SOCIALLY EXCLUDED PROSPECTIVE TEACHERS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS PUPIL CENTERED PRACTICES

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A key challenge for all the innovative programmes initiated by the Central Government, State, NGOs and other stakeholders are to motivate teachers in government schools to adopt the 'joyful learning' and a 'pupil-centered' approaches associated with the revised, competency-based school curriculum. These approaches all demand that teaching and learning be geared to the needs of each individual learner. It is crucial that teacher education rises to these challenges, since repetition and drop-out are closely linked with joyless and teacher-centered schools. This is an important issue for social inclusion, as it is the government schools that serve the social groups who have so far been excluded from formal education. The present paper has highlighted the issues related with the pupil centered practices as innovative programme for the inclusive growth of the society.

INTRODUCTION

Large number of people in developing countries are socially excluded – excluded by mainstream society from participating fully in the economic, social and political life of the society where they live – often because of their cultural, religious or racial characteristics. These groups are typically poor also according to our normal definitions of poverty. The concept of social exclusion in social science literature is of recent origin. Social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional concept having social,cultural, political and economic ramifications. The concept of social exclusion is used to describe a group, or groups, of people who are excluded from the normal activities of their society, in multiple ways. Although the concept was initially developed in Europe, it has increasingly been applied to developing countries. While the precise definition varies, there is broad agreement that Social exclusion consists of exclusion from social, political and economic institutions resulting from a complex and dynamic set of processes and relationships that prevent individuals or groups from accessing resources, participating in society and asserting their rights. (Beall & Piron 2004). This definition immediately draws our attention to several key aspects of social exclusion which differentiate it from other definitions of poverty:It is multidimensional, including political dimensions as well as social and economic. Indeed, while there are complex and reinforcing processes, lack of power or unequal power relations is at the root of every type of exclusion.There is a process of exclusion and agency involved – the behaviour of particular agents and institutions leads to the exclusion of certain groups. Indeed some include this as part of the definition of Social Exclusion (SE) is the process through which individuals or groups are wholly or partially excluded from full participation in the society in which they live (de Haan & Maxwell 1998). Social exclusion occurs when the institutions that allocate resources and assign value operate in ways that systematically deny some groups the resources and recognition that would allow them to participate fully in social life (Zeitlyn 2004).Social exclusion tends to be a feature of groups, rather than individuals. These groups may be distinguished from others in society by their culture, religion, colour, gender, nationality or migration status, or caste; or they may be identified by gender, age, physical or mental disabilities or illness, or – in developed countries, particularly – by their housing or lack of it. It is relational, which means that its definition depends on what is normal in the particular society where people live. In India, certain communities and categories such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Religious Minorities, Females of all caste, creed, religion and people from rural background experience systemic exclusion in the matter of taking advantages of development. However in all these groups the nature, extent and forms of exclusion have been varied. The Xth Plan of Government of India recognizes that exclusion of people on account of social, religious, caste and gender adversely affect developmental outcomes.Though it has been widely acknowledged that simply expanding educational opportunities will not reduce the social exclusion in societies, but there is also no argument that it can definitely reduce the tension, violence, disruption, inequality and deprivation in society. In behavioural science, several approaches have been conceptualized which may be seen with multifaceted policies to eliminate social exclusion. The pupil

centered practices is one of them. There is widespread agreement that the key to the success of any policy and program is the teacher. The importance of the quality of teaching, and therefore of teachers, cannot be overemphasized. The role of the teacher as an agent of change, promoting understanding and tolerance has never been more obvious than today. Teachers are instrumental in the development of attitudes-positive or negative- towards learning. They can awaken curiosity, stimulate independence, encourage intellectual rigour and create the conditions for success in formal and continuing education. Teachers have crucial roles to play in preparing young people not only to face the future with confidence but to build it with purpose and responsibility. So every effort should be made to change the attitude of teachers so that prospective teachers towards successful implementation of inclusive policy like pupil centered practices.

In the present investigation, a comparative study was done to know the attitude of prospective teachers who belong to socially excluded groups like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Females and Rural background towards pupil centered practices – an approach for building social inclusion. Since social exclusion is a complex and multidimensional concept, a step has been initiated by the researcher to address this issue and establish the research findings whether there is any difference between the attitude of socially excluded groups like SC/ST, Female and rural background teachers in comparison to their counterparts.

Pupil Centered Practices
One major component of pupil-centered theory is that the curriculum meets the needs, abilities and interests of students. This sharply contrasts a more conventional theory that expects all children to meet the same curriculum. It is also important to understand the term developmental. This term is often used when referring to academic readiness and achievement. Not understanding the term can cause misinterpretations and concerns about a child's growth. Developmentally appropriate practice has two components: age and individuality. Age appropriateness refers to the universal physical, emotional, and cognitive predictable changes in children. Lessons are based on developmental readiness. Individual appropriateness reminds us that each child has a unique pattern and calendar of growth. The curriculum and teacher-child interactions are adjusted to developing abilities and this includes plans developed to enable students to work toward what is age appropriate in a manner that develops the student's confidence, self-esteem, and attitude toward learning. Individually appropriate also includes challenging the more capable or developed child. Various components of pupil-centered practices are:

Choice
Giving children choices is a major component of a pupil-centered approach. It is important to allow children to share in decision making, making choices and controlling of much of their learning. Children in class are encouraged to make choices and decisions, to plan and are empowered by sharing control with the teacher in various ways. Each week a different student makes up the seating chart. During work periods, children have the choice of sitting at their desks, on the floor, or even at the library. Students often volunteer to be homework checkers also.

Academic Choice Time (ACT)
In formative years of teaching, kids could have free time when they finished their work. The kids that earned this time were the ones who were the academically most developed. In a pupil-centered classroom, choice is a planned part of the curricular day. Allowing kids is a means of meeting their basic human needs of fun, freedom, power and belongingness. When children have choice, they will engage in activities that fit their learning styles, do quality work, and practice being self-directed. If not done properly and without structure, no learning takes place and parents can view it as chaos and worthless. It would be ideal to make choice part of the every day curriculum.

Homework

It seems as though children's lives in today's society are filled to the brim with after—school activities. Homework, which is always a controversial topic, can be quite stressful for children. The idea of giving students choice can also be woven into homework, creating less stress and a more positive attitude about assignments. Homework takes on a variety of formats in fourth grade. At times assignments are given on a daily basis and students write them in their homework planners. Other times a menu of assignments is given, and the students plan out their assignments around their after school activities. Often assignments are tailored to individuals and their specific needs. Children who fall into the expert areas on the learning line in the 3-R's have the opportunity to devise their own homework assignments. This format is often challenging to kids because they have been accustomed to having the teacher give assignments. Being able to evaluate where one is in his/her learning and to plan appropriate work are more advanced skills, and are more meaningful to the child.

Student Projects
Another important component of pupil-centered education and developmentally appropriate practices is giving children the opportunity to do projects on topics of their choice. One form involves having students choose a topic within a teacher's choice. If studying planets, for example, children can choose a planet to research. The other format, which may be more motivating, is giving students the freedom to select a topic of their choice. This is more in line with the pupil-centered theory mentioned earlier: A curriculum that meets the needs, abilities and interest of children. As part of the process, there are class discussions and teacher guidance about topics. We want topics to be of educational value and not the same topics researched in earlier grades.

Learning Styles and Learning Lines
In a pupil-centered approach, it is important to understand that children are in their development stages. It is also important to understand the learning styles of children. In our class students take a learning style inventory. After they learn their main learning style(s), strategies are given for the three main styles—visual, auditory and kinesthetic.

Self-Directed Learners
A pupil-centered environment fosters self-directed learners. Simply telling children to be self-directed and responsible does not work. They have to be taught and given opportunities to make choices and decisions. In class, students are introduced to the skills that, in theory, help kids become self-directed. The formula for helping kids become self-directed learners is as follows: When we give students choices they will have some of their human basic needs met; when giving choices, children will engage in activities that relate to their style of learning; when being engaged in student choices children will be practicing many of the intellectual skills; when this happens students learn to become self-directed and do quality work. Children do need adult guidance in learning the intellectual skills and this takes time. This all sounds good in theory, but the implementation of this theory has proven successful with both third and fourth grade students.

Genesis of the Study
The teacher's work is not confined simply to transmitting information or even knowledge: it also entails presenting that knowledge in the form of a statement of problems within a certain context and putting the problems into perspective, so that the learner can link their solution to broader issues. The teacher-pupil relationship aims at the full development of the pupil's personality with emphasis on self-reliance; from this point of view the authority vested in teachers is always paradoxical since it is not based on the assertion of their power but on the free recognition of the legitimacy of knowledge. This function of the teacher as a figure of authority will probably evolve, yet it remains essential as a source of the answers to questions raised by the pupil about the world and as a key prerequisite for the full success of the learning process. Besides, it is becoming increasingly necessary in modern societies for teaching to help form individual judgement and a sense of individual responsibility, so as to enable pupils to develop the ability

to foresee changes and to adjust to them, in other words to continue learning throughout their lives. Keeping in view the above facts it seems essential to study how the prospective teachers are coping with various factors and in what way they are related and different with other socio-demographic variables. Accordingly it has been decided by the investigator to undertake a research study of attitude of different socially excluded categories of prospective teachers towards pupil centered practices.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The present study has been designed with a view to find answers to the following questions:
Is there any difference between attitude of Male and Female prospective teachers towards pupil centered practices?
Is there any difference between attitude of Gen and SC/ST category prospective teachers towards pupil centered practices?
Is there any difference between attitude of Rural and Urban background prospective teachers towards pupil centered practices?

HYPOTHESES
There is significant difference between attitude of Male and Female prospective teachers towards pupil centered practices.
There exists significant difference between attitude of Gen and SC/ST category prospective teachers towards pupil centered practices.
There exists significant difference between attitude of Rural and Urban background prospective teachers towards pupil centered practices.

DESIGN OF THE RESEARCH
So far as the research methodology is concerned, the present study comes under the scope of Descriptive Research. This was a status study of descriptive nature, made on the basis of data gathered through field investigation.

Field of Investigation
The field of investigation in the present study was students of B.Ed., i.e. prospective teachers studying in the Colleges of Education affiliated to Choudhary Charan Singh University, Meerut. For the present study, four clusters were taken. The prospective teachers were the primary units. The sample i.e. 120 prospective teachers were selected from three different B. Ed. training colleges of Gautam Budh Nagar, U.P. which had been selected randomly.

Instruments Used
This investigation was undertaken to see the attitude of prospective teachers towards pupil centered practices. Accordingly following tools were used for the present research.
Personal Data sheet: A personal data sheet included questions regarding sex, caste and family back ground.
Teacher Attitude Inventory (TAl): Teacher attitude inventory developed by Ahluwalia (1978). This inventory is a 90 item Likert instrument consisting of six sub-scales developed by the Likert summated rating procedure. Each scale has 15 statements that pertain to a particular aspect of prospective and practicing teacher's professional attitudes. For the present investigation, pupil centered practice subscale of the test was the tool of the research.

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION
It was found that male and female prospective teachers do not exhibit significant statistical difference (t=1.801) towards pupil centered practices. However, attitude of female prospective teachers (M=44.32) was better than their male counterparts (M=42.20). Although attitude towards pupil centered practices of General category prospective teachers (M=43.00) had an edge over SC/ST category (M=42.35) counterparts, there was no significant statistical difference (t=0.437) between the two. Rural and urban

prospective teachers also did not exhibit any significant statistical difference (t=0.092) in attitude towards pupil centered practices despite urban prospective teachers (M=43.27) having slightly higher mean value (M=43.16) than their rural counter parts. Thus, the proposed hypotheses of significant differences when gender based, caste based and family background comparisons were made, were not accepted in the present investigation. Attitude of teachers both socially excluded and others towards innovative programmes for quality education reflect the character of our society. Through this research investigation, an attempt had been made to understand the nature and dynamics of discrimination and exclusion. The results of the research indicated that though there is discrimination in the classroom but the exclusion, marginalization does not affect the innovative practices of social inclusion. Institutional inequality and discrimination has been a pervasive feature of our society. Many times inequality has been wrongly associated with the caste, creed, religion and gender. Indian society is getting transformed from a caste based to a class based society. Without understanding the concept of power and addressing the class structure, no society could eradicate social exclusion.

CONCLUSION
Several innovative programmes have been identified and implemented by the Government of India, State Governments and NGOs for quality education of socially excluded groups. Some of the programmes are Community Mobilisation and Participation, National Programme of Nutritional support to primary education, Decentralization, Kasturba Gandhi Shiksha Yojana, Skill based Education, School Monitoring Systems, Alternate Learning, Reading Promotion Initiatives, Initiatives for Learning Improvement and Pupil Assessment. A key challenge for all these programmes is to motivate teachers in government schools to adopt the joyful learning and a pupil-centered approaches associated with the revised, competency-based school curriculum. These approaches all demand that teaching and learning be geared to the needs of each individual learner. It is crucial that teacher education rises to these challenges, since repetition and drop-out are closely linked with joyless and teacher-centered schools. This is an important issue for social inclusion..

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