers

c) Developing guidelines for mentors in techniques of providing support and guidance to beginning teachers

d)   Supporting establishment of State Centre for Teaching Quality in School

Education in the SCERTs and Centres for Teaching Quality in Higher Education in every university level institution.

e)   Developing professional standards for teachers

f)   Running Online courses for Teaching Excellence (participation on payment basis)

g)   Development of Topic wise and Stage wise Annotated Bibliography of Print

Publications available in its own library and Online Resources and encouraging state SCERTs and all university level institutions to do so.

h)   Recognising excellence in Teaching by Instituting Senior Fellowships,

Fellowships and Associate Fellowships for serving teachers to be awarded on the basis of applications supported by evidence of their expertise and Honorary Fellowships for retired teachers considering their contributions to the education system

15. Upgrading Diploma Courses and the Institutions Offering These Courses to College Stage
(Planning Commission (2012, p.83, Art. 21.154) suggested that

"Diploma in Education programmes for teachers for the elementary stage currently imparted by DIETs and other independent institutes should be progressively upgraded to degree programmes and these institutions could be upgraded as undergraduate colleges affiliated to the universities."

To implement the above suggestion, the Central government may consider to modify its scheme of assistance for DIETs and BIETs   and the State governments may consider to modify their provision for DIETs, BITEs, and other teacher training institutions providing pre-job training of elementary and pre-school teachers.

16. Establishing a National Centre for Education Policy
The 12th Five-year Plan document of the Government of India pointing out necessity for undertaking policy research in higher education stated that:

"India does not have any major higher education research centre or a group of researchers focusing on this key subject. Higher education as an academic subject is not taught at Indian universities. As a result, there is a dearth of dependable, reliable, fact-based, unbiased, ideology-neutral policy information about Indian higher education. It is important for the country to create an ecosystem for higher quality policy research on higher education. In the Twelfth Plan, a network of centres for higher education research located at institutions that have the expertise for such research activity will be created." (Planning Commission 2012, Art. 21.334, p. 122).

The Central government may consider setting up a National Centre for Educational Policy

in the National Institute of Educational Planning and Administration, New Delhi.

CONCLUSION

Learner centered education, lifelong learning pursuits, learning from the womb to tomb, personalised learning, personalised teaching, self- learning and such other strategies demand the transformation of the existing education system to make the nation accelerate its process of becoming a lifelong learning nation. A few issues mentioned above are suggestive, however, they do not represent the totality.

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ONLINE TEACHING OF SPANISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO INDIAN LEARNERS DURING COVID19 PANDEMIC - OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

Anshu Shekhar

Covid19 crisis has led to a significant change in the education of foreign languages just as it has done in all areas of education, forcing academic institutions to switch to complete online mode of teaching for the students of all age groups. Since acquisition of second language implies acquisition of set of linguistic skills and knowledge for communication in target language, hence teaching involving acquisition of second language (or, FLT) has always been an area of pedagogy which requires additional instructional strategies, tools with specific methodologies of implementation. Shifting to complete online environment for teaching a foreign language required specific educational responses to deal with several barriers of learning in the new mode to ensure effective learning of language. By means of a web-based questionnaire, this study aims to explore the challenges and opportunities which the online environment implied in teaching Spanish as a foreign language or L2 in multilingual and multicultural context of India. It undertakes a study of different tools and approaches implemented to ensure the impartment of adequate linguistic competence in L2 (Spanish) as well as academic integrity while dealing with the major barriers of technological infrastructure and socio-economic & linguistic unevenness persisting in India. Besides, it also examines what the additional instructional strategies and tools in the complete online environment are required by the Spanish language (L2) teacher for minimizing the phonetic, morphological and syntactic errors by learners during online class.

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has spanned the world since early 2020 and caused traumatic experiences in almost all the countries. The pandemic has threatened the world population for being a disease that does not distinguish by nationality, sex, age, ethnic origin or socioeconomic level. This pandemic, in addition to having a high human cost and financial loss, is a crisis that has seriously affected the learning, physical and mental health and socialization capacities of millions of students.

This pandemic implied direct consequences on learning. When the pandemic reached its peak for the first time, in March last year, the lockdowns across all sectors and closure of educational institutions were the emergency measure that was adopted to maintain the social distancing with which it was expected to stop the infections. According to a United Nations report titled "UNSECO - Education During Covid-19 And Beyond", this closure due to the COVID19 pandemic caused the largest disruption to education systems in history, affecting 1.6 billion students simultaneously in more than 190 countries, which represents approx. 60% of the student population and more than 15% of the world population and forced an abrupt change from the face-to-face classroom education model to a distance education model using online or e-learning mediums as a more appropriate alternative to ensure the continuation of the educational process. Since this drastic change was adopted by academic institutions in a complete sudden session, without having prior and adequate preparation, suitable tools and methodologies, nor the opinion of the students in this regard. This unexpected change in the educational model has impacted the learning in various ways.

The mentioned UNESCO report clearly show the extent of disruption in education sector: at the beginning of June, when important lockdown measures had already been lifted in many countries, nearly a billion learners worldwide were still affected, i.e., 55.2% of the learners enrolled in all education level. Schools and higher education institutions were still closed in 119 countries. In case of India too, significant negative impact is evident in the field of education owing to COVID19. As per the mentioned report, the figure of affected students is more than 32 crores during last 1 year. The statistics show that at primary and secondary level education the figures of affected students are 14 crores and 13 crores respectively (UNESCO 2020).

Coping up with this dramatic change, the educational institutions worldwide made successful efforts for not letting the pandemic halt the teaching and learning process. This continuity of education employing e-learning or online learning method has come across with numerous challenges, which included lack of necessary infrastructure and inadequacy of technological, curricular, and pedagogical tools. Acknowledging the fact, above mentioned study observes, "The shock of the COVID-19 crisis on education has been unprecedented. It has set the clock back on the attainment of international education goals, and disproportionately affected the poorer and most vulnerable. And yet, the education community has proved resilient, laying a groundwork for the rebound" (UNESCO 2020, p. 26).

In light of a crisis that may be prolonged, the complete shift to e-learning from traditional method of teaching (i.e. face to face teaching) as an alternative has constantly been the subject to discussion and studies are being undertaken on its pros and cons. Citing a set of advantages, some educationists view this shift to online learning or e-learning as "a panacea" (Dhawan 2020, p. 7) in present situation of COVID-19 crisis, in which the lectures and instructional contents are delivered by teacher remotely using digital platforms.

Teaching of foreign languages (FL) remains no exception from the difficulties involved in switching to a complete distance education in e-learning mode discussed above, and the crisis rendered the FL teachers with no choice other than repositioning themselves in a mode of teaching that did not use to prevail in their work. This crisis-prompted learning environment turned out to be challenging in many ways for teachers, owing to paucity of time at their disposal to work on session plans, lessons, instructional resources and learning materials in order to ensure efficient language learning and create a positive teaching and learning environment (Egbert 2020, p. 314-319). Though studies show that the shift to complete online environment of FL classroom produced significant learning outcomes as well positive perceptions of students. This paper discusses the outcomes and observations centering on a questionnaire- based study (involving Spanish FL learners and teachers of India) carried out to understand the nitty-gritty of the advantages and challenges of COVID19 crisis-prompted teaching of Spanish as a foreign language to Indian students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning is a process of acquiring new knowledge and skill. For this process to be qualified as learning, instead of a simple temporary retention, it must imply a retention of the knowledge or skill in question that allows its manifestation in a future time. Learning can be defined in a more formal way as "a relatively permanent change in behavior or potential behaviour as a result of direct or indirect experience" (Hulse, Egeth & Deese 1980, p. 302). Since the onset of COVID19 crisis, teaching and learning activities have been taking place remotely (i.e. in distance education mode) using e-learning method of education. It is necessary to understand the duo. Moore and Kearsley define "Distance education" as "planned learning that normally occurs in a different place from teaching and as a result requires special techniques of course design, special instructional techniques, special methods of communication by electronic and other technology, as well as special organizational and administrative arrangements" (Moore & Kearsley 1996, p. 2). Distance education presupposes that there is no physical contact since the student and the teacher are geographically distant; online education or e-learning not necessarily, as classroom work is done using online communication or through a networked computer.

Etymologically, e-learning is electronic learning which refers to the learning process which happens between teachers and students in a totally digital environment where technology and learning techniques make up the educational model, thus achieving a highly interactive environment, at any time and from any place where you find. We understand a totally digital environment as an environment that is not physically real but allows remote interaction between interconnected users through a computer network. In the broadest sense, education that involves any electronic means of communication, including video conferencing and audio conferencing, is known as online education. In a more specific sense, online education means teaching and learning through networked computers.

The present COVID19 crisis-prompted education can be seen characterized with distance education based online mode of learning process which primarily counts on a wide range of digital resources available on internet for instructional purpose and which allows interactivity "within educational context with all its components: material contents, instructors, and other learners; and asking for help within the learning process to reach the maximum information, make meaning, and advance through learning encounters" (Al-Awawdeh & Ma'Moun 2020, p. 11538). Some of the characteristics of this education model are:

- Interactive model: One that allows the student to adopt an active role or role in relation to her homework or work, thus interacting with the s, her teachers and fellow students.

- Accessible: No matter the place, the area or the time you are, you can study anywhere with Internet access.

- Synchronous and asynchronous: Which allows the student to participate in tasks or

activities at the same time as others regardless of where they are.

- • Online resources: It allows access to any amount and variety of material and resources without the need to have them physically, in addition to having them at any time you need it.

Though this substitution of traditional education by ICT and digital platforms based remote learning has made online courses flexible, accessible and affordable for involving negligible or partial cost on transportation, accommodation and lecture delivery in comparison of face-to-face classroom-based learning; though this model is reckoned to be the model which enables "teaching–learning process more student-centered, more innovative, and even more flexible" (Dhawan 2020, p. 7) and "a worthwhile education model in emergency situations (Moorhouse 20, p. 609-611), however a number of tenable arguments have emerged highlighting the shortcomings of the said education model. Few studies claim that this online learning at a distance imply an insurmountable obstacle and deprivation of education opportunity for a significant number of students due to their socioeconomic origin, geographical location or other factors.

Since the paper involves examining an education model for teaching of Spanish as a foreign language, it becomes important to talk about the established framework which deals with teaching and learning of a foreign language (FL) and theories related with online foreign language teaching in order to assess the efficacy and suitability of an education model as well as the accomplishment of desired outcomes of learning FL. Since a decade most of the researchers take their cue for such studies on acquisition of language from the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) which is an internationally recognized framework for describing proficiency in a foreign language. In the 1990s the Council of Europe began to elaborate and in 2001 published the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learn, Teach, Evaluate*, as part of a broader effort to promote collaboration between language teachers from all European countries. It comprises a practical document whose objective is to establish the common elements that are intended to be achieved in the different stages of learning a foreign language. The framework is intended to be used in both teaching and competency assessment since it provides a collection of competency statements that lists the functions one will be able to perform using a foreign language at a given proficiency level.

For foreign language teachers, the CEFR is a guide or base in the programming of the courses that they have to teach, not only from the perspective of curriculum creation but also at a methodological level, creation of didactic units, typology of activities and evaluation of the four linguistic skills. It describes the linguistic capacities, the knowledge mobilized to develop them and the situations and contexts in which a foreign language can be used to communicate. The Common Framework recognizes that it is not only necessary to be able to speak, read and write; but also, to listen and understand. It lays emphasis on developing integrated linguistic skills, with particular attention on listening comprehension and oral production in order to develop adequate communication skills in learners of an

FL. According to this framework, ccommunication skills are those that enable a person to act specifically using linguistic means and which are made up of these sub-competencies: Linguistic skills, Sociolinguistic competences and Pragmatic competences. Our language activities involve the exercise of these communicative linguistic competences within a specific area when processing (in the form of comprehension or expression) one or more texts in order to carry out a task. Therefore, it suggests that an FL teacher should focus on facilitating students' learning for authentic communication with an essential approach of appreciation of the nuances and cultural aspects of the language. Learning a new language must follow an appropriate method in which the learner progresses gradually and logically, progressing from very basic communication levels to others where language management occurs automatically.

Since students' reading habits and preferences have changed over the past decades because of changes in digitalisation of communication (Reimers, Schleicher & Tuominen 2020, p. 3-4), FL pedagogy which comprises an important branch of applied linguistics, consequently has experienced precedence of research studies in the field of online foreign language education particularly. These studies have decoded the complexities of imparting linguistic competences in an online environment and suggested methods of effective foreign language education in an e-learning model. Hampel and Stickler are recognized for their significant contribution in this field. In their paper titled, "New skills for new classrooms" (2005), they propose a 'pyramid of competencies' which an foreign language teacher in an e-learning model require, i.e. understanding of : basic ICT skills; the basics of teaching software such as LMS or CMS; the barriers and advantages inherent in specific teaching applications; how to foster community through such techniques as netiquette and discipline; how to promote online communication through tasks and interactions; how to creatively integrate tools and resources into complex language activities, and exploring one's own unique teaching style.

These essentials aspects of language pedagogy and online foreign language teaching laid out above provide a standard basis to assess an education model for teaching FL in a multicultural context of India, and that's why this study formulates the questionnaire of the survey, taken into account the criteria suggested by the common framework for learning, teaching and evaluation of language and the 'pyramid' of essential interdependent skills desired in a FL teacher for successful online language teaching.

Teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in India (pre-Covid19 pandemic & present time)
The teaching of foreign languages in India is a new field that began gradually with the implementation of the new educational policy of the Education Commission (1966), which highlighted the importance and necessity of the teaching and learning of foreign languages to the society. In the report prepared by the Commission it was stated that knowledge of a foreign language should be essential. It was also observed that due to new foreign policies, international trade strategies, and India's growing bilateral contacts with the rest of the world, due to economic reforms and globalization, 21st century India will

need highly skilled specialists. competence in foreign languages. However, and despite the recommendations and reaffirmations of the Education Commission in favour of the discipline of foreign languages, there was a constant negligence for several years.

In Indian education system, though language learning has been an important part of curriculum in all the education policies introduced by government in past decades however teaching of foreign languages was given importance in the new education policy of the Education Commission (1966) which stated the necessity of the teaching and learning of foreign languages in the country in wake of new foreign policies, international trade strategies, and India's growing bilateral contacts with the rest of the world, due to economic reforms and globalization (Vikash Singh 2009, p. 371). Significant efforts in implementation of this recommendation of teaching of foreign languages were seen in the immediate years after adoption of New Economic Policy (1991) by India (Dhiraj Rai 2017, p.1). Teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in India is believed to begin in 1958 when School of Foreign Languages (SFL) of Ministry of Defence introduced Spanish language course for which the target learners were defence personnel and employees of Ministry of external affairs (Gaurav & Shilpi 2014, p.14). Subsequently the major public universities like Jawaharlal Nehru University, University of Delhi and CIEFL introduced short-term courses in 1970s to cater the needs of the tourism sector. The era of liberalization in 1990s, IT boom and consequent outsourcing of projects of Europe & US to India gave a major boost to Spanish language education in India. In order to address the gap of demand and supply of Spanish language professionals, a number of private language academies started offering Spanish language courses which included institutions like Instituto Cervantes (Language and culture academy of Govt. of Spain), Instituto Hispania, Ramkrishna Mission, Alhambra Institute, Bhartiya Vidya Bhawan (Gaurav & Shilpi 2014). In school education in India, Spanish as a third language or FL was introduced later than French and German. offering Spanish responding to the changed economic scenario of the time and increasing popularity of Spanish language across the globe. Initially (since 2000) few dozens of prestigious schools of CBSE and ICSE curriculum started Spanish language as a subject at secondary level. In past decade a good number of schools of IB (International Baccalaureate) and IGCSE thrived in different parts of country which have been offering Spanish as one of the major foreign language subjects, apart from French, German, Chinese and Japanese. Owing to globalisation and increased consumption and interest in Hispanic culture and music, we see the change in the scenario of language learning in the country and in last two decades "Spanish has become the most sought-after language in IB and IGCSE curricula and trickled down towards the national curricula" (Subhash 2020). At present more than 28 public and private universities of the country offer short-term and full-fledged undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Spanish language (Priy 2008, p. 8-9). Recently the govt. of India has introduced the three-language policy in NEP 2020 which has provided impetus to foreign language learning in the country.

When it comes to teaching of Spanish language to Indian learners, it entails several challenges and peculiarities due to its multilingual and multicultural existence. The diversity of language

and culture, geographical and socio-economic differences imply great challenges in way of imparting effective learning of a foreign language. For a Spanish teacher, it becomes difficult to apply a common or uniform teaching methodology or didactic approach for teaching all the students since their varied cultural and linguistic status emerges as a major barrier.

In light of COVID19 pandemic, like any other country India too experienced substantial disruption in education and has shifted to a complete online learning at a distance since March, 2020. While e-learning had been growing rapidly in recent years, India is now experiencing a boom in e-learning since the pandemic emerged. As per the article titled "Adoption of E-Learning during Lockdown in India"(2021), 90% of schools reported use of pedagogic software tools., 72% used live streaming videos, 40% provided links or URLs to access online materials and 68% conducted meetings and academic-intellectual activities and sessions on virtual platforms. Foreign language education, in particular, is impacted in various ways in the country owing to a sudden shift to complete online or digital medium based learning and its experience has thrown up some issues to discuss.

Teaching of Spanish language as a FL in schools, colleges, and foreign language institutions has been taking place using these online synchronous and asynchronous learning environments as the primary mode of classes, which entailed several benefits as well as a set of new difficulties for teachers in terms of preparation and delivery of lessons, instructional resources and learning materials. Most of these institutions have been using common learning platforms like Microsoft Teams, Google Meet or Google classroom for delivery of lectures and learning materials to the students. However, re-designing their institutional LMS (Learning Management System) suiting to the needs of complete online teaching of Spanish for learners emerged as be a major task for all the Spanish course offering schools and institutions, since in the Pre-Covid19 times the online learning (or e-learning) used to be an additional tool of accessing resources and practice of Spanish language exercises apart from classroom teaching. During pandemic time the changed scenario forced the institutions to provide all teaching support and resources remotely in an online mode. For Spanish language learners, particularly *ePgpathshala* turned out to be a remarkable support for e-learning. *ePgpathshala* is an online portal of Govt. of India which contains high quality, curriculum-based interactive content of different subjects across all disciplines, including Spanish.

In present crisis-prompted education system, though it is a fact that e-learning has overridden geographical challenges and provided opportunities for learners to not just access information but also to interact and collaborate (White 2006, p. 247-264) but at the same time it requires adequate technological support and both teacher and student to be tech savvy and digitally prepared. Reimers et al (2020 p.2) point out that, "The period has been one of adaptive and transformative challenges, triggered by the abrupt shift to distance education, the lack of short- and long-term anticipation, the need for appropriate technical infrastructure, the need for both academics and students to have good digital literacy skills and for the former to be able to implement distance learning pedagogies" (2020, p. 2).

METHODOLGY

A questionnaire-based online survey has been conducted to collect the data from different institutions in India offering Spanish language course. A total of 96 students and 21 teachers of Spanish language participated in the survey, belonging to different levels of FL education. For the sake of continuance of teaching and learning activities, institutions in India started conducting online classes remotely. This abrupt changeover in education model paved way for new opportunities as well as raised several challenges for both teachers and students of Spanish FL. This web-based survey consisted of questions relating to the lectures, study materials, tools and exercises for practice of the four linguistic skills and overall learning experience of the students of Spanish language as well as questions relating to the delivery of lessons, designing of course materials, modules and assessment of learning and overall teaching experience of the Spanish teachers.

Subsequent to submission of questionnaire, 54 % of the total participants joined a virtual meeting (a follow-up interview) to discuss in detail about their learning or teaching experiences, sharing their views on present mode of e-learning and what the advantages or challenges of this education model they have come across with. The Spanish language teachers were asked to explain the issues which they faced due to sudden changeover in the teaching methodology and what instructing strategies and tools and innovative practices they made use of in order to ensure effective and successful continuance of Spanish language classes online.

RESULTS

Most prevalent category of comments were related with online course content and activities. Many students found the Spanish language content given to them difficult to learn and more time-consuming in online environment.

- Some students added that though e-learning promotes learning by students at their own pace however constant exposure to FL content and activities with less intervention of instructor leads to saturation of understanding and practice after certain extent, which may cause loss of motivation and confidence in learners.

- Some comments pointed out the need of designing 'real-world' communicative activities instead of monotonous reading materials, wherein the students can practice their use of Spanish language.

- Most of the teachers find it difficult to substitute the classroom learning content and activities completely with online content and activities, citing various limitations.

Second most prevalent category of responses pointed out to the issue of lack of instructor-student and peer-peer interactions. Many students stated that they were having lesser opportunities of individual interaction with teacher to learn these competencies than in face-to-face classroom teaching.

- In their opinion, the present mode of learning involved more reading and self-

teaching than the usual mode of learning. They expressed the need of more interaction with the instructor for language learning activities. According to them, lack of significant interactivity decouples student participation.

- There are comments of some students which state that lack of interaction impact negatively to listening and oral practices of Spanish language, resulting in poor language learning. In face-to-face classroom teaching, students get opportunity to indulge themselves in adequate communication (speaking and listening with peers in target language) whereas the remote e-learning has deprived them of such activities.

- There were also some responses which found it suitable to have adequate opportunity to learn and practice on one's own the language using digital resources given by teacher and interaction with teacher during online class should be used for clearing doubts and errors of listening and reading comprehension sort of exercises.

- Most of the Spanish FL teachers admit that learning of language can best be learned through interaction and live activity-based tasks, which gets compromised to a considerable extent in online classes.

- Teachers respond to this issue citing time limitation to converse in a synchronous session, though they feel that this shortcoming causes compromise on the component of oral competence.

- Most of the Spanish teachers admitted the problem of delayed feedback in remote mode of online-learning and emphasised on the need of adequate synchronous and asynchronous sessions on corrections of oral and listening practice exercises for better impartment of linguistic competencies in Spanish language learners.

Third most prevalent category of responses comprised of classroom management and teacher's knowledge of use of technology and digital resources. Many students stated it to be a crucial factor in learning of Spanish language since entire teaching and learning activity is taking place on digital medium only.

- Most of the students found their Spanish language teacher well-prepared for this sudden changeover to complete online environment and well-familiarised with ICT tools to be implemented during lectures.

- Though there was a miniscule of responses highlighting the need of training of their Spanish FL instructor for effective classroom management.

- Teachers' comments comprise of difficulties in monitoring student's language activity and participation during synchronous lecture sessions and technological limitation of not being able to respond to more than few queries during lectures.

The fourth most prevalent category of responses of Spanish language students dealt with the issue of socio-economic disparities and other non-academic and non-technological issues (like inability to afford data cost and paid learning materials, lack of suitable space

at home for uninterrupted e-learning etc.) which caused interruption in learning or even getting deprived of learning opportunities in many cases.

- ▪ Almost 97% of the teachers acknowledged the above-mentioned issues as significant barriers in ensuring smooth learning by all their students and most of them suggested a mechanism of financial support and other necessary support by government.

The fifth most prevalent category of responses dealt with uneven distribution of listening, reading and spoken lectures and activities in ongoing teaching of Spanish language in e-learning mode in their institution, and suggested designing of lesson plans with adequate opportunity of practice of all four language skills.

- ▪ On this issue, 47% of the teachers expressed their satisfaction over proportion of distribution of learning and practice material for speaking, listening, reading and writing, whereas remaining 53% of Spanish teachers cited limitation of time and content for ensuring equal weightage to all four language competence skills.

Distraction & short-attention span turned out to be another prevalent important category of responses. The virtuality of classes has exposed students to a variety of distractors, ranging from being in the comfort of their homes to simultaneously doing other activities, to totally losing focus during class sessions. 87% of the students in the survey accepted performing various tasks while attending their online classes. Though, 11 students also mentioned using Spanish language learning apps like *Duolinguo*, *Memrise*, *FluentU* etc. simultaneously during lectures for additional learning resources. The Spanish language teachers who were part of this study also revealed that students had a tendency to listen to music, browse social networks, and send text messages during their online courses, and these distractions and decrease in attention of students have posed a serious challenge, and it did impact significantly student's performance (as admitted by 96% of the Spanish teachers).

Besides above-mentioned categories of responses, also there were comments of students stating lack of motivation and enthusiasm in participation in Spanish language learning activities due to relatively more exposure to online asynchronous learning environment and more digital interactivity with lesser or sometimes negligible interaction to humans. Most of the teachers acknowledge persistence of this issue of lack of essential student characteristics and 79% of the Spanish teachers stated having introduced several innovative measures like creating several WhatsApp groups of 5-6 students for entire class for the purpose of formal as well as informal chats and telephonic conversations, involving students in audio and video making activities in a collaborative way while providing asynchronous language activities etc.

DISCUSSION

The ongoing Covid19 pandemic has compelled all the countries to switching over to a teaching model which is driven by technology, making virtual classes a new normal and this model of education is likely to remain in use for longer time. The survey reveals how the stakeholders of this model of education, i.e. the students and teachers view it and what measure are needed to be taken in order to improve the learning experience.

Planning an online class at a distance greater amount of effort and time and it becomes challenging for Spanish language teachers to ensure adequate teacher – student interaction and adequate oral communication. Despite of providing sufficient learning materials and practice activities, online language classes ask for extraordinary availability of teacher for synchronous sessions, explanation and doubt-clearing sessions which makes teaching cumbersome for foreign language teachers.

The present crisis-prompted distance based online learning mode emerges as a necessity for Spanish and foreign language teachers to develop new e-teaching skills, combining and adapting to variety of roles i.e. facilitator of learning, designer of imaginative and innovative learning contents and well-versed and updated with new technologies in the field of foreign language pedagogy.

Since technology constitutes a significant opportunity to innovate as well as customize learning of language learners in the e-learning mode of education, the institutions in India can make effort to shape and design learning of Spanish language by the student in an experiential learning by making use of visual aids like audios, videos and other multimedia materials which allow better retention and add fun element, thus making the learning in an exciting and personalized experience. The flexibility element constitutes a great advantage of remotely functioning online-learning wherein access the online class and participate in learning activities. It provides a great opportunity to Spanish language teachers to facilitate exchange of ideas, opinions, practices, experiences. collective enrichment of the learning process without boundaries.

Survey shows that there is an upsurge in successful implementation of ICT tools by Spanish language institutions in India and a significant progress is seen in designing the Learning Management System (LMS) by institution in an effort to offer better experience of online language learning. The present education model has emerged as an enormous opportunity to improve learning materials and resources and more importantly, to facilitate interactive teaching and learning activity in a more collaborative environment like webinars, virtual discussion sessions and forums, e-conferences etc.

The findings of survey show that in spite of having advantages of technology and ICT based resources in e-learning environment, the teacher variable is the primary cause of variation in level of satisfaction of students and therefore lower student perceptions can be addressed by working on methodology and style of teaching and increased collaboration. In the online learning system, the role and responsibilities of a foreign language teacher

becomes manifold. The FL teacher is expected to play key role in facilitating efficient language learning by designing learner-centred content and practice materials in order to ensure development of essential linguistic competences. The language teachers face challenge of choosing appropriate educational aids which can allow interactive learning by engaging students as contributors in such learning activities which is otherwise difficult due to constant distraction of students across digital devices.

In addition to all above discussed advantages, opportunities and challenges related to online teaching of Spanish as a foreign language in India in the present e-learning environment, the study makes a significant observation that at one side this crisis-prompted online learning helps in building the sense of responsibility for self-development and self-discipline among the students, besides offering possibility of accessing the course whenever they want and facilitating the learning process by using more engaging techniques, however on the another side it accentuates the importance of certain aspects of traditional face-to-face teaching which are felt needed to be incorporated in the present emergency education model in order to make learning meaningful and to achieve desired learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION
Since language learning involves primarily involves acquisition of communicative linguistic competence in the target language, most of the questions of the survey intended to extract responses on the amount of time and resources and guidance were offered to students for written expression and comprehension, aural comprehension and oral expression in e-learning and the difficulties faced by them therein. This study finds that the Spanish language teachers in India quickly adapted to the new learning environment and re-designed their instructional tools within a short time, however several technological factors (poor internet connectivity, interrupted power supply) as well as non-technological factors (adequate planning and preparation of learning goals and contents; e-teaching skills; digital literacy of Spanish language learners, etc.) and non-academic factors (socio-economic gap etc.) comprised major challenges in impartment of teaching of Spanish in e-learning during the period of pandemic.

It seems that technology is no longer a limiting factor, it is FL teacher's ability to reconsider teaching and take full advantage of the tools and media that the technology provides, the one that will play a fundamental role in the future of the teaching foreign languages (in our case Spanish). For Spanish language teachers who have been involved in the creation of materials, programs, implementation of new approaches, etc. to facilitate the transformed mode of learning during the pandemic, this online medium gives them certain advantages and comfort, but as teachers of FL they need to understand and reflect on its possibilities, and the disadvantages and benefits of different technology options. Though the digital technologies based new distant learning mode of education appeals above all to creativity in pedagogical objectives and methods of teaching / learning languages. We should not, however, forget or let technology guide the methodology, although we do have to be attentive to the new doors that the digital world opens.

However, it now seems unthinkable - at least for many - that computer can replace human beings in a discipline that is dedicated to human communication with all its cultural and linguistic diversity. Technology undoubtedly has a place in the teaching of foreign languages. It is true that technology can improve the quality of the learning environment by offering the student a variety of stimulating media and an autonomous learning center and it is useful to support and enhance the learning process, but it still remains a fact that the technology could not replace human interaction. And therefore, the present remotely functioning online learning of foreign languages can neither entirely replace nor undervalue certain essential features of blended and traditional methods of teaching.

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CURRENT TRENDS AND PROMISING PRACTICES IN TEACHER LEARNING: A SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS FROM RECENT INTERNATIONAL SURVEYS

Milosh Raykov

"If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

[African proverb]

The changing world of work and knowledge-based economy demands an increased level of knowledge and skills. Teacher work is also affected by the changing nature of work, and this study that is based on a secondary data analysis of several international surveys examines some of the issues in the domain of teachers' work-related learning. Analysis of the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) further shows that a vast majority of teachers are frequently involved in informal dialogue with their colleagues and most of them believe that it is important for their CPD. Canadian Work and Lifelong Learning survey also demonstrate that, in addition to learning at work, a large number of teachers participate in informal learning. The analysis of the data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies indicates that a large number, more than two-third of teachers participation in various forms of learning but a significant number, more than a third of them experience unmet needs for education. In sum, the study demonstrates that teachers' intensively participation in lifelong learning and some specific forms of CPD play a highly significant role in modern society as a response to globalization and technological changes since teacher work is also affected by the changing nature of work and learning. The available data and the review of the literature also demonstrate a discrepancy between teacher preferences and the dominant forms of CPD as well as a lack of relevant applied studies and a need for organization of the viable and innovative forms of learning that can meet teachers' needs and professional interests.

INTRODUCTION

The globalized world of work and knowledge-based economy demands an increased level of knowledge and skills (Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, 1999). The increased complexity of work requires a higher level of skills and knowledge from all employees, and educational planners are responding to this challenge through the promotion and organization of various forms of lifelong learning, as well as through mandatory participation in CPD activities in many occupations.

In the global context marked by increasingly complex and multidimensional requirements at work (OECD, 2013; Statistics Canada, 2013), many studies highlight the importance of core academic skills, as well as 'soft skills' and continuous participation in lifelong learning and CPD. Policy studies emphasize that regular monitoring of participation in learning and CPD are vital for increasing involvement in the various forms of adult learning (Eurostat, 2015; OECD, 2014; UNDP, 2014). A significant number of studies also

demonstrate a growing demand for, and motivation to obtain, higher levels of education. In many countries, however, this kind of data is not available (Bowlby & McMullen, 2002; Krahn & Taylor, 2005; Livingstone & Raykov, 2013).

There is general agreement that lifelong learning plays a highly significant role in modern society as a response to globalization and technological changes. Policy makers and human resource theorists emphasize its importance in increasing national competitiveness, organizational productivity, individual income and quality of life (CCL, 2010). Research concerning participation in lifelong learning demonstrates that large numbers of employees are engaged in formal education (OECD, 2015), while a significantly greater number engage in informal work-related learning (Livingstone & Raykov, 2013; Rubenson, 2006; Rubenson, Desjardin & Yoon, 2007).

Teacher work is also affected by the changing nature of work and learning and increasing demands for knowledge and skills (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). In addition to teacher participation in the various forms of CPD, teachers increasingly participate in some of the networks of teachers developed specifically for the professional development of teachers. According to Abbott (2014), a professional learning community (PLC) is "a group of educators that meets regularly, shares expertise, and works collaboratively to improve teaching skills and the academic performance of students." Recent large-scale studies demonstrate an increasing rate of teacher participation in some forms of PLC as well as extensive involvement in various forms of lifelong learning.

RESEARCH PROBLEM
Several international studies (e.g. European Commission, 2015; OECD, 2016) demonstrate consistently high levels of participation of adults in various forms of lifelong learning. However, there is also an apparent lack of data on the key aspects of adult learning demonstrated in many of the comparative studies of adult education (e.g. European Commission, 2014). Also, most of these studies are focused on the previous participation and engagement in lifelong learning during a relatively short period, usually four weeks to one year, preceding a particular study. This retroactive orientation at the level of participation in lifelong learning does not provide sufficient and adequate evidence for educational policy and practice that aim to widen access to educational opportunities and raise citizen participation in lifelong learning. The same case is evident in the domain of teacher learning and CPD.

OBJECTIVES
Based on a comparative analysis of adult education and lifelong learning in countries with highly developed systems of adult education, this study examines teacher participation in different forms of continuous learning as well as their involvement in some particular forms of CPD based on the the existing data related to adult education (Statistics Canada, 2013; OECD, 2013; Livingstone & Raykov, 2012) and teacher training (OECD, 2009). Taking into account the identified knowledge gaps and inconsistencies related to the

evaluation of participation in lifelong learning, and the issues identified through the studies of international data regarding unmet demand for education (Livingstone & Raykov, 2013), this study addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent do teachers participate in various forms of CPD?

2. What content and forms of lifelong learning do teachers prefer and what do they perceive as useful for their CPD?

3. To what extent are teachers interested and ready to involve in different forms of lifelong learning and CPD?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC) that is based on responses from more than 150,000 participants from 24 countries indicates that more than half of teaching professionals (56%) regularly participate in some forms of job-related training (Statistics Canada, 2013; OECD, 2013). The same study demonstrates that most of the teachers (80%) learn for job-related reasons, slightly more than the members of other occupational groups (67%). The same study also shows (Figure 1) that a large number, seven out of ten (70%), of teachers learn-by-doing through daily teaching practice.
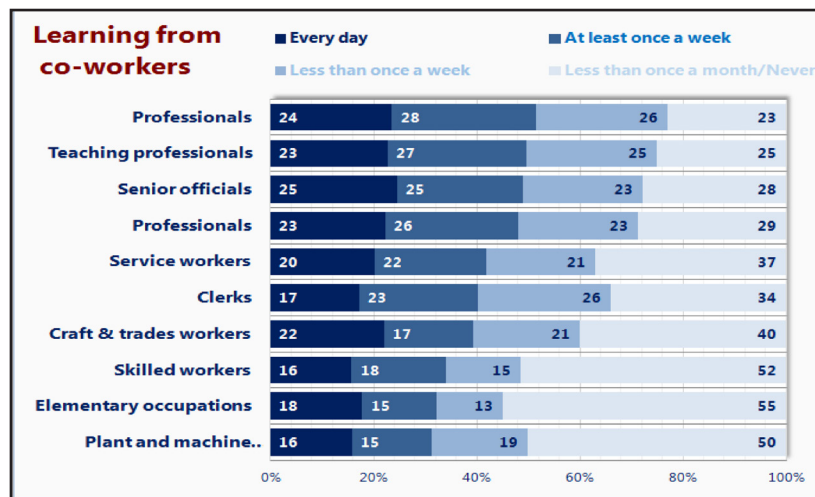
Figure 1

Teachers and Individual Learning (Learning-by-doing)
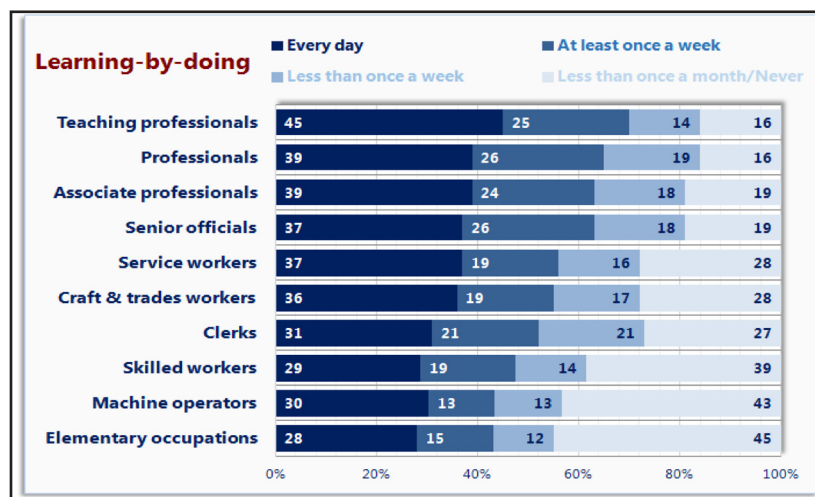
The analysis also demonstrates (Figure 2) that approximately half of all teachers (50%) learn from their co-workers or supervisors every day or several times during a week.

Figure 2:
Teachers' Participation in Collaborative Learning
(Learning from co-workers or supervisors)

As Figure 3 shows, a large number of teachers who participated in the PIAAC study (57%) also demonstrate a high level of readiness for learning. However, the Work and Lifelong Learning Surveys shows that despite such frequent participation in various forms of learning, a significant number (39%) of teachers and other employees (25%) experience unmet needs for education.

Figure 3:
Teachers' Readiness to Learn
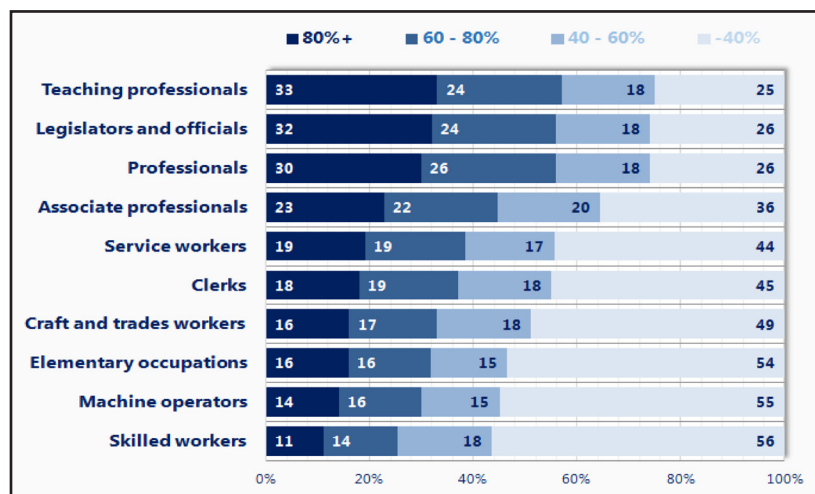
The OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) which included 72,190 participants from 24 countries, was analyzed to determine the most frequent forms of learning and teachers' opinions about the efficiency of the particular forms of continuing professional development (CPD).

This study shows (Figure 4) that a significant number of teachers participate in some individual and collaborative forms of CPD, formally organized courses or workshops as part of their CPD, and the overall level of participation is very high (81%). As well, teachers in the OECD countries frequently participate in education conferences or seminars (51%), individual or collaborative research (47%), mentoring and/or peer observation and coaching , as part of a formal school arrangement (40%), qualification programme (28%) and observation visits to other schools (27%).

Figure 4
**Teacher Participation in Various Forms of CPD**
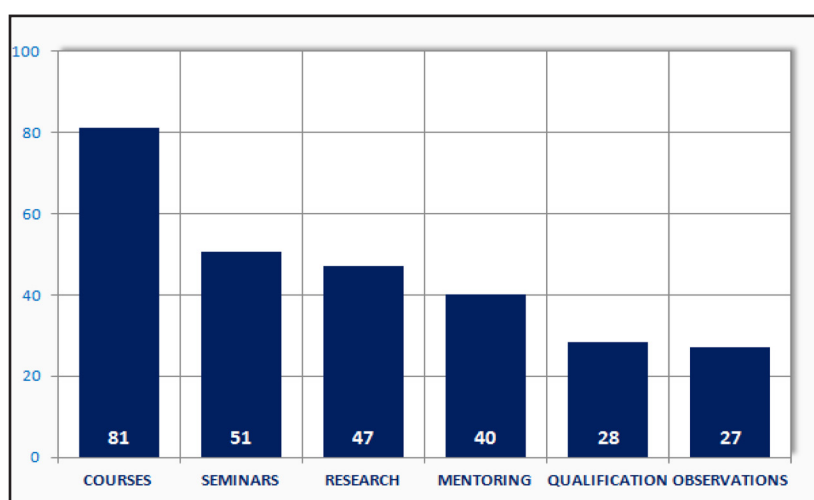
Despite the fact that teachers in the OECD countries are less frequently enrolled in degree programs and different forms of collaborative research, they highly value these types of CPD (Figure 5). The majority of teachers, (95%), highly value qualification programs and participation in collaborative research (90%) and believe that they have a substantial impact on their professional development. Also, a vast majority of teachers (92%) are frequently involved in informal dialogue with their colleagues to improve their teaching, and most of them (84%) believe that it is important for their CPD.

A smaller but a considerable number of teachers recognize observation visits to other schools (70%) and mentoring and/or peer observation (68%) as is forms of CPD with a substantial impact on their professional development. Unfortunatelly, the most common forms of CPD only a relatively small number of teachers perceive as forms of CPD with

a significant impact on their teaching practice. Participation in conferences or seminars (11%) and workshops (11%) are rarely regarded as forms of CPD with very strong effect on but almost two-third (63%) of teachers believe that this form of CPD moderately influences their professional development.

Figure 5
Perceived Impact of CPD
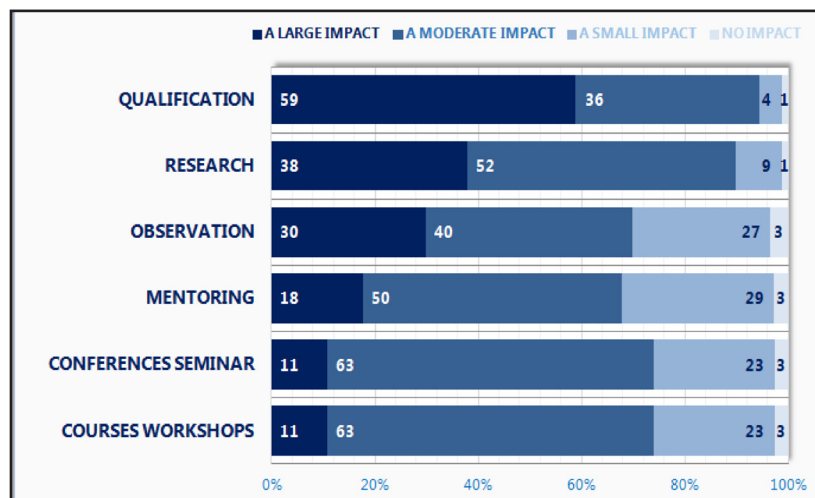
Other international studies such as Work and Lifelong Learning Survey (Livingstone & Raykov, 2012) demonstrate that, in addition to learning at work, a large number of teachers participate in informal learning related to their employment. For example, the Canadian Work and Lifelong Learning Survey demonstrate that almost two-thirds of teachers (63%) and approximately half of other employees (53%) participate in some form of informal learning. The study also shows that nearly one-third (34%) of teachers often seeks advice from someone knowledgeable to develop their job-related skills. A component of this survey focused on teacher learning demonstrates that the majority of teachers were involved in formally organized courses during the previous year; 90% of them. Most of the formally organized courses (82%) were related to their work. Regarding the preferred forms of lifelong learning, this study demonstrates that more than a quarter (29%) of teachers consult some experts, 20% cooperate with a specially organized group of learners, while more than half (52%) ask their friends.

The primary objective of an additional mixed methods study (Mayo, Borg & Raykov, 2016) was to provide relevant and reliable information necessary for evidence-based decision making related to supporting teacher wider participation in different forms of lifelong learning and CPD. In addition to the analysis of the large-scale surveys, this study also includes a small pilot study of adult learners from Malta interviewed by phone in

order to collect some preliminary data related to their participation in a wide variety of different forms of lifelong learning. The semi-structured interview was based on the Work and Lifelong Learning WALL (Livingstone & Raykov, 2012) and PIAAC (OECD, 2013) surveys. The survey was converted into an online form that was used as a base for computer-assisted telephone interviews. The participants were randomly selected from publicly available phonebooks, and the study was approved by the institutional ethics review board. This component of the study included 28 participants who agreed to be interviewed or to take the online survey. Thematic qualitative analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2009) with the application of software for computer-assisted qualitative data analysis was used to explore the data from collected through the interviews.

Most of the participants were employed, but only a few were involved or intended to continue their formal education as students in an educational institution. A significant number of participants in this pilot study reported that they were taking different forms of accredited courses on a part-time basis. Regarding informal and non-formal, the majority of participants mentioned that they extensively participate in various forms of learning and acquire a broad range of work-related knowledge and skills through their paid work, work at home as well as through their participation in voluntary activities.

Participants with higher education attainment mentioned that they would feel "out-dated" if they do not take additional courses and many other mentioned that their profession requires continuing professional development (CPD). Employers often organize courses for their employees, and this support is perceived as very convenient for CPD participants because of the many barriers to the participation in the various learning activities and CPD. It was also evident that the participants who use computers and the online forms of learning have more opportunities for their professional development and learning.

Also, more than half of the interviewed participants reported their involvement in different forms of employment-related informal learning. Most of them indicated their participation in learning about new job-related tasks, computers, and new equipment. Also, a significant number, almost half of the participants, stated that they learn about employment conditions, health, and safety. Regarding the sources of informal learning, most participants indicated the Internet and family members. A relatively small number of participants reported learning from books. It is interesting to note that several participants mention that they learn by using audiovisual sources from the Internet as it is flexible and allows them to learn at a time that is convenient for them. A much smaller number of participants reported that their primary source of informal learning is television and radio programs.

The interviews also identified a significant number of participants who wanted to participate in formal or non-formal training but, due to various reasons, were not able to do this. The central theme that emerged from the interviews was that most of the participants were interested in participation in both, formal and non-formal lifelong learning related to their work and CPD, but several participants indicated that they face various barriers to engaging

in adult education. Similar to the results from the previous studies (Livingstone, Raykov & Stowe, 2001), the most common obstacles to participation in adult education were work-related duties, family obligations and the cost of training. Some of those who were not able to participate also mentioned a heavy workload.

Since one of the major barriers to participation in adult education for the majority of participants is their work schedule, it is evident that employers' support and the flexible schedule of adult education courses are likely to facilitate wider participation in adult education. Considering the findings from our previous studies (Livingstone, Raykov & Turner, 2005; Raykov & Livingstone, 2014; Livingstone & Raykov, 2006), it would be expected that measures aimed at improving and supporting lifelong learning could have broad effects on general levels of participation. The preferred forms of informal learning and the influence that membership in professional and trade organizations has on the degree of participation in work-related informal learning indicate some of the ways in which work-related learning can be more widely implemented.

Regarding the question concerning the frequency of learning from co-workers or supervisors, more than half of the participants mentioned that they learn from colleagues every day or at least once a week. A significantly smaller number of participants, approximately one third, stated that they rarely or never learn from their co-workers or supervisors. For some participants "learning from their supervisors and co-workers" was perceived as a "normal" part of daily routine. The pattern of responses from the interviews is, despite the small sample, similar to the results obtained through some of the large-scale surveys such as PIAAC (OECD, 2013). A very similar pattern of participation was identified with regard to learning-by-doing. The frequency of the intensive, daily learning-by-doing is in contrast with the results obtained through official surveys and indicates that there is a need for the collection of a larger set of indicators that can provide a comprehensive overview of participation in different forms of adult education.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In sum, results from the analysis of the recent international studies demonstrate substantial variations regarding involvement in different forms of lifelong learning and CPD among the various countries as well as variations in the level of participation of different social groups. The variability of involvement requires constant monitoring as well as in-depth studies focused on challenges unique to each society. At the current stage, there is an apparent lack of evidence regarding the profile of participants and non-participants in different forms of adult education and CPD. Future research studies will need to focus on the exploration of this issue. Results from this study demonstrate that collaboration, networks, and partnerships play a significant role in the CPD of teachers. The review of the literature and the available data sources shows a lack of relevant applied studies and demonstrate a need for organization of the viable forms of CPD that can meet professional interests and needs of teachers.

Overall, the study demonstrates that teachers' intensively participation in lifelong learning and some specific forms of CPD play a highly significant role in modern society as a response to globalization and technological changes since teacher work is also affected by the changing nature of work and learning. Teachers participate in many various forms of continuous professional development (CPD), and they increasingly participate in different forms of collaborative learning and professional development that significantly contribute to their professional development and efficient work.

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IN THE BACKDROP OF NEP 2020……!

BILINGUAL CHILDREN IN THE CLASSROOM: BLISS OR MISERY?

Prema K. S. Rao

The long-awaited NEP 2020 has received mixed responses from educators and the public for a few fundamental principles enunciated in the policy. The promotion of multilingualism and the power of language in teaching is one such principle that has raised debates on satisfactory implementation, particularly for the young bilingual children in a classroom. With consideration to the multilingual and multicultural diversity in India, this fundamental principle is discussed in this article drawing support from the author's research. Two major issues related to the principle, language proficiency of teachers and communication as a tool to interact with bilingual learners is emphasized in this perspective article. The readers are encouraged to introspect on the notion of blissfulness or misery of having bilingual children in a classroom. Extensive investigation on this theme is also warranted.

The new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, adapted on 29th July 2020, aims to universalize education. The new education policy is an effort to integrate the traditional and modern education systems, the vision being an India-centric education system with the provision of quality education and equitable access to all students in a sustainable manner. The NEP lays particular emphasis on the development of the creative potential of learners by developing the 'foundational capacities 'of literacy and numeracy and 'higher-order' cognitive capacities, such as critical thinking and problem-solving in addition to social, ethical, and emotional capacities and dispositions. To achieve these, one of the fundamental principles of the NEP 2020 is 'Promotion of Multilingualism and the Power of Language in learning and teaching' (https://www.education.gov.in). This principle has raised debates particularly on the issue of inclusion of native languages in the NEP 2020 which is the crux of this paper. Therefore, an attempt is made to examine the power of multilingualism, particularly in early childhood education keeping in view the linguistic diversity in India. Research studies including the author's work are cited to discuss the issue of the language of education. However, before moving on to the details of the studies, it becomes necessary to offer clarity for a few terminologies applicable to the principle of multilingualism although they are generally considered commonplace vocabulary. Terminological clarification helps to eliminate preconceived notions on the issue of the specific principle of NEP 2020 addressed in this paper.

a) Bilingualism
It is widely accepted that bilingualism is a sociolinguistic phenomenon. 'Bilingualism' refers to being proficient, to varying degrees, in two languages (Edwards, 2013). Based on how the languages are learned Weinrich, as early as 1953, proposed three types of bilingualism: Compound bilingualism (when a child learns two languages in the same environment and acquires one concept with two verbal expressions); Coordinate bilingualism (when a second language, L2, is learned in a different environment with the mediation of the

first language, L1); and, Sub-ordinate bilingualism (when a child learns a second language but fails to understand it without the help of the first language unless (s)he translates the words in the second language to his/her first (language, L1, that is dominant). A distinction between simultaneous bilingualism (L1 and L2 learned about the same time) that parallels compound bilingualism; early sequential bilingualism (L1 learned first and L2 relatively early in childhood) and, late sequential bilingualism (from adolescence onwards) which is fairly equivalent to coordinate and subordinate bilingualism has been proposed by Bialystok and Hakuta (1994). In general, when a language is learned after the first or the native language is relatively well established, the term 'second language' is used. A few other terms to be considered to gain clarity are 'Biliterates' (bilinguals and second language learners who develop literacy in two languages, Perez, 2004); 'English Language Learners' (ELLs, referred to as children who are native speakers of a particular language but learn to read and write the English language) or 'English as Second Language' learners (ESL's). These terminologies have theoretical appeal to classify bilinguals but, fixed categorical terms given by a few bilingual theorists may sound absurd considering the heterogeneity in the bilingual population across diverse cultures in India (Pattanayak, 2003).

b) Bilingual Education
Bilingual education refers to teaching academic content in two languages, a native and secondary language with varying amounts of each language used under the program model. As a result, two languages are learned in educational settings. Bilingual education programs are designed to enable learners in the classroom (often English Language Learners) to become competent in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in the English language through the development of literacy and academic skills in the primary language as well as in English (or the language of instruction as per the educational program). Native/regional language of the child, medium of instruction, linguistic structure, and script features of the two languages (Cazden & Snow, 1990) are a few variables to be considered in such programs. In India, the Three Language Formula (TLF: Subhash, 2013) stipulated in the educational policy wherein English language (with alphabetic script) is taught along with two other Indian languages (with alpha syllabic script) requires children to develop an additional set of skills (for example, phonemic skills) to learn reading and writing in English that may not be necessary to learn alpha syllabic scripts of Indian languages.

Compounded with the above is the multiplicity of languages in the societal context. The majority of children in India are bilinguals or multilinguals for whom often the home language may not be the school language. Also, a few languages are written in scripts borrowed from other languages as they do not have scripts. Given such complexities existing in our societal and educational system, for many decades the linguistic and cultural diversities in India have been treated as 'problem' rather than an 'asset' (Prema Rao, Shanbal & Khurana, 2010) for strategizing educational plans in our country. This perspective appears to be deeply rooted in the teachers as they directly interact with the bilingual learners in the classroom.

c) Bilingual Teachers

Teachers who are required to deliver classroom lessons in two languages, the native language of the learner as well as in English (if learners are in an ESL group) are generally called bilingual teachers. These teachers are posed with the challenge to communicate effectively with the bilingual learners to convey concepts related to education. There is a strong conviction among the educational fraternity that the model and environment provided by the teachers set the right ground for the acquisition of a second language by children. Hence, the proficiency of teachers in the second language is viewed as an important component in the learning of a second language by children in the school context. This idea is also backed up by research suggesting language competence as the most rated essential characteristic of a good teacher (Lange, l990). Since classroom practices and proficiency in the language of instruction of teachers are considered to be directly related to the performance of children, the NEP 2020 announced the formulation of the National Professional Standards for Teachers (NPST) by the year 2022. NPST defines the work of teachers by stating explicit elements of high-quality, effective teaching to enhance educational outcomes. It is constituted to govern the teaching profession besides providing opportunities for personal and professional development including competence in the use of language (https://www. ncte.gov.in). There are several studies on teachers, particularly focusing on their language proficiency as an essential component of professional development that fall in line with the NEP's proposal for NPST.

STUDIES ON THE LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY OF TEACHERS

The notion that the proficiency of teachers in the language of instruction influences children's language acquisition, the second language, in particular, has been investigated in many studies conducted by Western countries. As early as 1994, Richards and Lockhart stated that a teacher should talk about a learner's level of comprehension so that the learner would be able to understand what the teacher is saying. Teachers' limited L2 knowledge and poor usage are likely to be transferred to the learners as teachers offer the right models for young children especially to learn L2. Pretorious (2002) attributed poor L2 learning in children to poor language teaching by teachers who themselves are less proficient in the English language. Nel and Muller (2010) by evaluating the errors exhibited by students of less proficient teachers reported that teachers are responsible for the inadequate language input due to their poor proficiency in L2. In general majority of these studies suggest that limited L2 proficiency in teachers has a negative impact on children's L2 acquisition. In addition, the studies also point out that proficiency in the language of instruction has a significant impact on teachers' confidence and self-esteem particularly the Non-Native English Speaking (NNES) Teachers.

The studies in India examining the issue of bi/multilingual teachers imparting education to children who are 'native speakers' of 'non-native language' of teachers are scanty although the thrust of educational policy is on bi/multilingual children. In the Indian context, it is well known that the formulation and implementation of language policies in education have always been a challenge. While in the NPE (1986) the Three Language Formula (TLF)

has been recommended to provide education in regional language, English and Hindi in non-Hindi states, and/or any other modern Indian language in Hindi speaking states, the medium of instruction, however, differs at different levels of education.

The issue of mother tongue-based Multilingual Education (MLE) policy adopted by many states in India was discussed at the International Meet (September 2011) held with the National Multilingual Education Resource Consortium (NMRC) and many other organizations in Mysore. The International Meet was held much earlier to the formulation of NPST as classroom practices and proficiency in the language of instruction of teachers are considered to be directly related to the performance of children. One of the major issues discussed in the Meet was 'capacity building' for a large number of MLE teachers since the number of teachers available from within a given language community is disproportionate to the number of bilingual learners in the classroom. This was taken up to meet the challenges faced by teachers in the classroom with bilingual learners. The Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages (CIEFL) and the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) initiated training programs for upper primary and secondary teachers in English and Foreign languages. The State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT) of Kerala also organized statewide training for higher secondary teachers and upper primary teachers. The training program concentrated on various methods of teaching English from a communicative perspective. Considerable efforts to boost the language proficiency of teachers are evident but in practice, the predominant use of native language for communication purposes is a common sight across several schools among the teachers and learners. Non-native language (often English) is usually restricted to the classroom environment.

For long, there is an understanding that teachers' language proficiency is essential to impart foundational literacy and numeracy skills to children in the pre-primary classroom. Teale and Sulzby (1991), Whitehurst and Lonigan (1998) have also stated that oral language of children has an impact on the early and emergent literacy skills subsequently influencing academic skills. But it is disturbing to note that majority of training programs for MLE teachers are often geared towards upper primary and higher education teachers (Prema, et al., 2010). In view of this, the principle of multilingualism and the power of language stated in the NEP 2020 are viewed through a lens to reflect on the practicability of the principle in classrooms. Drawing support from four studies conducted by the author and her research team that examined the proficiency of teachers as well as the importance of communication between teacher and learner, the relevance of the fundamental principle of multilingualism for education in pre-primary classrooms is discussed.

Language proficiency of primary school teachers: Prema Rao and Mekhala (2013) evaluated the language proficiency of 15 Tamil-English bilingual teachers who are non-native language speakers imparting education to children who are native speakers of the Kannada language. All the teachers were administered an online bilingual (Kannada-English) proficiency test. The results indicated lower proficiency in teachers for both

Kannada and English languages, but they seemed to employ multiple modes to communicate with children. While the native language of the children was Kannada with the language of instruction in the school being English (ESL children), the bilingual children showed flexibility to respond to differences in linguistic and socio-pragmatic expectations despite the teacher being a non-native speaker (Tamil).

Language proficiency of preschool teachers: In another study, Anjana, and Prema Rao (2017) conducted a survey on the language proficiency of preschool teachers using the International Second Language Proficiency Rating Scale (ISLPR) (Wylie & Ingram, 2006). Twenty preschool teachers from five English medium schools in South Kerala (Alappuzha, Kollam, and Trivandrum) were assessed for second language (English) proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The authors reported that the preschool teachers were least proficient in English speaking skills with relatively higher proficiency ratings for reading, followed by writing and listening.

The above two studies indicated poor proficiency of preschool and primary school teachers in the second language, i.e., English in this context. The role of teachers in the acquisition of a second language by children (the language of instruction) in the classroom is emphasized in several studies (Teale & Sulby, 1991; Whitehurst & Lonigan, 1998 among others). Since majority of activities in preschools are geared toward building language skills and pre-literacy skills, the role of teachers is very crucial. While children from different socioeconomic backgrounds receive different degrees of input for a second language, the onus of providing quality input rests on teachers. Theoretically the thrust for language proficiency is heavily loaded onto teachers but in actuality, language proficiency in teachers reported across several studies is not satisfactory. Therefore, an intriguing question to be addressed at this juncture in the backdrop of NEP 2020 is whether the teachers TEACH or EDUCATE preschool children? Alternately stated, should the preschool children be treated as STUDENTS or LEARNERS? Let us try to understand these terms from the perspective of NEP 2020.

Teaching is imparting facts and, transference of subject matter from a teacher to a student by training the mind of learners to think. The NEP 2020 strongly emphasizes 'educating the learners' in the classroom instead of 'teaching students'. As stated in the NEP the primary goal is the development of creative potential and higher-order cognitive capacities such as critical thinking and problem-solving. To educate, the teacher needs to employ different modes of communication where communication is defined as an active and intentional process through which a speaker and listener transmit messages such as experiences, ideas, thoughts, and feelings to each other. Teachers convey facts and encourage learners to exercise their thinking process by using different modes of expression. Therefore, communication becomes the key to educating learners with mutually acceptable mode(s) that best suits the context. The following two studies project the importance of communication using language as a tool in educating preschool bilingual learners.

Interaction of bilingual preschoolers with adult story readers: Prema Rao, Kaderavek, and Prarthana (2017) conducted a study on bilingual preschoolers to examine the interaction of children with adult story readers. Prema Rao and Kaderavek compared the linguistic output of typically developing bilingual preschoolers during shared book readings with a culturally familiar adult (CF) who spoke English as a second language and US English-speaking adult reader who is a culturally less-familiar adult (LF). The two adults differed in their language proficiency with CF being less proficient compared to the LF. Scripted questions were included during reading interactions. The language output during the shared book readings was transcribed and analyzed for linguistic features including mean length of utterance (MLU), and type-token ratio (TTR). The results demonstrated that children showed differences in MLU & TTR scores when different books were read but no significant difference observed in the linguistic output of preschoolers in response to CF (less proficient) and LF (more proficient) adults suggesting the adaptability of preschoolers to communication partners. De Houwer (2009) also reported that very young bilingual children can adapt to different language partners during communication. The encouraging finding of the study is that young children are likely to be interested in interacting with adult communication partners regardless of the language proficiency or cultural familiarity of adults. The reports suggest that the language proficiency of adult readers may be of less significance provided adult partners communicate effectively to convey the information. The following study further supports this conviction.

Oral language and phonological skill training through digital mode: Neha Lakshmish and Prema Rao (2011) conducted a study using on three groups of children using digital literacy package (DiLiCoach describes various activities for language and emergent literacy skills). The three groups were from LKG-1 (experimental group from school A), LKG-2 (first control group from school B), and UKG-1 (second control group from school A). Children of LKG-1 received 20 sessions of instruction from teachers who are pre-trained for using the DiLiCoach whereas children of LKG-2 did not receive any formal training with DiLiCoach. At the end of this period, the children of LKG-1(experimental group) and LKG-2 (first control group) were again evaluated on various measures of phonological awareness, print knowledge, and oral language. Results showed significant progress on all these parameters by the LKG-1 children with the scores almost paralleling those of UKG-1 children (second control group). Children from LKG-1(experimental group) were six months ahead of their peers in LKG-2 (Control group 1). The children who were instructed using the DiLiCoach also showed improved syntax (MLU) and semantics (number of different word roots and number of main body words). An increase was also seen in the total number of complete words used by children in their narration. These findings indicated that activities strategized using language as a tool promotes foundational literacy provided teachers are sensitized to be effective communicators with children.

DISCUSSION
The fundamental principle of NEP 2020 i.e., 'Promotion of Multilingualism and the Power of Language in learning and teaching' is projected in this paper from various angles. In

general, two major contradictory issues need to be considered before the implementation of the policy.

Issue no. 1: Language proficiency of teachers

The premise that exists in the West regarding the language proficiency of teachers and its negative impact on learning a second language by children in the classroom has received much attention even by the educational fraternity in our country. However, there is a need to examine this premise in-depth since the multilingual and multicultural status of India provides adequate opportunities for young children to learn languages in our societal context. Children learn to use not only the specific code of a given language (for example, their native language) but also engage other communication modalities to successfully interact with their peers and adults. The two studies described earlier (Prema Rao & Mekhala, 2013 and Anjana & Prema Rao, 2017) suggested that even the teachers who are less proficient in the native language of young bilingual learners successfully communicated using varieties of communication modes. Therefore, there is an urgent need to investigate this premise in the Indian educational context before it can be generalized to a larger population of bilingual learners.

Issue no. 2: Capacity building for teachers in communicative competence

While the language proficiency of teachers is debated in our context, a disproportion in the number of bilingual teachers to the bilingual learners is also an issue to be considered. The language and communication training programs for capacity building for MLE teachers are very scanty. Besides being very few, the programs are conducted as an initiative by a few organizations but are not pursued as a sustainable activity by the government sectors. It is disheartening to note that the pre-primary teachers who are considered the pillars to initiate foundational literacy skills are rarely targeted for MLE training programs that are focused on enhancing their communicative competence. Theoretical emphasis on the conviction that teachers should learn to 'play with children' using language as a tool for empowerment remains at best as a theory without much ado given for extensive training programs to the teachers at the ground level. There is an urgent need to schematize training programs for MLE teachers if teachers should learn to communicate using different modes to convey the educational concepts and encourage children to 'think and respond' in their language. Such training programs are much needed for those responsible for building foundational literacy skills in bilingual learners.

To sum up the discussion, in the opinion of the author, it is necessary to view the fundamental principle of NEP 2020-multilingualism and the power of language as an 'asset' and not as a 'problem'. The discussion held in this paper may help to ponder over the statement 'Bilingual children in the classroom: Bliss or Misery?' with a positive perspective to treat bilingualism as an asset. However, it should be noted that at this juncture, there is a need for extensive studies in this direction to investigate the critical issue in teaching young bilingual learners and, to work out the modalities to restructure, reorganize and reorient teacher training programs.

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Please note: The idea of changing perspective towards bilingual learners was presented by the author in the webinar organised by WELLTTA (World English Language Learners, Teachers, and Trainers Association) Forum on 22-01-2022.

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