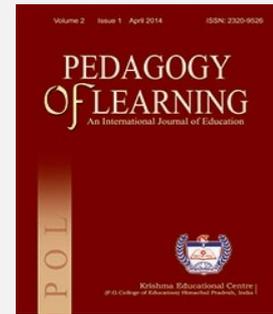


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## Transformational Leadership for Better Schools

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### ABSTRACT

Schooling should result in certain minimum levels of learning in the individual for the benefit of the individual and the society and quality education is a right now. The learning curve in school education is still showing downward trend. For long teacher education has been mostly focusing on the development of pedagogical skills in teacher trainees. This paper makes an attempt to discuss the teacher education curriculum beyond the pedagogical skills. A teacher is in charge of a group of young learners, therefore in a leadership role, and is expected to helping in transforming their lives. A leader doesn't wait for things to happen by it or expects to be told about what to do next. Teacher quality is one of the conditions for ensuring success in school education for everybody. Transformational leadership is one of those qualities that need to be developed in present and future teachers for the success of school education for everybody in India.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Schools

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### INTRODUCTION

A new national policy on education is under way which would indeed review and discuss the status of the school education in our country. Like the earlier national policies on education, the new policy would make suggestions and recommendations to improve the quality of school education in the country. India is a signatory to the UN Millennium Declaration (2000) of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). In the recent past, the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education legislation enacted in 2009 categorically emphasized the significance of quality in school education and made various provisions for providing quality school education to the children. One of the goals was to achieve universal elementary education (UEE) by 2015. During the period, through interventional educational policies such as the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) we have forged ahead to achieve the goal of universal elementary education. Today, educational statistics indicate certain positive trends in school education that there are more schools in India and there are more school going-age children in schools. However, high enrollment in schools may not be indicative of quality input and output in school education. The Annual Status of Education Reports (ASER) by Pratham

and the annual National Achievement Surveys (NAS) by the NCERT have time and again shown that lakhs of children remain in school but are not learning the basic literacy and numeracy skills. This means while quantitative expansion – more schools and high enrollment – is important, there is much more missing in the schooling process that should lead to learning achievements. Schools are created by the society for the society where the young in the society is expected to go through organized learning. Schooling should result in certain minimum levels of learning in the individual for the benefit of the individual and the society. And quality education is a right now. When the learning curve in school education is till spiraling downward even half a decade after the enactment of the right to education legislation, teachers and teacher educators must take note and take serious effort to fix the missing links in the school education system.

Subsequent to the enactment of RTE in 2009 the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education was developed in 2010. The NCFTE (2010) which draws upon the NCF (2005) and RTE (2009) brought out many gaps in the Teacher Education Curriculum in the country thereby pointing towards the dismal state of school education in India.

It envisioned teacher education as, “..... the development of the total teacher – knowledge and understanding, repertoire of skills, positive attitudes, habits, values and the capacity to reflect” (NCFTE. 2010, p. 23). For long teacher education has been mostly running on a mono rail of pedagogical skills. The new teacher education curriculum notified by the NCTE (2014) has its genesis in the NCFTE (2010). This paper makes an attempt to discuss the teacher education curriculum beyond the pedagogical skills as envisaged in the NCFTE (2010) and the new teacher education curriculum framework and emphasize the importance of transformational leadership in creating better schools.

## **TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

Over several decades teacher education institutions across the country have been training teacher aspirants to plan and execute lessons in class rooms based on a ‘given’ syllabus. Class rooms have become places where teachers go about delivering lessons based on a preordained script, deriving satisfaction and feeling good by ‘covering’ the syllabus. Engrossed in executing the planned lesson, the teacher is unmindful of the ‘*culture of silence*’ that prevails among a large section of children in the classroom. A teacher’s role is not limited to delivering lessons and covering syllabus. A teacher is in charge of a group of young learners, therefore in a leadership role, and is expected to helping in transforming their lives. A leader has a clear vision of her (as a teacher) goals, group’s (children in her care) goals and has the ability to align these goals to achieve outcomes. There are unplanned moments, situations and uncertainties in class rooms. A leader doesn’t wait for things to happen on its own or expects to be told about what to do next. Bass and Riggio (2008) explain:

*“Transformational leaders...are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers’ needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization.”*

Teacher quality is one of the conditions for ensuring success in school education for everybody. Transformational leadership is one of those qualities that need to be developed in present and future teachers for the success of school education for everybody in India. Some of the component skills that constitute transformational leadership skills needed in teachers for creating better schools are discussed here.

### **A. Understanding the Self and Others**

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Teachers come to the class rooms with a set of deep rooted beliefs biases, assumptions, attitudes and feelings of fear about the self and others, which are often not questioned, challenged or tested. Teachers should examine issues related to their self and identity and willingly work towards enquiring into their deep rooted beliefs and prejudices and remove them. One must be able to identify one's own strengths and weaknesses. Another aspect of the self and identity is the ability to locate and develop insight into one's aims and meaning of life. Understanding the self and the bases that form one's identity would help one develop professional competency and be responsive to others and be sensitive to issues of equity, democracy and social justice. It is not about tolerating others but about accepting others. A leader is perpetually in the process of self development along with the group by engaging in self analysis, developing self awareness and finally submitting to self evaluation and transforming the self.

## **B. Interpersonal Processes**

A teacher is always engaged in interpersonal processes. A teacher requires the ability to facilitate the social, emotional and cognitive development of children in her care. The understanding of interpersonal processes and relevant skills are very important for creating a conducive environment for the well-being of the learners in her charge. Yet this is not considered as an important aspect of teacher development.

### ***Communication Skills***

Just as the leader is a communicator, the teacher is expected to be a communicator too. It is not enough that the teacher has a clear vision of the goals of the learners. But the vision should be communicated to them and in such a way that it inspires them. The teacher is required to communicate with the learners to meet their social, emotional and cognitive needs. Communication is the process of sharing goal oriented messages between two or more sources through a medium or media. Teachers engage in communication sometimes at one to one level and at other times one to group level. And a communication is effective if: the message received is very close to the message sent; the message is easy to encode and decode; the nonverbal and verbal messages are congruent with each other; the message elicits the desired outcome; and the act of communication leads to building a trusting relationship between the source and the target.

***A teacher talks, explains narrates, asks questions, illustrates, translates, guides, instructs, caution, motivates, encourages and plays various other roles. (NCFTE 2010, p.36)***

The teaching process and activities described above demand the teachers to be effective communicators. This means the teacher's language and communication skills are critical factors in learner achievement. Therefore, teaching is effective when the class room communication; has high fidelity; has economy of delivery and deceivability, integrates verbal and non-verbal cues, has the ability to influence the learner and has the capacity to build trusting relationship between the teacher and learner.

### ***The Helping Relationship***

We need teachers who:

*Care for children and love to be with them, understand children within social, cultural and political contexts develop sensitivity to their needs and problems, and treat all children equally (NCFTE. 2010, p.23).*

Teaching profession characterizes helping relationship. A helping relationship involves two parties, the helper and the receiver. In this relationship the helper is involved in the help giving process and the receiver in help receiving and help seeking processes. Sometimes the helping relationship is reciprocal. People who have extension motive, the urge to be relevant and useful to

larger groups, engage in helping relationship. They have a concern for the interest and goals of others and willingly align their goals with the goals of others and work with them to realize their goals. Most teachers perform their job (planning and delivering lessons) without an insight into their own goals in life and of the goals of the learners in their charge. For school education to be effective teachers should define and extend teaching beyond transmission of information. An effective teacher is an effective helper, willing to influence without dominating, open to other's views and accepting of others as worthy.

Carl Rogers, the humanist psychologist and educationist, sees the educational process as a helping relationship and the helpers/teachers as facilitators. A teacher is an effective helper when she:

- Is perceived by the learners trustworthy, dependable and consistent. Effective helpers are dependably real, aware of their own feelings and attitudes (self awareness).
- Communicates unambiguously which means the verbal message is congruent with the non-verbal message.
- Exhibits positive attitude.
- Lets the learners be. Less interested in controlling others and more concerned with the goal ahead.
- Has empathic understanding of the learners.
- Accepts the learner unconditionally.
- Is sensitive that her behavior does not threaten the learner.
- Is not bound by her own past or the learner's past. Accepts the potential of the learner and see future possibilities.

### ***Interpersonal Competence***

Teaching job involves ongoing interaction with learners, colleagues, administration and guardians of the learners. This means a teacher is in interpersonal situations with different clientele groups in the school system most part of her working hours. Our daily interpersonal experience may vary in quality; some being pleasant and some being upsetting or hurting. The quality of these experiences impact the quality of our interpersonal relationship. Developing an insight into these relationships would help us improve our interpersonal relationship. Becoming aware of the effect of your behavior on others and the effect of others behavior on you leads to our interpersonal competence. This can be achieved when you subject yourself for critical self examination, actively seek feedback from others, and develop mutual respect and trust towards each other.

### ***Handling Conflict***

In our daily life conflict occurs due to contrarian views, actions, and unrealistic expectations. Conflict may arise between two people or more, two groups or more, or a person and a group. When there are two or more people involved in a conflict it is interpersonal conflict. But conflict is not always limited to interpersonal actions. Sometimes the conflict may be within the individual (intrapersonal). Teachers experience both kinds of conflicts. Competing needs and roles in an individual may give rise to intrapersonal conflict. Often cited reasons for intrapersonal conflict are frustration, goal conflict and role conflict. Sometimes the unresolved intrapersonal conflict may spill over to your interpersonal relationship and accentuate or create intrapersonal conflict. Sources of interpersonal conflicts are often found in one's deep rooted beliefs, prejudices, attitude towards oneself and others, competition for limited resources, resistance to change, poor communication skills, lack of goal clarity and struggle for power etc. Both parties acknowledging the source(s) of the

conflict is important in resolving the interpersonal conflicts. Therefore, teachers need training to recognize their intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts, locate the sources of the conflicts, and develop conflict resolution strategies for themselves to be effective in their profession. We must also understand that conflicts are not always detrimental to development, it may also lead to positive development. So, one should develop the ability to resolve conflicts in personal and professional life effectively.

### **C. Curriculum Skills**

Teachers treat knowledge as 'given' and teaching as transmission of information. Curriculum, syllabus and textbooks are rarely critically examined by teachers.

*... the NCF requires a teacher to be a facilitator of children's learning in a manner that helps children to construct knowledge and meaning. The teacher in this process is a co-constructor of knowledge. It also opens out possibilities for the teacher to participate in the construction of syllabi, textbooks and teaching-learning materials (NCFTE. 2010, p.3).*

*Teachers need to be creators of knowledge and thinking professionals. They need to be empowered to recognize and value what children learn from their home, social and cultural environment and to create opportunities for children to discover; learn and develop. ... Teachers need to be looked at as crucial mediating agents through whom curriculum is transacted and knowledge is co-constructed along with learners (NCFTE. 2010 p.4).*

Teacher educators and teachers need to recognize and acknowledge the role of community knowledge in school education.

*It is important for the development of concepts in children as well as the application of school knowledge in real life that formal school knowledge is linked with community knowledge. ...teacher... needs to be equipped to select and organize subject-content and learning experiences from the community for the classroom. ... need to develop the capacity of teachers in identifying entry points in the curriculum and textual materials which call for contextualization and development of appropriate teaching-learning sequences and episodes based on the identified local specifics (NCFTE. 2010 p.14).*

Contextualizing the curriculum "facilitates the creating of vital links between children's experiences at home and in the community and what the school offers them (NCFTE. 2010, p.35).

### **D. Multicultural Responsiveness**

Diversity is the founding stone and the fountain head of the entity called India. Indian class rooms are reflections of this reality. A teacher needs to recognize and value the social and cultural diversity among her learners. Every learner comes to the class room with her own '**cultural capital**' even if the learner doesn't belong to the sociocultural mainstream of the society. Multicultural approach demands that the teacher uses the cultural capital brought to the class room by the learners as resource instead of relegating it as the burden of the learner. A multicultural responsive teacher would adopt pedagogical practices (selecting the content, accommodating for the linguistic differences, teaching methodologies etc.) inclusive of the sociocultural environment of all the learners. The teacher's actions – social and pedagogical – should affirm her belief in multiculturalism and pluralism, not objecting to the physical presence of others, who are different, is not enough. When teachers value difference they become sensitive to the varying needs of learners who come from different backgrounds. Schools where multicultural and pluralistic ethos prevails, equal opportunities that empower all learners are created.

### **CONCLUSION**

The National Curriculum Framework (2005) for school education provided a critical analysis of school education and called for transforming the school education in India. Affirming the need for

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quality school education the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act was enacted in 2009. One of the most crucial participants in the endeavour towards quality school education is the teacher. Therefore, a change in perspective in teacher education was called for. The National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education (2010) and the recently notified curriculum framework for teacher education by NCTE (2014) are to be seen in this light. This paper was an attempt to highlight the significance of developing transformational leadership skills in teachers to herald in quality school education, thereby underscoring what teacher education is expected to provide for.

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