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THE APPALLING CONDITIONS OF TEACHERS TODAY

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Abstract: Education is universally accepted as a fundamental human right. It not only contributes to employment, which enhances one's economic and social status but also paves the way for reducing poverty, unemployment and ill health, solving social and environmental issues, and promoting equality, empowerment and peace. Teachers have an indispensable role in education, as their primary duty is to impart knowledge to students and form them for the future world. Nevertheless, as the world progresses with technology, the role of teachers, today, is undermined and overlooked. This research paper seeks to explore the deplorable conditions in which many teachers in India are placed, explaining the multiple problems encountered by them. It analyses the transitional change brought in the key profession of teachers and its detrimental impact. Underlining the shortcomings of ranking-oriented education, it insists on the need for stress-free and peaceful ambience whereby teachers can work in a better way with dedication. It also expounds the hazardous outcome of the cyclic process of frequent examinations and tests. It highlights the importance of the involvement of adequate number of teacher-representatives in policy-making.

Keywords: teachers, education, examination, overtesting, ranking-oriented education, quantity over quality, work pressure, stress, 'immediately-illness,' technostress

Introduction

Food, water, air, clothing and shelter are considered the most basic needs of human beings. In today's society, education also is one of the most significant requirements for a dignified living. Lack of quality-education stands as a barrier to suitable employment. Education should be a means for human liberation. John Ruskin affirms that education is "the leading the human souls to what is best, and making what is best out of them; these two objects are always attainable together and by the same means; the

training which makes men happiest in themselves also makes them most serviceable to others" (230). He rejects the human tendency of equating education with great scholarship and tremendous intellectual knowledge: "The great leading error of modern times is the mistaking erudition for education" (230). In his viewpoint, true education is not a matter of how much humans know but "what will fit them to do their work, and to be happy in it" (231). Though teachers are said to be "at the centre of every education system," their role as teachers is "not properly recognized and supported" ("The Transformation"). Teachers in schools as well as in higher educational institutions encounter multiple problems today. This research article makes an analysis of some of those problems.

1. Paradigm Shift in Teachers' Profession

1.1. Teachers as Data Collectors, Data Entry Operators, Clerks and Non-Teaching Staff

Education plays a significant role in transforming the human lives. One of the key goals of education is to "provide socially relevant knowledge" (Kumar). Once upon a time, teachers were free and peaceful to do their work with dedication, and had enjoyed great esteem. Therefore, they were able to serve as good and dedicated teachers, and created a massive and positive influence on students. They were great teachers, because they had the ambience to work as teachers. They had to only teach the lessons, impart knowledge to students, and take care of the educational and moral needs of the students. Hence, they had time and opportunity to form the children to have a better future and become responsible human beings. Today, the profession of teachers, both at schools and colleges, has drastically changed. Accordingly, they suffer from work pressure and stress.

As observed by a veteran educationist, teachers, today, are "forced to do a range of data collection and entry operations—working as 'clerks'" (Mohanty). In fact, "[e]very teacher," as disclosed by a head teacher in a school, "has been reduced to a data entry operator" (Mohanty). Public policy expert Jean Dreze notifies that teachers are loaded with "excessive non-teaching duties." In addition to these works, they are also engaged in "election and census duty" (Mohanty). Vijay Kothari reveals that "teaching and research are not the only activities" of teachers in the university system. A college or university teacher is assigned with "a lot of administrative tasks too, that demand him to act as a clerk and not as an intellectual teacher or researcher" ("Being a Young Researcher").

Revealing the appalling conditions of schoolteachers, Subashini Vijayakumar says, "Many teachers from across TN complain that they are saddled with non-teaching work, affecting their ability to focus on teaching," adding that "[t]hese works…range from uploading health details of students on EMIS (Educational Management Information System), ensuring that government schemes reach children and even going door-to-door to link Aadhaar with voter's ID" ("Administrative Tasks"). According to Subashini, a teacher from Kancheepuram is said to have revealed that she had to "cover 1,400 houses and help residents link Aadhaar with voter's ID" ("Administrative Tasks"). The teacher regrets to say, "While we should be spending more time teaching children, we are using the majority of our time sending details

of students to district educational officers and filling in details on the EMIS app" (quoted in "Administrative Tasks"). Another government schoolteacher says, "We can ask for an hour between 3 pm and 4 pm to do this work. But, as school-related work keeps us busy, we are forced to do the work after school hours. We have to also attend meetings with revenue officials. This is taking a toll on our health and school work" (quoted in "Administrative Tasks"). Subashini's news report reveals that the school education department has demanded the teachers "to upload health details of students on the EMIS app through a list of 36 yes-or-no questions," which include "questions on the size of their heads, facial and dental features, and whether they smoke/drink and play online games for long hours" ("Administrative Tasks"). In the mid of May 2024, schoolteachers in Tamil Nadu were suddenly asked to do the task of verifying the mobile numbers of students' parents in the EMIS portal. Teachers had to make a call to every parent and explain the details to get the "OTPs sent to their mobile phones to add them to the EMIS portal" (Sundaram). Some parents did not pick the mobile phones even after repeated calling. Many parents used to raise many questions as they had "suspicions about potential scams," and they were reluctant to give the OTPs, "citing RBI and Police warnings against sharing OTPs over phone calls" (Sundaram). Besides these difficulties, the teachers had to face a lot of mental stress due to technical and network issues, because as it was summer vacation, some teachers were out of station where they would not be able to work with ease, and in a similar way, many children also were out of station with their parents. Thus, the teachers had a very hectic and tough time to update the parents' mobile numbers in the database.

Teachers suffer from what could be termed as 'immediately-illness,' which generates an enormous amount of stress to them. That is, there are occasions when teachers are, all of a sudden, asked to submit, or collect and provide certain data 'immediately' without any notice in advance, or without giving them adequate amount of time. They are given certain tasks 'suddenly' to complete them 'immediately.' Such kind of hasty and instant demand from teachers displays the improper planning, and ill-organized and inefficient nature of those who demand such tasks from teachers to be done 'immediately' without informing them beforehand and without giving them sufficient time to complete those tasks without mental pressure and work-life imbalance. Thus, teachers, today, are prone to an immense amount of work pressure, stress and ill health.

To put it briefly, today, teachers at schools and higher educational institutions are prevented from being teachers, and are forced to function as data collectors, data entry operators, record cum document writers, report writers, clerks and non-teaching staff. Moreover, they are also coerced to maintain multiple records of students. This will generate detrimental consequences on the students and thereby on the future of the nation.

1.2. Teachers as Marketing Executives and Canvassers for Admission

Teachers in several private schools and colleges are used as marketing executives, salespersons and canvassers for increasing admission in the respective institutions. The private institutes in Indian education, as pointed out by Raka Bhattacharyya, "fight to fill up their seats before the season begins every year" ("Indian Education"). Teachers in private educational institutions are given a target to fetch admissions depending upon which they are given a very minimum increment in their salary. This is obvious in various reports published in the newspapers. Speaking about how teachers in schools, particularly in CBSC schools in Hyderabad, are involved in canvassing for admissions, Sadaf Aman writes, "Managements select one locality each day and ask teachers to get information from household in the area — details like the number of children and where they are studying—and then lure parents into admitting their wards to their schools" ("Private Schools Force Teachers"). VRC Phaniharan presents a report of similar incidents, unveiling that women teachers are used as "salesgirls," who are enforced to make "door to door visits" to canvass and strengthen the admission in the institutions where they are working ("Private Schools Use Teachers as Salesgirls"). Sadaf Aman's report about how the payment of teachers' salary is linked with admissions they should bring is alarming and very much shocking: "A franchisee, which claims to have 64 schools across the state, issued a 'Consent Letter' to its teachers …which states that April 15-May 31 salaries will not be paid unless they get 20 new admissions. Another school has threatened to deduct `1,000 from the salaries of the teachers if they do not meet the targets" ("Private Schools Force Teachers"). This situation prevails across the country even today, and it exhibits the deplorable conditions of teachers.

Another news report published in *The New Indian Express* unveils how professors in private colleges are used as "marketing executives to rope in new students every year, letting education take a backseat." The professors are also coerced "to collect class 12 student databases, including their contact numbers, by visiting schools daily," and some colleges used to bribe the headmasters "to get the students' details." A female professor working at a private college in Coimbatore is said to reveal how she had "to work as a telemarketer to explain course details, fees, facilities, etc. to over 150 students daily" while each male professor was "assigned a target of ensuring at least five admissions in a field visit." The same news report discloses that "[s]alaries of a few professors also hinge on their ability to secure admissions" ("Professors in Tamil Nadu"). This observation raises an important question as to whether a teacher is paid for his noble profession of teaching and forming the students for the future, or for doing a colossal amount of clerical and non-teaching work and for fetching admission to the institutions.

Today, there are many educational institutions run by businesspersons and politicians, for whom, education is a commodity through which a huge amount of profit can be generated. Such people equate dedication of teachers with working long hours outside the class hours, deserting their health, families and their wellbeing. However, in reality, the research works reveal that productivity diminishes when the working hours are increased (Collewet and Sauermann15, Kodz 148). Long working hours lead to illness

(Pencavel 27). Therefore, in order to increase the productivity, employees should be given sufficient time to take care of their families, take adequate rest and relax for themselves. They should also be given the required resources to work without difficulties (Sanket). If they are stressed with work pressure, they will not be able to have a healthy work-life balance. Consequently, it will affect their health as well as their productivity in their workplace.

1.3. The Impact of the Change of Teachers' Profession

A person, who is trained as a surgeon, should be appointed in the respective field as a surgeon for him or her to treat the patients with care and contribute to the respective field. Instead, if a qualified person, who is appointed as a surgeon in a hospital, is asked to do the work of a civil engineer or data entry operator or clerk or tailor or some other profession regularly, and if he or she is expected at the same time to perform surgery on patients, what will happen to the patients? This is what will happen to education and students if teachers are diverted from performing their role teachers to performing duty as a clerk and nonteaching staff. Keshavamurthy and Thomas rightly point out that "[t]he magnitude of clerical work in many public institutions causes emotional and physical exhaustion" to teachers ("A Quiet Epidemic"). This exhaustion will have a harmful impact on the quality of education. In spite of doing such a lot of non-teaching work, teachers are expected to perform the miracle of not only completing the syllabus, but also making the students score more marks and show a marvelous percentage of results, particularly in schools. This creates a massive amount of stress among teachers. Ultimately, teachers do not have the opportunity of functioning as teachers today. Such diversion of teachers' profession will engender a negative impact. It is obvious in the observation made by academics and public policy experts, who warn that "the government's increasing demands for all kinds of information, and its policy of engaging teachers in the collection and entry of data, would hurt the quality of education at both government and private schools" (Mohanty).

Brooding over this remark unveils an alarming implication that diversion of teachers' profession into mere clerical and other non-teaching works will have a destructive impact on the future of the students and thereby the future of the nation. Jaspal Kaur, in his news report titled "Overworked Teachers Can't Provide Quality Education," rightly puts forth the hazardous impact on students caused by engaging of teachers in nonteaching work. According to him, involving teachers in "non-productive duties like census, aadhar card registration" and so forth, causes the students to be deprived of "actual learning experience from a teacher who is competent, qualified and appointed for a particular subject." Thus, it hampers "the quality of teaching-learning process." Overloading the teachers with non-teaching work, which affects quality of education, is like "double-edged sword, which is injuring both the students and the teachers" (Kaur).

2. Shift from Student-Oriented Education to Ranking-Oriented Education

Ranking has become a buzzword among educational institutions. As pointed by Francisco Marmolejo, rankings, today, are regarded as "a significant part of the tertiary education landscape, both globally and locally" ("Are We Obsessed"). With the introduction of multiple ranking and accreditation systems for academic institutions, the academic focus is shifted from student-oriented education to ranking-oriented education. In this regard, Vijay Kothari, talking about his personal experience in a report titled "Being a Young Researcher, Teacher, and Clerk at the Same Time," presents the real and the pathetic conditions of teachers at colleges and universities in India:

> In almost all Indian universities, faculty are required not only to teach but also to take on a variety of administrative responsibilities; and after that one needs to create time for research. These are the times when multiple ranking and accreditation systems for academic institutes are there in vogue. Educational institutes are made to apply for these assessment/accreditation/academic audit systems either by the government or they (particularly private institutes) just join the bandwagon out of the herd mentality. Most of such ranking/accreditation schemes involve a massive amount of paperwork to be done by the applying university, and a major chunk of this clerical work is to be done by the teaching staff. In addition to this, the teaching staff is also made to handle various non-academic portfolios like anti-ragging committee, anti-drug squad, extracurricular activities, convocation preparations, etc. Overall, this culminates in under-utilisation of the highly qualified intellectual faculty. Its demoralising impact on the teaching professional is obviously quite a lot.

Vijay Kothari's observation is applicable to teachers working at colleges as well as universities. In terms of the clerical and non-teaching works, it is quite applicable to schoolteachers as well. Educational institutions are competing to obtain ranking, which involves a colossal amount of paper and document work, which falls ultimately on the shoulders of teachers. Furthermore, the ranking authorities expect the educational institutions to have multiple number of clubs and committees, which are demanded to organize a number of activities and programmes, excluding the usual programmes such as conferences, workshops, endowment lectures and the like, which are related to the subject of the respective departments. These works too are again completely loaded on teachers, who again must create all documents and records in connection with these programmes. Besides these activities, the respective departments take effort to conduct various cultural events for the good of the students. Teachers are also forced to track the alumni and maintain the record of their whereabouts and what they are doing. Teachers' non-teaching tasks, which have occupied the primary place in their professional life in the recent years, have pushed their professional work of teaching and learning to the secondary level. In addition to manifold tasks, teachers are also expected to pay attention to research. When the mind of teachers is completely exhausted and is in a stressful state, how can they focus on learning and the well-being of students? The knowledge, potentials and skills of the teachers are wasted on doing fruitless and

multiple clerical and non-teaching works. Teachers are made to believe that document-making is more important and greater than learning and imparting knowledge and values to students.

Sharon Fonn, in her news article entitled "University Rankings are Unscientific and Bad for Education: Experts Point out the Flaws," warns of the danger of focusing on ranking: "An obsession with ranking creates perverse incentives to act to improve a rank rather than get on with the worthwhile work of universities." Therefore, it is time to realize that "[i]f rankings become the end rather than the means towards better tertiary education, then this should be a matter of concern. An excessive importance given by institutional and government decision-makers on rankings may be both disturbing and alarming" (Marmolejo). The alarming ambience is obvious in the following:

> Most well-known rankings tend to equate institutional quality with research productivity, which is measured either by the number and impact of their publications in peer-reviewed journals, or the selectivity on their admission processes. Of course, such a proxy of quality downgrades institutions that place greater emphasis on teaching and prolongs the 'publish or perish' principle. In pursuing better position in the rankings, most probably internal and external funding may tend to favor academic programs or research units that are more inclined to get involved in the dynamics of researching and publishing. Finally, it diminishes the role of other important functions of tertiary education institutions such as teaching and public service. ("Are We Obsessed")

If education should be fruitful to students, it must be borne in mind that teachers and students should have a peaceful, joyful and academic ambience. In the news report entitled, "A Quiet Epidemic of Clerical Work is Choking Public Education," published in *The Wire*, Kiran Keshavamurthy and Renny Thomas write, "Teaching and learning are no longer joyful experiences for teachers and students. In effect, the students lack interpretive skills since they have not been trained to be critical." It is to be noted that "[h]aving a peaceful place to write, think and teach without fear is not a privilege but a basic right for every academic" ("A Quiet Epidemic").

3. Prioritizing Quantity over Quality: Its Harmful Effect

Extracurricular and co-curricular activities are essential to the holistic development of students. However, laying too much emphasis on those activities will dismantle the key purpose of education. As revealed by Jaspal Kaur, the current education system pays too much attention to extracurricular activities of the students. When the teachers are involved in conducting too many programmes, regular classes are immensely affected. Consequently, the teachers as well as the students become the sufferers ("Overworked Teachers"). As the educational institutions are expected by the ranking authorities to organize a number of programmes and activities, the attention is diverted from quality of work to quantity of work. That is to say, on the pretext of innovation and excellence, the number of programmes and functions and thereby amount of work of the teachers mushroom year after year. Therefore, the teachers

are forced to conduct several programmes just for the sake of records and documents. Additionally, they are expected to organize extra-credit courses, certificate courses and other courses outside their regular class hours. There is an expectation to have new ventures and initiation of new activities and programmes every year.

If a bus, which has a long way to reach the destination, has the capacity of seating only 35 passengers, and if it carries only 35 passengers, the journey will be comfortable, smooth and safe. If a few more passengers are added, they will have to stand in the bus, and there will be an experience of congestion and inconvenience. Retaining all these passengers in the bus, if new passengers are added in every place it goes through, and let us assume that the bus carries 60 passengers, then the smooth movement of the bus, and the journey of the passengers will be drastically affected. The bus will either get collapsed or meet with a massive accident. A safe and purposeful journey cannot be ensured. This is applicable to humans and their activities, and accordingly to the educational system as well. If new ventures and programmes are adopted in every educational institution every year, then the ventures and programmes of the past must be done away with in order to maintain a balance. Instead, retaining all the past programmes and activities in schools and colleges or any department, if new ventures and programmes are added every year, it will affect the quality of those activities, increase the workload and stress of teachers as well as students, and thus drastically downgrade the teaching-learning process and the purpose of education. Therefore, the focus should be on quality rather than quantity of programmes and activities.

In private schools and colleges, on the one hand, there are multiple number of events and programmes organized wherein teachers and students are involved and kept busy, and whereby many classes are affected and cancelled. On the other hand, the teachers are expected to perform the magic of completing the portions on time, and make the students perform in the best way, even if the students do not attend the classes regularly and do not take effort to study well. Yasmeen Hossain unveils this problem faced by teachers, saying, “a lot of instructional time” in private schools “is lost to rehearse high profile school events like annual day, sports day etc and with the time that is left over teachers are expected to finish the curriculum with finesse” (“Problems Faced by Indian Teachers”). Hossain’s observation is applicable to higher educational institutions as well.

4. The Hazardous Impact of the Cyclic Process of Frequent Examinations and Tests

Examinations and tests are very essential to test the knowledge and skills of students in the subjects wherein they are trained. Exams not only serve as “the source that measures the capabilities and abilities of students” but also enable them to “discover their own weaknesses and strengths” (Alysha). However, too much of anything is good for nothing. Jaspal Kaur claims that the new system of student-assessment in schools has increased the work of schoolteachers. He notifies that evaluation of students

through formative and summative assessment has made the teachers to be "most of the time" involved in "record-keeping only" ("Overworked Teachers).

Too many examinations ruin the mindset of students to acquire knowledge, and bury their interest in enhancing their innate skills and talents. They also spoil their health and their routine healthy activities. Nevertheless, very unfortunately, many educational institutions have not yet realized the fact that excessive emphasis on examinations and tests has "negative effects on both teachers and students" ("Why Less Testing"). "Overtesting," as rightly pointed out by Sobana Balasubramanian, "is not the best strategy to properly teach material and ensure that students are learning to their maximum capability. In fact, it generally detracts from the student's well-being and health" ("Too Many Tests"). Dr. Rachel Brown identifies three problems caused by overtesting in schools that are pertinent for discussion: "(a) student fatigue, (b) practice effects, and (c) false positives" ("Avoiding Overtesting"). These problems are applicable not only to school students but also to college and university students.

Speaking of how overtesting paves the way for 'student fatigue,' Rachel Brown claims that when so many tests are conducted "in rapid succession," students "develop either test anxiety or stop trying to do their best on the tests" ("Avoiding Overtesting"). He articulates that too many successive tests will engender 'test anxiety,' which is characterized by "sleeplessness, lack of appetite, fear, and even physical symptoms such as headaches and stomachaches," and which will consequently have a harmful impact on "the student's ability to perform well on the assessments" ("Avoiding Overtesting"). The Anxiety and Depression Association of America reveals that test anxiety gives birth to "feelings of disappointment, anger, helplessness and fear" ("The Psychological Effects").

Concerning 'practice effects,' Dr. Rachel Brown argues that frequent tests will make the students "end up practicing the right answers" and thereby the students will no longer be "challenged by the questions." Thus, frequent tests, according to him, will lead to the loss of the purpose of a real test ("Avoiding Overtesting"). Rachel Brown admonishes that when there is "a large number of tests over short periods of time, there is an increased likelihood that the results for each student are not correct" ("Avoiding Overtesting"). The reason is very obvious: on the one hand, the teachers are forced to complete the formality of testing, and on the other hand, the students are compelled to undergo the process of exams and tests just for the namesake.

Thus, it is evident that when there are too many examinations and tests, the students will not take those examinations and tests very seriously as their attention is diverted from acquisition of knowledge and skills to mere memorizing and studying just for the sake of examination. Frequent examinations and tests not only reduce the performance of the students but also force them to overlook deep understanding of the lessons. They open the way for students' physical and mental illness. Furthermore, the students become unable to concentrate on developing their creative skills as well as critical thinking skills. The

ultimate outcome is mere surface-level learning, which deprives the students of their deeper knowledge, which is fundamental for their better future.

On the part of the teachers, when there are too many exams and tests, there are too many deadlines for them to set question papers, complete the exams and tests, assess and grade the students' performance, and maintain the records of their marks. These too many deadlines become 'deadly' lines for teachers, which preoccupy their minds more with setting question papers, conducting exams, and making assessment and entry of marks than teaching, learning, and imparting knowledge and skills to the students. Considerable amount of instructional time is wasted on this cyclic process of exams and tests. In such a fatiguing ambience, teachers are given an impression that the process of completing tests, making assessment, and entering the marks on time is more scholarly work than teaching and learning. Here, the priority is transferred from teaching and learning experience to the cyclic process of mere formality of setting question papers, conducting exams and tests, and maintaining the records. In this context, Sobana Balasubramanian, in her article entitled "Too Many Tests Can Detract from Joy of Learning," warns of the dangers of frequent examinations and tests:

> If the purpose of school is to foster a productive environment where an emphasis on learning is widespread, then repeated testing should not be practiced. Often, when students are given frequent tests and do poorly on one, a fear of failure starts to set in, resulting in an increased sense of anxiety for other tests. Overtesting essentially leads to stressed and tired students who are not at an optimal attitude to learn. Additionally, frequent tests can lead to some students who decide to give up and not try at all. When something becomes abundant, one often sees its value significantly diminish.

In fact, Sobana Balasubramanian's view is applicable to all types of students whether they are school students or college students. In schools, even small children undergo too many tests. It must be borne in mind that "[e]xams make children fearful and unable to engage their minds fully in learning. Even those who do well are always under stress to keep up their good performance" ("Tests and Exams"). As reported by Sonal Khetarpal, Professor Pankaj Chandra, Vice-Chancellor of Ahmedabad University, is of the opinion that in today's education system in India, "[t]here is too much focus on exams and not learning. This often desists the teacher to innovate their pedagogy. Exam becomes the end goal for the faculty, the learning and the curriculum" ("Indian Education System"). In this context, it indispensable to remember that the attempt to enhance the number of academic tasks of the students will only downgrade the quality of work. Ira A. MacKay, in his article, "The Value of Educational Criticism," terms the attempt "to raise the standards of education by increasing the amount of work" of the students as "a cardinal mistake" (191). To him, it is not the quantity of work done by the student but how he or she does the work that really matters (191). Too many tests and exams disturb the students' active learning, and make their learning more mechanical. Thus, the students are conditioned to study just for the sake of writing tests, and their actual knowledge-acquisition is immensely hurdled and is in jeopardy.

5. Master-Slave Relationship

Every human being in this world, as a human being, deserves to have a dignified living, and needs to get respect and honour, irrespective of status, rank, caste, creed, religion, language, race, or any other distinction. The relationship between teachers and their authorities is a serious matter of concern as the former play a fundamental and indispensable role for the development of educational institutions and for the construction of a progressive nation. Accordingly, the relationship between teachers and their authorities needs to be healthy, reliable and pleasant. Mutual respect and dignity are basic prerequisites in a workplace. As stated by V. Neelagandan, "after the birth of privatization in education, the so-called fathers of education [kalvithanthaigal] today have begun to treat the teachers like the bonded labourers" ("Are Private College Teachers Modern Bonded Labourers"?). Some authorities in some of the educational institutions, particularly in private institutions, when they are in power, assume that they are emperors, and the teachers working under them are mere slaves. They expect the teachers to obey them blindly and say yes to whatever they say. They do not have any regard for the teachers. There are occasions when teachers are ill-treated, insulted and tormented by certain authorities. According to Shobhit Rawat, "teachers in private institutions have been fired without notice on numerous occasions," and they are "exploited" and "forced to do work at the mercy of such institutions" where their working hours are increased "without compensating for overtime" ("Rights"). Sometimes, teachers in some institutions find it very difficult to take Casual Leave (CL) or Medical Leave (ML) when they are in need. In some schools, teachers need to personally go and beg for leave when they are in need.

For instance, the researcher was shared an information by a schoolteacher about her bitter experience in her school. The headmistress in her school issued a rule stating that if any teacher needed a Casual Leave suddenly, she or one of her family members had to personally go to school and ask for leave even if she was sick. If a sick teacher, living in a nuclear family, did not have a family member to personally go and inform the headmistress, the concerned sick teacher had to personally go and inform her. Otherwise, the headmistress used to deny leave for the teacher. The concerned teacher was not permitted to just make a call or send message to the headmistress to pass on the information in such a situation of emergency. There are occasions when teachers, in order to avoid standing in front of such cruel, inhuman and rude authorities, prefer to go and work with illness. First of all, a teacher takes leave when he or she has some important work or attends some important functions and so forth. When there are preplanned programmes or tasks, one might give a leave form in advance. When someone falls sick suddenly, or has a situation of emergency, how is it possible for him or her to personally approach the concerned authority to take leave? This will only worsen his or her illness and stress.

There are some schools, including aided schools for instance, which do not issue pay slip with signature from the respective authorities regularly. When a teacher needs to take a loan from a bank, the respective bank asks for 6-month pay slips, which should have been duly signed by the correspondent or respective signing authority of the institution. On such occasions, the teacher has to personally approach

the authority, and finds it very hard to get it as favoritism plays an important role. At times, respect and honour for teachers are determined by caste affiliations and personal likes and dislikes of the authorities. The slavish treatment and master-slave relationship will not only put an end to the interest of the teachers to work with dedication and love but also their fervor for updating their knowledge, and their zeal for using their skills for the betterment of the students and institutions.

Due respect for employees, and empathy for them in their need serve like a positive catalyst, which will create a constructive impact on them, refreshing their mind and body to be more loyal to their profession. Trust in the employees is a very essential factor in a working place. There are institutions, both schools and colleges, where the authorities do not have trust in the teachers. It is to be noted that when teachers are not trusted, they lose their interest in their work, and their dedication to the profession is very much hindered. In order to enhance the trust of the employees in his company, Alex Pornomarev practises and recommends the method of "letting people do their work, paying them well, recognizing their achievements, encouraging them for new accomplishments, and allowing them to have time off they deserve" ("Measure the Quality"). If teachers are treated in a dignified manner, and are treated as teachers, making them avail themselves of their rights, they will work with dedication and happiness.

6. Low Salary

Low salary is one of the major problems encountered by teachers, working in private schools and colleges in India. Today, "[t]eaching is not considered as one of the most sought after career in India," and this is because of the multiple problems faced by teachers (Hossain). Study carried out by Amita Chudgar and Jutaro Sakamoto reveals that "…private school teachers experience less favorable working conditions in terms of non-monetary benefits, job security and collective bargaining compared to public-school teachers" ("Similar Work"). In private schools in India, "cheap labour" is preferred by the school management, and accordingly, in private institutions, teaching is "one of the most underpaid jobs barring some schools which strictly adhere to pay commission of scales" (Hossain). Of course, the same situation prevails in private colleges too.

Disclosing the pathetic conditions of teachers, working in private schools, Nikita Jain writes, "Year after year, teachers are forced to work without proper pay hike, while the work burden keeps going up manifold." She also registers a key grievance of the teachers in private schools: "the schools collect exorbitant fees from the parents in the name of 'development' and earn high profits, but do not pass on the financial benefits proportionately to their teaching staff" ("Overworked but Underpaid, Private School Teachers"). The teachers encounter "mental harassment" because their work pressure has gone up so much that they do not find any "transparency and equilibrium when it comes to their salary and workload" ("Overworked but Underpaid, Private School Teachers"). The same circumstance is found in private higher educational institutions also.

Speaking of the meagre salary of college teachers in private institutes in Nagaland, L Singsit unveils that a college teacher's salary is lower than that of an auto driver. According to his report presented in 2022, a college teacher "with a masters degree and NET gets about a mere Rs. 22,000 per month in private colleges in Nagaland" while "the starting pay for Assistant Professors in Delhi University" is "Rs. 75,000." Singsit claims that "auto drivers in Dimapur earn about Rs. 25,000-35,000 per month" ("Need for Higher Pay"). According to an editorial published in *Nagaland Page* in 2020, majority of the schoolteachers in Nagaland are paid "Rs 5000 to Rs 8000 per month." They are "exploited by the school management" and "this exploitation has gone unnoticed over the years" ("Bonded Labourers"). As reported by R. Radhika, "an ECCE [Early childhood care and education] teacher earns Rs 7, 665 which is about a third lower than government teachers' salary of Rs 11,394. At the primary level, on an average, teachers earn Rs 11,086 only, which is 65% lower than government teachers' salary of Rs 31,225" ("How School Teachers"). The amount may vary a little in the other private schools and colleges throughout India. These examples are just samples to disclose that teachers working in private educational institutions, with an exception to a few institutions here and there, earn a very meagre income, which is quite inadequate to manage their families smoothly and peacefully. Put in simple words, in many schools and colleges, the salary of a teacher is lower than that of a mason or a coolie worker, but the amount of work that is extracted from him or her is multiple times higher. Therefore, this issue requires a very serious attention.

Many private educational institutions do not retain the same teachers for many years, except a very few senior teachers here and there. Some private institutions create "mental pressure to force the teachers to quit" ("Bonded Labourers"). The reason is that the respective institutions, by doing so, can avoid providing regular increments and other incentives to teachers. If they recruit freshers or persons with less experience in large numbers every year, they can give very low salary to them. If senior teachers are retained, they will have to pay higher salary along with increment. The private institutions usually prefer to go for cheap labour. Thus, poor salary is one the major problems of teachers working in private schools and colleges in India. Appointing teachers in government educational institutions on temporary basis is another problem faced by teachers. As observed by Arun Kumar, undermining the role of teachers, allocating lack of sufficient fund for education, and recruiting the teachers on temporary basis, have made numerous teachers "become insecure, as they have no autonomy and are shamelessly exploited by the administration" ("Education in India"). The sense of insecurity among teachers will hinder their dedicative spirit. Therefore, there is a need for guaranteed job security with lucrative salary for all teachers, more particularly for those, who are working in private educational institutions.

7. Teachers Forced to Come to Streets for Their Rights

The pathetic condition of both school and college teachers is that they are forced to come to streets and fight for their rights periodically. The regular promotions, periodic salary hike and other benefits of school and college teachers in the government institutions, particularly in the government-aided

institutions are most often long delayed and at times denied in the recent years. The situation of the teachers of the aided institutions is more pathetic. Unless teachers come to streets and protest, the governments do not pay much attention to these issues. Teachers are forced to fight for their rights. In this regard, there have been several agitations and protests by various teachers' associations ("Aided College Teachers Protest," "ACTA Protests Withdrawal").

One of the key demands of teachers is the old pension scheme. Every human being, with the exception of those with premature death, has to grow old whether he or she likes it or not. Old age is regarded as second childhood as old people begin to lose their physical and mental energy and be dependent on others for support. Persons at their old age suffer from several diseases, and therefore, without a decent and regular income they are, many times, considered a burden in poor and middle-class families. When a person, who has been earning monthly salary for so many years, retires and does not get regular and sufficient pension, he or she begins to lose not only respect in the family but also care and love from the family members. Pension helps a retired person to lead a dignified life. It helps a pensioner to lead an independent and tension-free life. Even if the family members do not willingly care for them, they will express their concern for them at least for the sake of regular pension they get. Furthermore, the number of joint families is getting gradually diminished. Therefore, adequate amount of pension is one of the most important requirements of retired persons for leading the rest of their lives in a dignified manner. That is the reason why the government employees and the teachers of both schools and colleges are protesting against CPS (Contributory Pension Scheme), which has come into effect from 2004, and which is not of much use for the retired members. It is the old pension scheme, which, with a better assured and regular income, guarantees a better life even after retirement. That is why government servants and teachers are demanding and fighting for the old pension scheme.

Teachers and other government servants continue to fight for implementation of the old pension scheme. It is to be noted that "[t]eachers and staff members in granted and government schools across the state have embarked on a strike … over the old pension scheme" (Rao, "Gujarat Statewide Protests"). It is very unfortunate that the politicians, who serve just for a term of five years as MLAs or MPs, get pension along with several allowances throughout their life. According to Salary, Allowances and Pension of Members of Parliament Act 1954, "a former MP getting any other pension is also entitled to receive pension as an ex-MP" ("Ex-MPs Can Take Pension"). But a teacher or a government employee appointed after 2004, serving for 20 years, 30 years or even more is denied of pension as per the old pension scheme. This is indeed an unjust practice.

8. No Proper Forum to Express the Grievances Freely and Openly

The conditions of teachers working in the private educational institutions are very much appalling. The teachers do not have opportunities and right forum to express their grievances freely and openly. In many of the government and government-aided institutions, there are at least unions and associations

through which teachers could express their common grievances to some extent. As remarked by Amita Chudgar and Jutaro Sakamoto, teachers in private schools have "a lower access to teacher unions" ("Similar Work"). In completely self-financed institutions, and in some aided institutions, teachers do not have unions or associations, which can represent their suggestions and grievances because they are not permitted to have them. In such institutions, teachers cannot voice for their rights. If they do so, either they will be chucked out of the institutions or they will be cornered and avenged when they ask for their rights. On the one hand, teachers are expected to discharge the responsibilities most sincerely and overwork for the higher profit of the institutions, and on the other hand, when it comes to their rights, they cannot avail themselves of their rights when they are in need.

The private educational institutions used to collect the original academic certificates of teachers while employing them. Many institutes did not even give the teachers the receipt of the certificates they had received. In such circumstances, when a teacher wanted to leave the institute, especially for better future, he or she used to find it very difficult to get back the certificates. Some teachers have lost their better future because of this inhuman practice. That is why, realizing that "[t]eachers face tough time in recovering their certificates from the institutes when they leave their jobs," and "[e]ven many teachers are unable to recover the documents on time and lose better opportunities," the UGC had instructed the institutes in 2020 not to retain the original certificates of teachers ("UGC to Institutes"). Even then, many schools and colleges continue to collect the original academic certificates of teachers when they employ them.

9. Duplication of Work: Technology and Its Impact

Humans are caught into the web of technology. Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Artificial Generic Intelligence (AGI) have already crept into education system. Human life, at present, particularly in the future, cannot be thought of without technology. Technology should reduce the work of humans, and should make the work much easier. But very unfortunately, in many institutions, technology is used more to increase the amount of work, and to duplicate and complicate the work. For instance, in schools in Tamil Nadu, new system of student-assessment, which involves formative and summative assessment, has made the work of teachers more tedious and stressful. In many schools, the teachers manually write the same marks and assessment grades of class students in so many registers, besides in the rank sheets. Each student in each register has more than twenty entries, with formative and summative grades. Finally, the same details should be typed in the Excel sheet templates. This is a mere duplication of work, which creates a lot of strain among teachers. Instead, the teachers can maintain a single register, the details of which can be entered in a single template given by the government. Thereby, they can take any number of printouts they want and get them signed by the respective teachers and the headmaster.

Another fatiguing non-teaching task assigned to teachers is that even admission details and other details, which are maintained by the respective persons in the respective offices of the educational

institutions concerned, are many times collected through teachers. Thus, the burden of teachers is multiplied. Therefore, adequate number of qualified professionals should be appointed exclusively for data collection, data entry and maintenance in every educational institution. Required software should be created for all types of details to be entered by the professionals and the respective persons, and maintained in a single platform, and they should be able to get any details automatically in any format they want, instead of always asking the teachers to repeatedly do all kinds of data-gathering and data entry. Thereby, teachers should be left free to concentrate on their profession.

Technology is very useful for teaching and learning. However, as stated by Arun Kumar, "Teaching is currently being undermined by the growing emphasis on technology" ("Education in India"). Moreover, technology has paved the way for teachers' technostress as it drives them to "work too much and too fast," ultimately leading them to their ill-health and low productivity (Bourlakis et al.). Stress causes both physical as well as psychological diseases. It engenders "damaging consequences for both the workers and their organizations" (Bourlakis et al.). Therefore, technology in the educational institutions should be used in such a way that neither teachers nor students are pushed into the pool of work pressure and stress. Otherwise, the damage will be there not only for teachers but also for their institutions and for the future of the students and thereby the future of the nation. It should be borne in mind that the role of teachers can never be replaced with technology.

10. Reasons for the Appalling Conditions of Teachers: Wrong Picture of Good Teachers

There are several reasons for the deplorable conditions of teachers. As revealed by Yasmeen Hossain, one of the reasons for the appalling conditions of teachers is that they "don't have a voice and have no say about educational policy." Furthermore, the idea of a motivated or good teacher is falsely projected and expected. According to Yasmeen Hossain, a teacher, who is merely "regular to school every day, follows official protocols blindly without questioning and if necessary provide information that management team wants," is erroneously considered a motivated teacher. Yasmeen adds that the teachers are expected to focus on "complying orders as fount fit by the administrative department" and serve as "puppets who have no voice" ("Problems Faced by Indian Teachers"). Yasmeen Hossain's observation reveals that a teacher is not often regarded as a great teacher for his or her teaching-learning experience, knowledge, and performance in the classroom but for blindly following the protocols and orders, and saying always yes to their boss.

11. A Key Source of the Problem in Policy-Making

11.1. Wrong Policies as an Offshoot of the Joint Venture of the Politicians, Bureaucracy and the Academics with a Bureaucratised Mindset

Policy-making plays a major role in bringing about positive or negative transformation in every sector. Right policies, which are framed judiciously, with proper discussion and debate, involving the right persons from the respective sector creates and promotes valuable outcome. Arun Kumar identifies

that the key source of the problem in the realm of education is rooted in policy-making. According to him, "the policymakers, including academics in positions of authority, have imposed policies that are wholly unsuitable for teaching" ("Education in India"). These unsuitable policies are greatly responsible for the miserable conditions of teachers as they have not only caused "a decline in the self-esteem of teachers" but also made teaching and research more "mechanical" ("Education in India"). Arun Kumar asserts that the wrong policy-making concerning education is an offshoot of the joint venture of the politicians, bureaucracy and the academics with a bureaucratised mindset, and he brings out this idea very clearly in the following words: "The decline began with academia ceding ground in policymaking to the politicians and bureaucracy. Academics co-opted into policymaking are the ones with a bureaucratised mindset who do not see the problem from the academic prism. The politicians absolve themselves by pointing out that the policies were formulated by academics in consultation with the academic world" ("Education in India").

11.2. Dangers from Colleagues: The Need for Teacher-Representatives in Policy-Making

Constructive criticism is an essential ingredient for the growth of an institution. Arun Kumar observes, "The bureaucrat academics heading institutions treat dissent as a malaise rather than as the essence of higher education" ("Education in India"). He adds that teachers especially the senior ones are often indifferent and do not resist the policies or decisions, which are against the wellbeing and progress of teachers ("Education in India"). At times, certain teachers, after having enjoyed all the rights and benefits, which are accessible to a teacher while working as ordinary teachers, begin to work and voice against the same rights and benefits of other teachers when they (the former) come to power or higher positions in order to please or obtain certain fringe benefits and favours from higher authorities. Particularly, when they are on the verge of end of their service, they begin to work against the welfare of their own fellow-teachers, who have many years of service. As revealed by UNESCO, "The transformation of education also begins when teachers actively participate in social dialogue, decision-making processes and policies. They need to be heard from the classroom to the policy level" ("The Transformation"). It is obvious here that if right policies, concerning teachers, need to be taken, right teacher-representatives, who can 'truly represent' the views, grievances and requirements of teachers, need to be appointed in every institution to get the opinion of every teacher. The chosen teacher-representatives, after consolidating opinions of teachers, may select members at regional, district and state levels. Finally, a group of members, after consolidating the views of all teachers, can be involved in the policy-making process. Persons, who represent teachers, need to be teachers, and they should not be 'yes-persons' or sycophants. They should not be the ones who occupy any administrative ranks or positions in any educational institution. They should be free from discriminatory and bureaucratised mindset. They should 'truly represent' the opinions, suggestions and grievances of teachers and should voice for the rights and wellbeing of both teachers and students.

Conclusion

Teachers' role is unavoidable for the development of a nation and it cannot be replaced with anything in this world. The analysis that has been made so far in this article evidently displays the various problems and challenges encountered by teachers at both schools as well as higher-educational institutions across the country. This research work clearly reveals that teachers, today, more particularly in private institutions, are in work pressure and stress, as their profession is diverted from teaching to doing a colossal amount of work as non-teaching staff. UNESCO says, "The transformation of education begins with the improvement of teachers' working conditions" ("The Transformation"). In this context, in order to improve the working conditions of teachers, teachers should be, first of all, treated as teachers and not as nonteaching staff. To accomplish this purpose, the government should make policies to relieve the teachers of the works done by them as data collectors, data entry operators, report writers, clerks, canvassers, marketing executives and nonteaching staff. The working ambience should be created in such a way that they do not have any work pressure or stress or technostress, which leads them to work-life imbalance, and physical and mental ill health. Teachers should have an ambience wherein they can learn more, update their knowledge, and serve as better teachers without any stress. The government should ensure such a working ambience for all teachers in all educational institutions. Teachers should be treated in a dignified manner with due respect and honour. The government should regulate and guarantee a lucrative salary, regular increments and other benefits for all teachers working in private institutions as well.

This research work also shows that conducting frequent examinations and tests is a hurdle to the progress of students and their talents, and paves the way for only rote learning and not for a serious and in-depth learning, which is essential for the future of students. The number of programmes organized by an educational institution or a department in a college or university needs to be regulated. Preference to quantity rather than the quality of programmes and functions will hamper the regular classes, and teaching and learning atmosphere. This article unveils the fact that ranking-oriented education not only downgrades the teaching and learning ambience but also hinders the core of education as it insists more on mere document creation, records, more quantity of programmes and activities, and stressful ambience. Policy-making, concerning education and teachers, should involve adequate number of right teacher-representatives from all kinds of educational institutions who can 'actually represent' the opinions, grievances, and the actual happenings at the grass-roots level for making right policies, which will ensure stress-free and good working ambience and the rights of teachers. Ultimately, teachers should be left free to focus on their noble profession of teaching and learning.

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