

இடமில்லல. தனித்தனியான கல்வி வாய்ப்பு என்பது சமமற்ற நிலையை உள்ளடக்கிய இருக்கும்”(Chandru 6). (When translated into English it roughly reads: There can be no philosophy as separate but an equitable educational opportunity. Separate educational opportunity could only be inclusive of an unequal state of opportunity). Justice Chandru stands for an equitable educational opportunity to all.

Of course, this paper does not claim to go into the merits or demerits of the prevailing system of school education in India. Instead, it only tries to find out how to retrieve the crumbling, but the most vital base of the entire educational structure, the ‘Primary Education’, and suggest ways as to how the Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) can step in to save this crumbling edifice.

Imparting knowledge starts at the primary level. If so, the question arises as to how good the school education is now at the primary level. Since the majority of the little learners go to government schools, it is these schools that are of main concern of this paper. This paper also avoids revisiting the oft

- repeated statistical data that are often culled from many sources and thrown in to impress even a casual reader. Instead, the effort is directed to find any new ways that could be implemented at the ground level.

There are four major segments in any learning process. One, the learner, second, the teacher, third, the content, and fourth, the methodology employed in the teaching—learning process. The premises and arguments put forward in this paper may be against the grain of the standard text—books that are prescribed in Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs). Still, from my observation of these elements from close quarters, I have surmised the following.

At the primary level, every learner who enters the portals of education is a reluctant entrant. Snatched away from his normal domestic ambience, the young learner is to be at first coaxed into a new environment. To his bewilderment, he is asked to obey a system of learning in which his teacher becomes everything to him. Here, I wish to leave out the content part, the subject that is brought before the young learner, for him to somehow learn it. For, the educators who formulate and design the course—content for these young minds do not seem to relate it to the real needs of the learner. The young learner is not asked what he wants to learn. Nor is there any sincere attempt at finding what should be imparted to him to make his learning meaningful as well as conducive to his personal and societal environment. Hence, it is not going to be gainful in any way to discuss this in a short paper like this.

In practical terms, neither the learner nor the teacher is directly involved in drawing the course – content and hence any discussion of it, here, would not serve the aim of this paper. Hence, I would like to confine myself to the most important element here, the teaching—learning process and how far the teacher, as the most significant kingpin of the whole exercise, can be of use to his wards and how the TTIs can help the teacher to reinvent himself for the benefit of his young learners at this level. It is Salman Khan’s ‘ You Tube Academy ’ and his book The One World School House that have opened the floodgates of rethinking in the learning process. In this

connection, Prof. Vamsee Juluri has rightly spoken of the despicable “Prussian model”, the one roundly denounced by Salman Khan. Prof. Vamsee Juluri too is not proud of the “Prussian model” we follow today, thinking of it as modernity and “progress”. Under this model, we break up children unnaturally into age cohorts, fragment and compartmentalize their learning experience into subjects and periods, and of course, we also test them not for “mastery learning” but for a mere pass mark that lets them move into the next year. He calls this a “broken model”. Prussian schools, whether in America or India, are aimed at producing obedience, workers and soldiers in the old days and employees and consumers now (Juluri 8).

Let us accept this. This has become the ‘fait accompli’ of the Indian education system. We might have produced great scholars, scientists or successful entrepreneurs here and there. But we have failed to give a mass lift to the learners’ needs and aspirations for which the keel, the real foundation, must be laid at the primary school level. We must recognize, as Vamsee Juluri says, ”What is important is not “What they learn” but “how they learn to teach themselves” in a future that is not yet clear to us beyond signs that the air, water, lands and trees will be in far worse shape than even what they are now” (8). Here, how and what the young children learn depends mostly upon the teachers concerned. As long as the teachers are conscious that what have been left under their care are not any inanimate things, like the files in an office, but very vibrant, living beings who are at first mostly confused and bewildered, but later on ‘waiting to go’.

A young child - learner is anxiously waiting for a teacher who would successfully relate him to the three Qs, namely EQ, (emotional quotient), IQ (intelligence Quotient) and SQ (Spiritual Quotient). He is not even conscious or aware of the existence of these three Qs or any other technical contraptions that are waiting to surprise him. But his inner—self has the potential to connect him to all the three Qs and awaken in him the innate reality of his self.

Writing on “Goal: Get your QS RIGHT”, Mansie Dewan points out that, “EQ identifies with the will to do things. IQ relates to our ability to solve rational problems and achieve defined tasks, and is indicative of our potential to achieve goals. So or the spiritual quotient defines our very purpose—the WHY behind what we do” (Dewan 1). Let us honestly accept that this is common to the learners as well as the teachers. At the primary level, the intent must be to provide the young learners with the necessary tools to achieve a smooth synchronization of these three Qs so as to prepare them for the future challenges. This necessitates a new discourse.

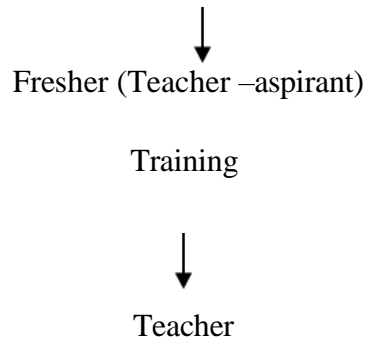
Now, let us come to the most essential operative part of this exercise. If this dream of making it a reality is to be realized, then the teacher, an innovative, sympathetic and considerate one and not the one who forces himself into this noble profession to make money or to make his own living alone, should be trained to be teacher-innovators and not merely as teacher – trainees. This responsibility rests squarely on the shoulders of the Teacher - Training Institutions, in short for this paper the TTIs, that include Teacher— training colleges that presently train the teacher - trainees.

Instead of making it their aim to produce large number of Teacher— education—trained certificate – holders, graduates and postgraduates, the TTIs must be clear in their intent to send out real teacher – innovators from their portals of learning. For this to happen, these institutions,

apart from their traditional method of covering the syllabus and following the dictum of the University concerned alone, must open up to the primary schools in their vicinity, co – opt them in their endeavour and jointly work for the common goal. It is not a tough calling. The only requirement is for these TTIs to come down to the ground - reality and also convince the Primary School Managements, whether private or public, of the urgency and necessity of such an exercise.

It is a vain process to recount the usual grind. Instead, I would like to present a model different from the usual one for the consideration of the TTIs. It should be a different scenario where the bell of innovation and implementation should toll for the benefit of the little learners at first, which would eventually benefit the society at large.

Every fresher enters the TTI as a teacher—aspitant. Here is given a simple model of progression, as it is now, for the teacher—aspitant.



Instead of training a fresher to emerge, with his bonafide diploma, to work merely as a teacher, my suggestion is to make every teacher—aspitant, a teacher—innovator. It is indeed a challenging task, but not unattainable. It is here the TTIs can play their constructive, innovative roles.

It is also a fact that, of late, the Primary schools of little villages like Thiruvithancode and Azhagamandapam have been mentioned and laudatory articles have been written on them in newspapers such as the தமிழ்இந்தி (Thamizh Indhu) for their innovative ideas and their acumen in implementing them. Hence, if the TTIs are willing to go half way to meet such of these institutions, they would surely and enthusiastically respond to this kind of calling.]

The TTIs should devise suitable plans to rope—in the near-by schools. Here, the emphasis is on primary schools. They must take, at the maximum, 2or3 such schools. After extensive consultations and open—dialogues with the teachers of the schools about the difficulties, challenges as well as the successes in their endeavour in imparting knowledge to the little wards under their charge, they can form a JOINT WORKING GROUP (JWG) in order to exchange ideas and information and devise methods suitable for that particular school and its environment. Instead of forcing down the throats of the young learners the methodology devised elsewhere, the teacher—aspitants, who are deputed to the schools for their hand – on training purpose, should be encouraged to work with the learners under the guidance of the JWG and find new ways of

imparting knowledge that are friendly and suitable to these young learners.

The classroom, instead of remaining as a forum of a teaching process, which is at present mostly one of a one—way traffic, should be made an arena of learning. It should be transformed into an arena where the teacher— aspirant is able to gain not only experience but also enhances his ability and reputation as the one who encourages speaking—process among the learners.

Only by speaking and listening one could learn is a universally acknowledged but never implemented method in our classrooms. We are grown in a ‘Don’t talk’ and ‘Keep quiet’ classroom – environment. This is what the teachers of today usually do in their class—rooms. This kind of ‘hoodoo’ must be broken first at the ground level. The teacher— aspirant must be allowed to freely innovate, solely for the benefit of the child—learner. The TTIs’ role in this exercise is the most important and enduring one. Only they can instill in their trainees the imperativeness of this reality.

The teacher— aspirant must be made aware of the fact that the young child—learner feels more comfortable in his natural environment outside the classroom. So, the child—learner must be encouraged to speak. They should be encouraged to sit together and talk to each other freely. We have already given it a fanciful name, Peer Group Learning, and learn of it theoretically, but in practice taking care not to allow it to take roots.

The “Peer Group Learning” is one of the few learning methods available to break the ice of fear, resistance and adamancy in the young child-- learner and make way naturally and automatically to what is called “Flipped Classroom”. It was devised first by the two American teachers of innovation, Jonathan Berkman and Aaron Sam’s, for their Colorado Classrooms. My intention is not to ape their model. They did it roping in emerging technology in 2004, in America. But here, we should fashion a totally new model, different from what we are doing today, that is conducive and friendly to our child – learners.

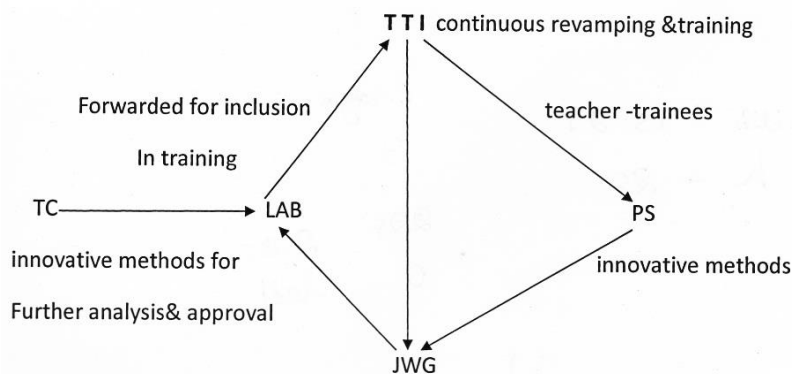
Here, I would call upon the teacher— aspirants as well as the teachers of the child—learners to use their ingenuity to fashion the most—friendly approach to make the children open—up with their peers first. Allow them to speak freely, first among themselves and then with their teachers. Encourage them to bring in the fascinating stories of their games, quarrels, relationships that include friendships, joys and sorrows, and in short, an entire world of excitement in which they live outside their schools. Listen to them, share with them, learn from them and lastly devise a friendly way to teach them what they are required to be taught.

In a county like India and in a so—called educationally advanced state like Tamil Nadu too, James Billon’s invention of 1801, the black board, is still the most potent device in a primary school classroom. The teacher – aspirant should be made aware of its importance and trained to make use of it fully. All the same, he should observe and record the progress made in that sphere of activity and bring it to the JWG.

The TTI that deposes its teacher— aspirant for such a venture must get ready a working

mechanism, an analytical one at that, to welcome the new efforts and analyses and take the right steps to incorporate them in their teaching methodology. It may even be called simply the 'LAB'. Thus, the 'LAB' should become the fulcrum to receive new initiatives, and after due process of discussion and analysis, must contribute to the building up of innovative, practically useful teaching methods for the TTIs to train its teacher – trainees and convert them into teacher-innovators. Once again, the LAB must also be a receptacle to the initiatives brought in through the JWG. The momentum must be taken forward is the most vital requirement here.

Another important initiative is to create a permanent body in the TTIs. One may call it THE CLUB OF IDEAS, or simply THE CLUB (TC). This is apart from the largely ceremonial 'Alumni clubs' we usually have in the TTIs. Those of the students of the TTIs who are employed as teachers in different schools should be encouraged to become members of The TC and share any successful methods they have developed and used in the course of their teaching career. The new initiatives brought through the TC also should be thoroughly discussed and analyses in the LAB and made a part of the institution's new teaching methodology. Thus, a multiple —channel information - flow could be made available and sustained throughout the year. By painstaking discussion and analysis, suitable teaching - methodologies could be devised and implemented to make the teacher—training more meaningful and result—oriented, as shown in the illustration below:



TTI - Teacher Training Institution; PS – Primary School ; JWG – Joint Working Group ; TC - The Club; LAB .

For instance, a TTI such as the Muslim College of Education could become the hub for the immediate educational ambience of its vicinity to successfully experiment and implement the appropriate innovative methods it could fashion, as suggested in this paper. In short, a whole gamut of real—time innovative teaching/learning activities can be initiated by the TTIs with a strong commitment of application to make the learning process a pleasurable one for the child—learners at the primary level.

To make it a success, the golden rules beg reiteration. They are:

- The TTIs must imbibe in the teacher— aspirants the strong dictum that they are always learners and teacher—innovators, and they should never hesitate to learn from even the

little toddlers as well as from the other teachers.

- They must commit themselves to learn and improvise.
- Whatever new ideas the employed teachers innovate and implement, they should always come back to “The Club” (TC) in their respective TTIs, and discuss, analyses and help in enriching the training methodology of the TTIs with their new formulations.
- The teacher – innovators and the employed teachers as well should convert their classrooms into “Flipped Classrooms
- They must always recognize that a talkative class, at this level, is the most productive class.
- They should also be enthusiastic participants and encourage the young learners to learn from their own experiences.
- If the TTIs can do this, they can very well stop the crumbling edifice called the Primary education in this country and rebuild it to toll the bell for the poor, innocent children.

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