

What Beget Quality in Rural Education in India: Exploring Approaches

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Abstract This paper attempts to build a theoretical argument to compare the two approaches of Elementary Education - information centric and humanity centric. In most of the rural elementary schools in India the education system is actually promoting rote learning i.e. 'learning without understanding'. This is basically information centric approach which is observed by majority of teachers. In this approach the village children are taught various bits of information which are segregated in separate silos having no inter-linkage or any link with life. This education system by default supports 'rurbanism' i.e. migration of rural children to urban centres for higher education and employment. The children after going through such kind of elementary education system have to compete in a larger world of globalisation, open economy and industrialisation once they complete their formal education. The Globalisation and open market economy again limits the meaning of education. The affluence earned through such education is measured in only pecuniary terms. Thus, the basic purpose of education is defeated in information centric approach. The humanity centric approach is quite different from information centric approach. In humanity centric approach education could be designed and developed in which personal and social performance could be enhanced with autonomy given to the rural children. This enables them to use their learning's for doing some creative and innovative entrepreneurial work in their own interest and to uplift the rural society at large. For all this people at the helm of affair need to have a strategic plan to build the capacity of teachers, strengthen monitoring and evaluation system by the participation of rural society.

Keywords Quality Education, Information Centric Approach, Humanity Centric Approach, Rural Education

"Every child is potentially the light of the world, as well as the cause of its darkness. School must act as a Lighthouse of Society, providing meaningful education, spiritual direction, guidance and leadership to students, parents and the society in general"[1]. **Dr. Jagdish Gandhi**

1. Introduction

The raison d'être of education is always an issue of deliberation. Some educationist thinks that the education should be directly linked to livelihood the others differ. Some think that education should enable one to earn wealth the others think that it should liberate one from materialistic gains. To explain these issues two approaches viz. information centric and humanity centric are discussed. One needs to understand how these two approaches will produce different results and what could be the practical solution. In most of the rural schools there is a system which actually promotes rote learning i.e. learning without understanding and could be termed as **information centric approach**. In

this approach the village children are taught various bits of information in school. The subjects are segregated in separate silos having no inter-linkage. On the basis of what they have taught in the schools, exams are conducted to finally declare who has succeeded to continue school education. They are further branded as meritorious - who study further and failures- who eventually are dropped out from school and then from education. The missing link with those who remain in education is - How the gathered information in schools could be linked with different situations of rural life. Most parents are concerned only with the issue that their children should complete the school course by good marks/grades. According to them this is a gateway to get a reasonable 'Naukri' (employment) and enable them to earn their bread and butter. This however, is a limited way of looking at education.

2. Methods

This is basically a theoretical argumentation developed on the basis of the current practices observed in the elementary education system of India. For writing this paper secondary data and literature has been used. In this article, and in epistemology in general, the kind of knowledge usually

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discussed is propositional knowledge, also known as "knowledge that." It is the type of knowledge that is, by its very nature, expressed in indicative propositions. This is distinct from "knowledge how" and "acquaintance-knowledge." Epistemology is the branch of philosophy concern with the nature and scope of knowledge which can include facts, information, descriptions or skills acquired through experience or education.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1. Clarifying the Goal of Education

Are the schools solitary centers of learning? Should schools provide loads of information? What is expected from a school – to provide literacy and numeracy or 'education'? When you will call a person educated? What is the intent of school education? Does content provided in schools mainly through books fulfill the intent? Is the pedagogy used in school appropriate? Is the evaluation appropriate? Are we satisfied with the quality of education which is provided in the schools? Who should govern the education system Government or Private bodies? Should education be market oriented or linked with the industrial demand? Should education lead to employability or should it be delinked with employment? There are lot many questions in the mind of the people and in this maze of question they find themselves lost. Finally they end up with admitting their children in some schools which is nearby, has a good 'reputation' in their social circle and which suits their social and economic status. The scene becomes worse when these set of questions are raised in context of rural schools of India where there are limited options of schooling.

So if the parents are looking for a quality education in school they need to understand what quality is, who is responsible agency to provide the same and how their children can access this education. Quality education is that which train students for self reliance and make them capable of analysing the situations of life in their own way. There is an infinite sum of knowledge in the world on almost all the subjects. All this knowledge cannot be acquired in one go and that too in a schools. There are numerous things which one has to learn through the exposure of world and by acquiring experience. The school should and can motivate students to learn from life. A teacher teaches a lesson for a day and then takes a test but the experience of life take the test first and then teach the lesson which becomes part of knowledge they have earned. Thus a teacher should be able to create curiosity among their students and in turn they will continue the learning process as long as they live as independent learner. The process of becoming an independent learner also involves helping a student to understand more about the process of learning, described by several in the group as the meta-cognitive aspect of learning. It involves helping students to develop strategies for dealing with new knowledge, and to understand how arguments are build and then putting them together for logical reasoning. It

is also important to provide scaffolding support along the way to develop independent learners. This might involve supporting students through the use of reading lists and then, as appropriate in their discipline, helping them to go beyond their reading list and find new sources.[2] Current Indian elementary education system especially in rural area prepares children to compete in a larger world of globalisation, open economy and industrialisation. This by default supports 'rurbanism' i.e. migration of rural children to urban centres either for higher studies or for Service. They further exacerbate greater demand of consumable goods and housing in urban centres and for that economic force yearn for bulk production and marketing across the countries. Entering the other nations market generates cut throat competition which ultimately results into unlimited exploitation of natural and human resources. This also becomes a cause of stress and anxiety for those children who succeed and want to become a part of class also for those who do not succeed and become a part of mass. In the final analysis it enhances the gulf between classes and masses. The concept of Globalisation and open marketing economy has limited the meaning of education and the wealth earned through such education which is measured in only monetary terms. Thus, the purpose of education is defeated in **information centric approach**.

The goal of **humanity centric approach in education** is quite different from **information centric approach**. In humanity centric approach education could be designed and developed in which personal and social performance could be enhanced with autonomy given to the rural children. This should also enable them to use their learning for doing some creative and innovative entrepreneurial work in their own interest and to uplift the rural society at large. The education should be of the quality which gives the power to an individual to use the acquired intelligence which must be harmonised with the power to manage the senses to strike a balance between humankind and its ecology. The human centric approach which places importance on social capital, and happiness derived from the values like altruism, cooperation, interdependence, faith, honesty and trust are quite varied and diverse as these are not necessarily convertible in terms of only one measure i.e. money. The mass production processes obviously takes away jobs and working opportunities, eventually makes them non-productive and useless for a healthy society. In rural India education should build the skills of individual how to be self reliant and contented, how to excel in the direction of healthy living and self sustainment. This is the basic contradiction between human centric approach and information centric approach.

According to Rabindranath Tagore an ideal teacher can never truly teach unless he is still learning himself. A lamp can never light another lamp unless it continues to burn its own flame. The teacher who has come to the end of his subject, who has no living traffic with his knowledge, but merely repeats his lesson to his students, can only load to their minds. He cannot quicken them. Truth not only must

inform, but also must inspire. If the inspiration dies out and the information only accumulates then truth loses its infinity. The greater part of our learning in the school has been a waste because for most of our teachers, their subjects are like dead specimens of once living things, with which they have a learned acquaintance, but no communication of life and love[3].

3.2. What should be done?

In the rural schools we can see that the mistakes are being made in two ways. First, millions of children do not get education, and, secondly, those who get, is not of desired quality. Thus, on one side there is lack of education, and, on the other, education is in mess. In the highest performing countries, teachers and teaching are held in the highest esteem. Rightly so, because all the evidence shows that good teachers make a profound difference. People often do not understand the creative, innovative and facilitative role of a teacher in fulfilling the goals of education. To ensure quality of education the prerequisite is availability of good teachers. This is a profession in which both intensive and extensive preparation by the teacher is mandatory. Thus to bring in the quality in rural elementary education we will have to have a multi pronged approach as follows:

1) Pre service and in-service capacity building/Training:

The capacity building of existing teachers is essential component in rural elementary education system. It is needless to say that the National level bodies/Institutes like National Council of Education Research and Training, State level bodies/Institutes like State Council for Education Research and Training, District level bodies/Institutes like District Institute of Education and Training, local level bodies/Institutes like Block Resource Centre and Cluster Resource Centre should play a supportive and coordinated role in pre service and in service types of training to the teachers. There is a need to reform initial teacher training so that more training is on the job, and it focuses on key teaching skills, the capacity to generate contextual content, link it to surroundings and this way to deepen the length and breadth of content. For all the aspiring candidates who have passed TET (Teacher Education Test) the pre service training model used in internationally known innovative educational project - Shiksha karmi project could be used in mainstream formal schools. It was internationally acclaimed best practices in re-establishing rural dysfunctional schools with the help of rural youth. In Shiksha Karmi project identification and selection of Shikshakarmi's was given prime importance. During the internship besides basic educational qualification, the other qualities were taken into consideration like person should have a positive attitude towards children, excitement about the new chance to learn and to be a 'real teacher' with high energy and enthusiasm, creativity, vision for development of society etc.. The teacher should have sensitivity, sense of responsibility and accountability that they have to shape the future of children. They have to value knowledge and recognize its value in use and commit themselves to be continuing learners of 2C's i.e.

Continuous Content modification and Carefully Communicating the same to pupil.

The in-service/orientation training programme must be made essentially to sharpen the knowledge, enhance the creativity, thinking skills and improve the pedagogic skills of the teachers. In orientation programmes the first step could be to diagnose the 'real' problems faced by the teachers- is it lack of information on the content or overload of information or inability to creatively link with live examples, or inability to demonstrate to the community what they have taught or how to link content with life or low self esteem or lesser recognition by the rural community or the vision that how development of rural community/environment can be achieved; then only the orientation course of the teacher should be organized accordingly. The other creative way could be to allow the best performer teachers from the cluster to train other teachers. Thus the horizontal learning will enrich the performance of all the schools in the cluster.

2) Teacher Preparation before classroom processes:

Before entering into class a teacher should be well equipped. Two components are critically important in teacher preparation: depth of the knowledge of the subject to be taught, and skills in how to teach that subject by linking it with the immediate surroundings. Research shows that depth of knowledge of subject is necessary but not the sufficient condition for effective teaching as well as learning. The second part is more important which is often neglected. To become effective teachers they should be able to understand and apply various strategies to help and enable students to understand how to link the acquired knowledge for social good. Teachers should understand and apply knowledge of child development to motivate and engage students. Teacher should be able to diagnose student-wise learning needs. They should know how to develop a positive climate in the classroom in order to make it a stimulating learning environment. Teacher should be ready with the plan of how he will organize class room which includes seating arrangements and classroom setting. What material he will display and what materials he will be using, when and how. How the children will be grouped for the competencies S/he is going to teach etc.

3) Classroom Processes:

Reciprocal teaching is an instructional technique developed by Palincsar and Brown[4] and described by them as "a dialogue between teachers and students for the purpose of jointly constructing the meaning of text." It is designed to improve students' reading comprehension by teaching four key reading strategies:

- 1) Summarizing the main content
- 2) Formulating questions
- 3) Clarifying ambiguities
- 4) Predicting what may come next.

This can be re-arranged in following fashion:

Predicting: This includes the prediction made by the students about the general idea of the text from title or heading so that students even before starting any discussion try to establish a co-relationship between the subject and the

context.

Classifying: After detailed reading of the text by the teacher, followed by the students they have to classify and underline or note the difficult parts of the text like new words, terms, phrases or sentences.

Questioning: The class is then divided into small groups. Each group have at least 5 students and they prepare questions on the matter they did not understand. Each group pose questions in general and any group can answer the questions. In the case of difficulty in getting the answer, the teacher facilitates the answer by explanation and some teaching aids. Questions why and how are asked to create shared understandings of the content/section. These questions lead to additional questions and result in a discussion with in the group. If a disagreement arises between students, the passage may be re-read for better understanding and interpretation.

Summarizing: Finally the teacher provides a few questions through which a summary of the text is drawn.

Visualizing: The group members with the help of each other draw a picture on what exactly they have learnt from the text matter.

4) Monitoring the progress of learner:

The progress made by each student need to be monitored. As in India there is a policy of no detention so the teacher should look carefully into how the students are progressing. There could be a system of formative assessment and summative assessment. For this the teacher may make progress chart in which every day he can enter the level attained by a student in a competency S/he has taught. The recording of the progress will guide his preparation for the next activity. By involving students S/he can also establish a system to obtain instant feedback for the session conducted by her/him.

There are many aims of formative evaluation:

- To make available pointers for teachers to revise content,

- To revise pedagogy,
- To monitor the students progress,
- To identify deficiencies of the students,
- To motivate students for self learning processes,
- To improve the thinking level of each and every student.

Summative assessment could be organized on a quarterly or half yearly basis in which what the students have learned and whether they can apply their learning in life situations needs to be assessed.

5) Role of the Rural Community:

The central role of the rural community is to establish a teacher in their villages. In one of the state of India, Rajasthan it was experimented and established through Shikshakarmi project. The Shikshakarmi was introduced in the village as a person who will shape the life of the children living in the villages through education. The teacher should not only teach but also be in a position to demonstrate rural community what their children have learned. The

involvement of rural community and parents could be ensured by local self Government-Leaders-Representatives of Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRIs). A forum in each village can be created to show the progress made by the students. For this Village Education Committee/Mother Teacher Association/Parent Teacher Association can help in organizing such event on monthly basis.

4. Conclusions

Hence if we want to improve the scenario of elementary education in rural India then the humanity centric approach needs to be given priority over information centric approach. The non negotiable things to impart quality education through this approach includes–Capacity building of teachers, teacher preparation before going to class, continuous sensible & sensitive monitoring and evaluation with participation of community to improve the overall quality of education.

Finally, there is a felt need to impart values along-with the education in rural schools as part of curriculum. Although education opens up our mind, but filtering what one teach/learn through the sieve of values will give them purity of heart. Education should make every individual capable physically, mentally, intellectually emotionally and spiritually[5]. Therefore, some universal morals like harmony, mutual respect, openness to new ideas, interdependence, co-existence and non-violence should be accepted by all the educators worldwide[6]. In India the essential elements of such education should be based on the development of concerns towards the needs of rural society. In this contemporary world, the value should highlight the importance of healthy living. Any education without values will be like a body with dead heart and soul.

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