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Editorial

Curricular choices have always remained areas of deliberation and reflection. A democratic society necessarily has to empower its citizens to participate in the governance and functioning of all the processes and it is important to think about the role of education in it. Human societies educate children to understand the tradition and the culture while absorbing new knowledge, understanding and even new perspectives. Wider educational processes beyond that of the family and the community must enable one not only to appreciate what Society has but also look beyond it and examine it critically to help the community, so that Society and the nation move forward.

The curricular deliberations were set into motion many years ago even before the country became independent. The discerning discourse of the proponents of the *Nai Talim* is still relevant and needs to be taken cognisance of what we think about the way forward today. Of course the curricular questions have been taken further in the country at the instance of the Departments of Education and by many independent explorations that have sprouted in the nation during the process of thinking on this. It is not that all these have worked in the same direction or of the same depth and quality but these explorations have brought into sharp focus the questions and the challenges that confront us. A curricular document needs not only to be clear and aligned to the aspects that are relevant to us from all perspectives but also help those using it to be clear about the expectations from them. A curricular document is therefore just a framework as it would only be complete with all the supporting documents. This issue explores embedded aspects and the complexities of the exercise from the construction to the concretisation and implementation.

The first article is by Prof. Khader who has long experience and association with curricular development and concerns. In his paper, the author has argued that Curriculum in reality is a roadmap for formulating and structuring learning and is the relation that binds the learner and teacher experiences. The article identifies four ideological sources of their origin. The author argues for a shift from 'scholar roots' of curriculum such that teachers are not mere 'givers' of knowledge and include process perspective as well. He suggest that a common thread that runs across different ideologies, and in the relation between curriculum and individual and society. He elaborates the aspects that relate to the formulation of textbooks and argues that process perspective needs to be understood carefully. The perspective speaks of integration of content and pedagogy. The author argues that schools need curriculum to have a shared plan for all those involved in the functioning. The clarity and nature of ideas included in it give directions that give some coherence. The construction of the curriculum however, is a judicious process with difficult choices. The multidimensionality of the curriculum and the chosen act of purpose emanates from an understanding of what a human society ought to be.

Schools, Education and hence Curriculum are expected to fulfil complex often somewhat contradictory roles. Their foci and elaboration would be defined by perspective that may seem similar on surface but are very different when examined. A democratic polity requires space for all to be equitably educated and that too aims towards developing a complete person. The importance of inclusion of diversity requires a school programme that has multi-dimensional learning opportunities and a spectrum of expressions of various forms.

The diversity of curricular experiences is necessitated not only due to inclusion but also from principles that define education. Considered in this manner, the space for conversations and expectations widens as also the domains of experience. On the other hand functioning of the curriculum is also affected by the simultaneous desire to produce a somewhat homogeneous student out-put. This is accentuated by the keen competition and the race to be the best. The author argues that the ethical framework must function with provision of autonomy and not with an overt or even covert coercion and pressure. He suggests that an appropriate framework could be one that not only values autonomy and space for creativity but also recognizes the true working with hands. It would also ensure cooperation and comfortable learning rather than competition and pressure. The school while using the curriculum must have a spirit of listening to and learning from them.

The second article titled, 'Curricula: What can the School do for the Development of a child' by Prof. Hriday K Dewan focuses on role and importance of curricula, the expectations from it so that it can guide and help the school in fulfilling its purpose. He points out the conflicting visions and perspectives of the curriculum and the influence of the rapid changes in the human situation including the technological that pushes the popular image of the school towards competition and as individual endeavour. These sensibilities drive the schools and expectations from them. He further underlines the role of education for a society in terms of carrying forward the tradition and also enabling the people in it to discover, check and validate new knowledge and understanding. For a democratic society there is an expectation of building togetherness, co-operation and sense of belonging and responsibility in all people and therefore the need for the schools to have a role in the development of students as responsible and informed citizens. A humanely developed democratic society requires education that makes students well-rounded and have multi-faceted interests. It is in these varied requirements that there are contestations and choices to be made. There are challenges and tensions in creating space for myriad, multiple views. School has to keep these in mind and strike out a path that is able to fulfil the expectations in the context that it exists. For the Indian context, it becomes essential to make the effort to develop in children an appreciation and respect for the wide diversity in knowledge and cultures. Therefore, the new approach to curriculum must seek to involve all stakeholders and as a two way process of influencing them and being simultaneously influenced by them.

The article on 'Reflections on School Science' by Professor Amitabh Bhattacharya provides a glimpse into the way science is taught in the schools and how it is different from the nature and the basic principles of science, its development and how it can become interesting for the learners. The content load is too much and the expectation is of remembering and reproducing information. In Indian Science classrooms till secondary, doing experiments and even demonstrations are vanishing now even in the assessments. The experiments in the books are not written in a manner that expects that they be done regularly and the entire treatment misses the essential elements of science namely detailed observation, framing hypothesis, collecting and organising data to drawing inferences. Professor Amitabh talks about the Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme and argues that the effort showed that science could be taught in a manner that was interactive, interesting and with active experimentation. He points out that

the NCERT can guide the way but for the ideas to reach everywhere in the States, a strong advocacy and support is needed from the entire science community.

In the article 'Textbooks- hear our voice!', Disha Nawani talks about the journey of textbooks from the point of view of the content and usage. From no textbooks to just a few textbooks and by now we have many textbooks. The text book has gained importance as the education system has enlarged, expanded and uniformity across places and people is expected. The author points out that the subsequent journey focuses on the relationship between curriculum, syllabus and textbooks and how the approach to handle their content. This has undergone a sea change from knowledge and expecting recall to being means to develop concepts and aid teachers in that. Written as an autobiography of the textbook, the paper argues that the importance of the textbooks is sought to be made more balanced by the NCF 2005 and they need both to leave space and flexibility for the teacher and the children but also not consider themselves as the only resource!

Prof Rajaram Sharma in his paper talks about the current confusion in the direction and way of using technology and defining its role in education. He argues that the attitude to technology needs to be balanced. The current overdrive and way to use technology to monitor and tell the teacher what to do in the classroom paints the teacher in extremely negative light and puts her under tremendous pressure. By systematically mapping all chapters of all textbooks, creating digital content resources, disengages the teacher, the primary role of nurturing student abilities is no longer the role that galvanizes the teacher. As a result teachers become passive and unfortunately it also reduces students to passive consumers of packaged information distorting the very purpose of teaching learning. Making it to mere content delivery.

Prof Rajaram Sharma argues that Teacher's responsibility can not be to show and tell or just follow the protocols given. Unless the teachers have a space to be and expected to be creative and urge the students to do the same, the role of students also becomes passive and mechanical. The best use of technology is to build communication and break the isolation of the teacher in the school so that she can reach out and share her experiences and ask her confusions and questions. He further says as teachers we just need to be ourselves and not over awed, over enamoured by Information Technology (IT) or be over reactive to it denying that it can not serve any purpose

The article 'Teaching of English in India- Issues and concerns' by Kirti Kapur, is as the title suggests about teaching of English in India. The introduction of English is a matter of concern inspite of the large demand for English and its use as the medium of instruction. The article briefly presents the approaches to learning and their evolution. Discussing the goals and objectives of English teaching, it analyses the principles outlined in the NCF and points out that the NCF suggests creation of multi linguals as the purpose of teaching English. The article points out the huge gap in the availability of appropriate materials and trained teachers and argues that the teaching of English needs to be looked upon as any other language teaching. This would, therefore require creating an input rich communicational environment as a pre-requisite.

The article 'New Curriculum to New Pedagogy in Multilingual Context' by Binay Pattanayak, shares the journey of new curriculum development in the state of Jharkhand. The focus in this process was on quality, equality, harmony, mutual

respect and co-operation. They worked towards a paradigm shift in pedagogical strategies in their multilingual context based on the guiding principles of NCF-2005. In this direction, they developed 30 position papers driven by a child's rights perspective. He points out the beginning of the journey to its implementation.

The article titled 'Science Teaching: Recommendations and its Implications on Teacher Education Programme' by R.R. Koireng discusses about teaching of science as an integrated subject and its implications on teaching-learning materials, pedagogical processes and teacher preparation. Explaining briefly the format and principles of integrated science as it is pointed out in NCF 2005 through examples, how abstraction can be reduced and teaching brought closer to life, he indicates that while NCERT has made many efforts including production of textbooks with an integrated perspective there have been no reforms to enable it. The paper also raises its implications for pre-service syllabus and teacher preparation and says that teachers currently produced by the teacher education institutions are not equipped to teach integrated science. The teacher preparation programmes themselves have physical and biological science teachers. The schools generally also divide content in this manner and in many states even the syllabus, text books, etc. and time tables are also divided. The author asks why this is so. Is it due to the books that present science as a combination of segregated domains of physics, chemistry and biology? or Is it due to the teacher development programmes or is it due to the product of university education system feeder for B.Ed course and such courses.

N. Suresh Kumar in his article emphasises the importance of making the teacher think about the children, their native worlds, actions and the words they use. He analysed that teacher thinking and her attitude is extremely critical for effective teacher-student exchange. He argues that teacher thinking is at the root of the way they work and their degree of professionalism.

The article on 'Curriculum Development and Implementation' by Utpal Chakraborty is a discussion based on the experience of teaching, the paper on Curriculum included in the syllabus of teacher education for pre-service preparation of teachers (B. Ed.) in Chhattisgarh was introduced after the NCTE 2014 regulations. He points out the difficulties in dealing with the course due the lack of sufficient quality material on this. He argues that the notion of curriculum is described and understood in diverse ways but unlike in English, there are no materials that bring out the nuances and distinctions in these notions around this in Hindi. He also points out that the way the paper is taught and assessed reflects the understanding that the teacher has no role in the defining of the curriculum or help the student teacher learn to do anything better in her school. He suggests that the paper needs to be taught and assessed in a way, it must help the teacher understand curriculum as something that she has a role in constructing and delivering. He opined that teacher must be able to understand, its sources and the underlying principles so that she is able to see it differently from hidden or unintended curriculum. He suggests that understanding curriculum would help realise the actual intended curriculum reducing the practice of finding excuses and blaming everyone else.

In the article Digital Story Telling and ICT based method of constructing curriculum, Sree Ranjini and Gurumurthy argue with examples that teachers can have a role in co-constructing the curriculum and its implementation for their school. Curriculum and teaching are crucial parts of education. And hence

the teacher is critical as the curriculum can not teach itself. Since the needs of children are diverse, it is not possible for a single text book to fulfil the needs of all, implying a need for contextual resources and teacher development. In all this ICT can have a role and the authors describe an experience of co-constructing such resources with teachers for their class-rooms. The authors emphasise many times that all this is to empower and strengthen the teacher not to weaken her role or to totally replace her.

The article entitled, 'Teaching with Technology' by Vineeta Garg discusses the need to incorporate ICT into school curriculum to maximize educational outcomes.

The article 'Stories and Mathematics Come Together' by Pooja makes an attempt to demonstrate story telling as a pedagogic tool for teaching algebra to elementary stage children. During story telling, students show their high level of curiosity and logical reasoning . The article is presented in a diagnostic form discussing a real case of a teacher.

This issue of VTTE carries two reports on workshopes/seminars. One on a workshop held in Raipur which discussed School Curriculum- Emerging Issues. The idea was to reflect on the State Curriculum Framework (SCF)-2007 which was developed on the principles of NCF-2005. The workshop reflected on the issues that were not adequately spelt out in SCF-2007 and /or had not been sufficiently or effectively carried forward in the field resulting in a gap. The three day workshop came up with some key points of agreements and some concern that needed more deliberations as very strong counter views were presented. The workshop was exciting and led to a fresh round of thinking. The second report is a seminar on a path breaking effort in educational discourse. This seminar was organised by Azim Premji University (APU) and Ambedkar University Delhi (AUD) focussed on the Teachers and their work. The seminar had over 100 participants' writing papers out of which 82 were accepted. The Seminar held 18 discussions over 3 days. The seminar focussed on the broad themes associated with the teacher. The sessions on notion and identity of the teacher including the construction of the notion of a teacher by and in the community saw many passionate but well argued presentations. The fact that the language of the papers was Hindi, made it possible for them to distill their learning and extract principles that were worth sharing.

This issue also carries a review of the book 'Nai Talim' written by Marjorie Sykes who spent many years as a part of the large movement thinking about the way to educate the Indian children, namely the Nai Talim. The review by Nidhi Gaur underscores the relevance of the book in today's time of violence, both internal and external, and disconnect of education from the life of the people. She says that Sykes has shown Nai Talim as a continuous dialogue with the society and the temporal reality. She also points out that Marjorie presents the 50 year journey of an idea starting from a nebulous idea of ideal education to a way of transforming the lives of the people. She says Sykes has brought out the challenges of Nai Talim from within and has shared her dream of its purpose in todays' world.

This issue of VOICES covers only a few of the aspects of curriculum and its practices. We intend to carry more reflections on this in the next issue of Voices as well. We look forward to responses on the views expressed in this and also bringing forth other fresh aspects. We would want to bring out the next issue

early and therefore would request you to send in your reflections on papers in this issue as well as the new contributions.

Editorial Committee