Foreword...

The Process of 'Becoming'

I am a teacher by profession. A little more than three years back I took up work in Reachout Foundation. In fact I was one of the members in the founding team. The Foundation was to work on racial and ethnic discrimination. Much as I would like to say that I was well aware of what this meant, I was quite oblivious to the reality of discrimination on one hand and on the other racial and ethnic discrimination sounded more like Greek to me. Without wanting to give any excuses for almost an arrogant disconnect from what a majority of our country people face, I being an urban, educated woman married to an officer in the army, did not anticipate that I was embarking on a journey of rediscovering myself. A journey that transformed me for the better; in every sense.

One of the flagship projects in Reachout was to address diversity and discrimination as perceived and manifested in the schools. To highlight the challenges that diversity and multiculturalism brought into the schools, how it was being tackled and how it was impacting the teaching learning process.

The intervention in the schools began with a workshop conducted in Bloom Public School. Towards the end of this workshop the children who were in classes 6 and 7, had not only absorbed the idea of discrimination in the schools; one of them affirmed it by saying, "We love our pet dogs and take care of them but we shoo away the street dogs. Isn't that discrimination?" This gave me an insight that it was more than possible to carry out this social experiment to shift perceptions of young minds, to open up endless possibilities for them once they realized that the cultural diversity was a strength.

But the real transformative journey of 'Becoming' began for me when I started working on the qualitative research monograph to assess the acceptance of multicultural diversity in the schools of Delhi. It was Dr. Monica Bannerjee, Director National Foundation for India, who laid grounds for this research monograph.. It was to be a qualitative research of diversity and the challenges that it brought into the arena of schools.

As I began the process of interviews of students, teachersand parents, I also began the process of self realization that as a teacher there had been a number of times when I had indulged in blatant favouritism by choosing a few students time and again to participate in extra curricular events just because they were talented. I realized that how oblivious we are as parents and educators to the disappointments, frustrations and a lot of times the pain that the students go through because of the exclusion that they face in the schools. Ironically somewhere in the process of growing up we forget the path traversed by us in the exact same manner during our school days.This feeling of not being accepted, not seen as they are, leaves the children with perceptions and belief systems that go a long way in moulding their personalities. This becomes the basis of their tackling the real life

situations when they grow up. They find themselves on flimsy grounds to face a diverse social setting.

This further strengthened the conviction in me that human diversity and its acceptance had to be addressed in the schools, efforts had to be made to help children, teachers and parents realize that accepting people as humans first was the very basis of laying grounds for social justice and equality. On the practical level students passing out from the schools have to be given a solid basis to settle down in colleges which are away from their home towns. They have to be equipped with the adaptability and openmindedness to accept new surroundings and environment.

I am grateful to NFI and Shamdasani Foundation for the support given to Reachout Foundation for carrying out this qualitative research. Working on this monograph has empowered me personally in more ways than I could have thought. I am specially thankful to Dr. Monica Banerjee for showing me the way ahead when so many times it felt that I had reached a dead end. We in Reachout hope to initiate a dialogue about diversity and multiculturalism in schools to contribute towards enhancing social justice and Nation building.

Vibha Lakhera
Reachout Foundation

'Breaking Stereotypes: Understanding Multicultural Diversity in Delhi NCR schools'

Preamble

REACH⬡UT
FOUNDATION

Defy Stereotype, Fight Prejudice, Eliminate Discrimination

We live in a world of negative generalisations about ethnic, racial or religious groups. Stereotyping has been a universal phenomenon and the "Other" has mostly been attributed with exaggerated characteristics. States in India's northeast for example have extraordinary ethnic, racial and cultural diversity, which has produced a crop of rich stereotypes; the term "Northeast" itself being one of them.

Similarly the Adivasi areas in Eastern and Central India or Jammu & Kashmir, Leh & Ladakh have also been victims of such stereotyping. In view of this outlook, there is no denying the way that the various societies and commonwealths of these regions are underrepresented in the Indian media and discourse around them from a historical and cultural perspective.

The protracted conflict in many of these states have ensured that young men and women leave their home state routinely to receive education and seek employment outside, resulting in a steady flow of students and professionals across the country. The Indian hospitality industry or the beauty industry for example is populated with people belonging to these states. States like Delhi and Bangalore receive thousands of students each year from these states looking for jobs or upgrading their knowledge base in the hopes of lucrative work options outside their own home. It is thus rather strange that despite the tremendous and systematic flow of people from and to these places, prejudices and stereotypeshave continued since time immemorial. As a result the sense of perceived alienation has turned out to be so intense as to produce circumstances and situations that sometimes culminate in violence.

In 2012, ethnic riots in Assam and certain social media misinformation that went viral deepened this division to the extent that several Indian cities witnessed an exodus of sorts of "Northeastern people" returning home following alleged threats to their life. The threat was more of a perceived fear (in the minds of those from the North East)which then spread like wild fire and created a national situation. That incident in fact became the trigger for the founders of this organization to conceive what today is known asthe Reachout Foundation.

During the course of its research and ground interaction with a large variety of people the Foundation realized that the stereotypes continue to be perpetrated and often towardsdangerous ends. We feel that this arises primarily from the problem of non-inclusiveness of the perceived 'Mainland' towards those in the fringes.As a very basic example, Indian history books at school or college level have almost nothing from places like Manipur or Nagaland or even Chhattisgarh or Ladakh. The only information about them commonly available areabout the beautiful landscapes, the music and the fact that these are shadow areas where disturbance remains a continuum. This brings us to the realization that unbiased education, information and sensitisation at all levels are the key drivers that can challenge and dispel stereotypes.

We realize that in order to change stereotypical perceptions and replace them with an inclusive idea of India, there is an urgent need for policymakers, the media, civil society and public as well as corporate stakeholders to rethink the economic, political and cultural aspects of the "centre-periphery" relationship to a more "equal" relationship.

There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved-

-       Firstly it is important for both the national and regional media to report about these regions more accurately and frequently rather than retain a stereotypical and sensationalist frame.

-       Secondly both policymakers and government departments nationally and regionally need to undertake strong diplomatic steps to ensure that there is effective communication and networking to build political and cultural bridges with the culturally diverse people of the region.

-       Thirdly, it is imperative that as corporate social responsibility, organizations recongise this as a critical area to invest their energies and initiatives.

In March 2015, the Reachout Foundation was commissioned by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India to suggest draft guidelines based on best practices for schools across the country to assess multicultural diversity in classrooms. The draft of the same has been sent to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and is awaiting approval.

In order to understand the scope of the study and decide on the methodology, Reachout Foundation organized a roundtable with all stakeholders on 'multicultural diversity' in 2016, as a precursor to this study for the monograph.

Some of the key takeaways from the roundtable are as follows:

i)   The parameters of the survey should be specifically on ethnic diversity

ii)   The survey/study will cover students, teachers, the head of the school, who's vision permeates down to the school, the management

iii)   What are the values that the management proclaims to be and then actually believes in?

iv)   What is the vision statement of the schools (that have been covered as a part of this study-which helps us arrive at a general idea)?

v)   Assessing the environment like school canteen or observing the assembly- as a part of social and cultural assessment.

vi)   In many ways children's reactions in classrooms highlight the attitude of their parents, especially with regards to values- This helps in understanding the parent's role in the home education of the child.

vii)   How do we define the identity of the child? How do multicultural identities play a role in the personality of a child? Which part of such identities do children (or parents) want to retain, which part do they not want to retain, what enters their practices and rituals and why is it important for them?

viii)   Evaluating text books. It is shocking to know that many of nursery rhymes are rabidly racist even today. Have there been any attempts at getting rid of them. Also, getting rid of them is one part of the process, what they will be replaced with- remains the larger question.

ix)   Are the schools facilitating or reinforcing stereotype identities? In this area a majority of the work needs to be done by the management in collaboration with other agencies that are more thorough in such areas with regards to both implementation and research.

x)   Research in diversity shows that more diverse environments increases the students' level of critical thinking, of their knowledge and awareness, ability to challenge assumptions, and raise levels of their connections with others and enhance their communication skills.

A multicultural learning situation brings with it a number of challenges that need to be overcome to create an effective learning environment for every student. These aspects such as communications (different languages), learning preferences (the manner in which learners understand and retain information), and social values (values that differ from culture to culture) all contribute to the learning environment.

Schools are zones where people from diverse worlds and social positions are brought together on a common platform. If the school has a firm, fair, consistent, and positive discipline, supported by the democratic conditions, it can help children develop the habits of independent thinking and becoming sensitive in their public life, in terms of courtesy, tolerance, respect and sense of justice.

Although today there is awareness about the changing racial and cultural interactions in the society, yet we still observe on a daily basis-verbal, behavioural, or environmental conflicts (whether intentional or unintentional) that communicate hostility and result in instigating insults toward people of different race, other cultures, ethnicity, religion, etc.

There is also a need to build an adequate bridge between the schools and the family. Making children feel safe, valued, and wanted makes them take to proactive-ness. Parental involvement is essential in ensuring the success of children.

Background

In the past India has been characterized by some, as a relatively immobile society. But the report released by UNESCO based on the census report of 2011, by the year 2014 India had an estimate of 400 million internal migrants. A significant percentage of that population comes to Delhi NCR in search of employment, personal and economic growth. The most obvious outcome of this process can be seen on housing, employment, education and so on. The social impact on one hand shows

intermingling of the variety of cultures and on the other hand the challenge of prejudices and biases leading to stereotyping and discriminating attitudes also come to the fore.

Addressing multicultural diversity can go a long way in fighting discrimination.

India has very correctly been categorized as a sub-continent, and not without reason. Throughout its history, India has had a mix of people of different races, cultures and origins. India's uniqueness and strong hold has been in the ethos of diversity, tolerance and acceptance of her people. However with diverse groups of people in the country arises the challenge of politics of identity. Migration being a reality of modern India post independence, has brought greater number of people from different states and regions of India in close contact with each other giving rise to misconceptions, prejudices and biases adding to the socio-economic problems. A multicultural nation like ours needs collective opening of minds, awakening of people to accept each other with our differences. Education has a huge role to play in catalyzing this process. Educators are the key influencers in raising awareness and imparting knowledge in understanding cultural, linguistic, social and religious diversity. Schools play a critical role in laying the foundation of social harmony by promoting knowledge of various cultures and inclusive attitudes. The diversity of students populating the class rooms highlight the challenge of bringing assimilation and cohesiveness amongst students and meeting their needs and requirements so as to enhance the teaching learning process.

Educators can help prepare students in widening and opening their horizons, minds and thoughts. Thus equipping them with the ability to accept differences and diversity of people in the society, country and ultimately at the global level.

Schools need to tackle diversity at a very fundamental level rather than articulating it through, religious, linguistic or regional lenses.

Objectives

The study explores the level of acceptance of multicultural diversity in Delhi NCR schools not only at the surface level but more importantly asa day to day behaviour almanisfestation. It aims to analyze the perspective of the teachers, parents and students regarding the issue in the schools.

It highlights the teachers', students' and parent's understanding of the concept of diversity and how they recognize and overcome the challenges emerging through diversity, both inside and outside the classroom. Schools in Delhi – NCR today encompass an array of races, languages, traditions, belief systems, social strata and religions. There is no homogeneity amongst the learners. With this shift in learner demography teachers face multiple and complex issues that may challenge many of their educational practices and assumptions.

The study aims to highlight :-

(a)   How multicultural diversity manifests in the school.

(b)   How teachers understand and accept and address the issue in respective schools.

(c)   How students are impacted by the existence of cultural diversity, how they cope up with it in class rooms, how conflicts arising out of cultural diversity are resolved by them and at a management level.

(d)   What are the impressions, perceptions, belief systems passed on to the children by parents and family- which finally gives them their identity? How does this individual sense of identity impact the behaviour of students and affect their learning and education in the schools?

(e)   One of the most important aspects of this study was also to highlight the existing gaps in the experiences of the three most important stake holders: teachers, students and parents.

A school plays the most vital role of nurturing the all round future of the nation and empowering its citizens with strong and liberating core values of open mindedness and expansive and progressive mindsets. The study shows that diversity is understood by the teachers, students and parents as an all encompassing concept underlined by notions of social justice, multiculturalism and learning styles. It draws attention to the interconnectedness of race, language, religion, learning styles and socio-economic factors as the main issues that teachers are confronted with in class rooms.

It is an attempt to bring us face to face with the deep seated biases and prejudices which are hardwired in human psyche and which forms the basis of different behavioural patterns that manifests in schools in the form of favouritism, bullying, teasing and exclusion.

The study hopes to contribute to a better understanding of the challenges faced during teaching of diverse group of students. This is arrived at, drawing on the notion, that the pedagogic tasks of classroom teaching could not be separated from the social task of nation building and economic improvements.

Methodology

At a fundamental level, the acceptance of diversity lies in the concepts of social inequalities and injustice. To ascertain such an intangible aspect of behavior in the schools, the approach taken up for the monograph was qualitative.

Schools falling in different categories like Public Schools, Army schools, Central govt. aided schools and NDMC schools were taken into consideration. The idea was to comprehend the level of acceptance of diversity in various schools as they cater to learners from different socio-economic backgrounds who bring with them their unique set of ideas, experiences, perceptions and belief systems. At the same time the teachers in these schools belong to varied backgrounds, therefore their approach in dealing with such diversity is also different.

Each of these schools has a different environment, style of functioning and basic DNA which is unique to it.

Data gathering sessions included questionnaires administered with teachers, students and parents. This was followed by an in-depth individual interviews which added to the process of "digging deeper", approach culminating in the collection of rich data.

What is diverse class room?

Culturally diverse students may have customs, traditions and values that set them apart from their peers and interfere with their self esteem and their ability to participate in their learning experiences. Some students may be fluent in English and some may be learning the language. Therefore educators should realize that diversity not only refers to ethnic, racial and linguistic diversity but it encompasses all children, their ethnicity, language, family structure, learning styles and personalities. All these factors contribute to the construct of multicultural class room.

The biggest challenge for the educators is to design and implement lessons which integrate a multicultural perspective into all aspects of the educational process. Acknowledging and accepting differences in backgrounds, cultures, beliefs and so on will foster harmony, understanding and friendship amongst students of different cultures.

Case Study

Ruchika is a TGT (trained graduate) computer teacher in Army Public School. She has been teaching in the school for the past 8 years. She enjoys teaching. Although she has not done her B.Ed, she is of the opinion that the curriculum includes educating the trainee teachers about how to teach in a multicultural setting. School starts at 7.30 am andRuchika reaches school without fail by 7.20 am.

Army schools encompass a wide range of diversity amongst students. They come from various parts of the country, religions, linguistic diversity anddiverse financial backgrounds. If this were not enough the categorization of students as officers wards, other ranks and civilians (a term given to those students who are not from army) background adds further layers to the diversity of learners. To bring in cohesiveness in the school is not easy and is yet the underlying vision of such schools. Usually assemblies touch upon the general awareness of the students with relevant

topics like pollution, earth day, various multicultural festivals, etc. Because of the transferable nature of their parent's job, mostof these children are used to changing schools and intermingling with a new set of 'friends' and adjusting to a new environment. Yet a lot of times one can hear name callinglike 'Bihari', 'Tambi' 'Chinki'. 'momo'. This obviously creates conflict amongst the students.

We were told by the principal that a few days back there had been an incident in the school where children had got into a fight with each other. Children whose parents worked in the Gurkha Regiment, were told by other students to go back to their country (China)!The principal here thinks that it is necessary to orient the students and teachers about the cultural diversity in the school.

Ruchika's friend Anamika recollected a dark skinned girl in her class who came from the Southern part of India. She was teased by boys in the class for her skin colour. Anamika had to counsel the girl and spoke about the issue in front of others in the class too. It must be noted that students tend to hold the class teacher on a pedestal, and often the class teacher can guide and mentor the students about sensitive issues. This renders a great responsibility on the teacher's shoulders.

There are cases of bullying too in the school which need intervention on the part of the teachers, coordinators and school counselors. Parents too are called over to the school to help in resolving such conflict. Once a dark skinned girl named Isha had complained to the school counselor about students calling her names. She was being labeled as 'that girl' in the school. She was a new student and had come from Pune. Such cases of exclusion are common and keep coming to the fore as a apart of bullying and teasing. It is a part and parcel of school life and is often unfortunately an accepted norm. This acceptance results in the fact that no set policy seems needed to address multiculturalism or bullying in the school.

Anamika had once mentioned to Ruchika that one of the days she had worn a 'Kantha' (thread work used in Bengal for embroidery) sari and a red 'bindi' to school. One child in her class had eagerly beamed at her and asked "Maam are you a Bengali?" When she replied "No" the child immediately went back in a shell. This was probably because the child was trying to make a connection with the teacher on common cultural grounds.

Although a lot of teachers feel that B.Ed does not really prepare them for a multicultural environment teaching, there have not been any workshops in the school also that highlight these issues.

According to the students, Indian Education system does not prepare them to face a diverse environment and the school text books touch upon the issue superficially. They also feel that the awareness about each other is needed and that it will go a long way in building a cohesive atmosphere in the school. Different backgrounds, facial features, physical status, economic status are reasons why bullying teasing and exclusion happens in the school.

Today, as Ruchika enters the class room, her thoughts are about the new student, who sits quietly in the corner seat of the class. She makes an effort to include the boy in the class by asking him more questions, while teaching. He fumbles with the answer. The reason is not because he does not know, but because he is conscious of his pronunciation in English. The boy is from Assam. Ruchika encourages him to answer and tells him to write down the words that he is not able to pronounce right, which he can ask her later once the class is over. All this while, she observers the smirks on other children's faces when Diganta mispronounces the words. This in turn hampers the settling down process for Diganta and further affects his learning adversely.

In Ruchika's view parents and students need to be oriented about diversity and its challenges. During one of the parent– teacher meetings one of the parents Col Nithoujam, who originally belongs to Manipur had mentioned that his daughters felt being excluded in the school. They are asked questions like "is there enough water in Manipur to bathe?" His younger daughter was bullied by her peers for the way she looked. The school tries to address the issue by maintaining the record of children who tend to bully, they are given a red and yellow card as a warning. They are counseled and their parents are called to the school to resolve conflicts. Favouritism shown by teachers towards a few students many a times douses the enthusiasm of other learners in the class.

Regardless of so many challenges and loopholes the school tries to bring in assimilation by organising cultural events, highlighting cultural aspects of a state or of another country. Children are asked to gather data and information to bring in inclusivity and to educate them about different cultures. Teachers too get involved in this process. It is an attempt to create awareness through creativity in the school.

Teacher's Speak :-

As nation builders, the role of teachers is irreplaceable. In this context we decided that it was absolutely necessary to find out from the teacher's themselves what they thought of the education system in the country and the way it addresses matters such as discrimination based on cultural differences. The response from the teachers was sometimes illuminating and at other times confusing. AlokBharti Public School coordinator, ShaliniDuggal in her statement to us had said, "I don't think so, when they settle down easily with each other in the school then I don't see the requirement to talk about cultural diversity in the school and draw their attention unnecessarily." The statement confused us, as discrimination against children is hardly something that can be sidelined we thought and needs to be addressed at every step. We were however reassured when the principal of the same school, Sudha Gemini had this to say, "Indian education system prepares students to deal with multicultural diversity at a superficial level, it does not help the students at that level. The concept has not been introduced by anyone yet. The question is there in our minds, something is lagging behind."

The search for further analysis led us to Navyug School in Sarojini Nagar. As we entered the campus, the gong had just sounded and children from different classes poured into the grounds.

Some sat in groups, others ran around and some others mingled through different classes. Somehow it was a reaffirmation of the fact that left to themselves and without the baggage of culture; children are not usually bothered about differences especially when their minds are more gainfully occupied. We headed to meet Jyotishna Sharma, the head Mistress. She was forthcoming and added, "Basically the understanding for this issue is not there. People think it is not so important but it has far reaching effects which teachers do not understand. So there are workshops they will know that to understand the aspects of multicultural diversity will be helpful for the students to learn better in the school."

When we approached army public school teacher Anamika Chandra, she said"We can have workshops as there is diversity amongst teachers as well. There are teachers from army background, civilians,

young and old. These issues applies to everyone." Her statement broaches the important subject of the diversity of teachers themselves and also the need to understand whether they are well prepared to handle the sensitive matter of such social discrimination. A lot of students have made us aware of the fact that the outlook of the teachers regarding diversity of students is often dominated by the supremacy of the teacher and text book; hence the perspective becomes narrow. And nowhere is it better seen than amongst children who are under achievers. So while there are some teachers who are aware of the discrimination patterns, there are others who neither understand it or underestimate it and brand it as common teasing to be taken lightly.

We tried to broach the subject of discrimination towards children from the North East specifically, because even though school texts do talk about discrimination of a certain kind, specific issues are hardly dealt with as a result of which even teachers aren't aware of it and hence don't know mostly how to deal with it. Trainee teacher, Shivani Mann had this to say, "The migration that has taken place from North East and the challenges that it brings to diversity issues, needs to be addressed in NCF (National Curriculum Forum) which is not there. The curriculum needs to be revised to suit the present day changes and settings"

The astonishing fact about discrimination is that a large number of people don't often have the sensitivity to understand that their behaviour might be discriminating towards another. This happens often because they are not at the receiving end themselves as well as the fact that as a society we often lack sensitivity to those who are in the minority. A leading Public school principal casually said about the students in her school, "They intermingle organically. There is no problem." We realise then that recognising the problem is half the job done. Workshops, teacher-student awareness programs and adequate mention in the syllabi are a must if this problem is to

be tackled on a war footing. Army school principal wraps it up for us perfectly when she says, "There should be talks, workshops in the school about cultural diversity for the teachers. Sometime back Gurkha Regiment children studying in the school were bullied by other children telling them they were Chinese so they should go back to their country"

Students speak:

In an attempt to understand how discrimination works we spoke to some students from different schools in order to understand exactly how the students themselves feel about the matter. As expected, children were far more forthcoming and realistic about the problems. They didn't try to be diplomatic but told it like it was. Most students admitted that physical features and the way children spoke went a long way in them being teased or discriminated against. Some of them also said that students choose friends according to the language and the region they belong too. Students were collective in their criticism for the Indian school system as well as the textbooks being propagated, as they felt that neither the schools nor the text books showed adequate concern for such discrimination. Hearing the some of the stories of discrimination from children were horrifying. Isha Singh, of class XII Army Public School said, "I was in Pune prior coming to Delhi and people there were pretty friendly as compared to people here. After joining this school I found myself in a pretty hostile environment where everyone had a judgment about everyone, especially girls who were given names regarding her character and that's what happened in my case too. I became known in the school as "that girl" by people who didn't really know me." We found out that the token word of caution against discrimination in school text books did not take into account the numerous ways in which children mistreat each other and that a general lack of sensitivity was the order of the day. Sameer Thukran, of class XII, Army Public School added, "People have preconceived notions of how a person should be in order to fit in their society and this could lead to bullying eventually."   Glen Issac, of standard VII of Mount St. Marys' added another dimension to discrimination. He said, "I am dark so I think my teacher did not give me any responsibility." Children's minds are sensitive and often such discrimination can lead to scars that can last a lifetime. Kushali Gupta from standard XII in Bloom Public school says that kids from similar backgrounds stick together as it helps them tackle discrimination better. She says, "Yes, since you know each other's background you understand problems better and it makes you more empathetic."

Having talked to the students, our horizons broadened. Discrimination takes various shapes we discovered. Most of the students felt that discrimination was a very common aspect of school life and one of the most commonly ignored by institutions and the various boards and the textbooks which they propagated. Students felt excluded in different ways through bullying, teasing, name calling, teachers showing favouritism towards a few students in the class, etc.

Parents Speak:

The beginning of all education is the home and parents become the first teachers to any child. We wanted to know what parents thought of discrimination in schools, how they dealt with it and

what their inputs might be in tackling it. As expected there were a wide range of answers. To our surprise many parents had never heard of their children speak of discrimination of any kind in the school and as a result assumed it did not exist. There were others like Vishwanath, Joint Gneral Manager HDFC who thought that discrimination could exist if everyone did not follow the majority culture. In fact he even seemed to approve of such discrimination. "We are broad minded and don't mind anything. Only they should follow Hindu culture." said Mr Vishvanath. Should parents make their children sensitive towards other cultures and would that help lessening discrimination, we wanted to know. Ananth Narayan, General Manager HDFC Bank seemed to concur. He said to us, "It is very important, they should not only know about our culture but also other people's culture to better understand them." How do different parents react to discrimination, what are their awareness levels- in order to understand this we chose to ask parents from different walks of life. Domestic helper Geeta told us about her daughter's experiences, "Yes I have seen discrimination in the school. I have heard children say, "How she looks. Her clothes are so dirty. She looks so ugly. She does not know her lessons well. Her bag is so dirty". But does discrimination affect all kinds of people irrespective of economic disparity? In a country as large and diverse as ours, the nature of discrimination is hardly contained to few straight jacketed parameters we discovered. Geography, how you look, colour of your skin of the way you speak and to which state you belong are equally important factors. Col. NithoujamSudeep (Retd.) spoke to us about how his daughter faced discrimination, "People would often ask my daughters if there is water to bathe in Manipur." Domestic helper, Rekha is disgusted at the way teachers handle the students in their class. She says that teachers themselves need to rise above prejudice before children are expected to do the same. "In the 10th standard my daughter's teacher used to encourage only a few children. At the parents teacher meeting I got to know this. I discussed with other parents and we requested the teacher to pay attention to all the children. Some children hesitate to answer; they are shy so they lag behind. It improved after that."

It is also surprising to note that most parents were not aware of any anti bullying policy being followed in the schools nor did they express a strong need to take up any such measures with either the school administration or at an administrative level. The question that remains is, if parents themselves are not aware of the kind of discrimination that children face what is the role of civil society in curbing discrimination?

Recommendations

1- Based on responses by teachers, it is apparent that regular training on multicultural diversity to all staff is essential to enhance capacities. It should be an ongoing sensitisation programme and inter school teacher exchanges is highly recommended to share best practices. Reachout Foundation would like to launch a pilot project by adopting one school and integrate this training with help of subject experts. It will also help bring teachers and students from other schools to share their experiences.

    a) Relationship building through culturally responsive classroom management

b)   Empowering educators through cultural competence

c)   Creating an anti-racist classroom

d)   Diversity resources for teachers

e)   Sharing best practices

2-   How to recognise 'bullying' (by teachers and peers) and how children can report it to the school administration? The study recommends training on recognising 'bullying' for both teachers and children and suggests that schools frame a policy against 'bullying'.

3-   Interactive lessons for children on diversity: Children need to be made aware of multicultural diversity through films, discussions, and diverse classrooms to explore race and ethnicity, gender equality, and sexual orientation.

a)   Social Justice Projects in the Classroom

b)   Talking about race and stereotypes

c)   Coping with racial slur and how to report it

d)   To recognise that Racist jokes are not cool

e)   Get to know your community

4-   Monitoring and accountability is the key to implementing policies against racism. Reachout Foundation would be happy to collaborate with school administrators to help frame policies that fixes responsibilities.

5-   Communication plays the pivotal role in challenging discrimination. The PTM or Parent Teachers Meeting, now almost mandatory in every school should discuss discrimination.

Conclusion

The most critical stake holders in fighting discrimination are young minds who have the potential of being nurtured and honed to reap the desired results in fighting discrimination and doing away with stereotypes effectively.

It is our responsibility as adults to help them form perceptions that allow acceptance towards others and reduce the divides and barriers in society.

In spite of the progress that India has witnessed over the last couple of decades, the growth dividend has not been equally shared and the divide between have and have-nots has only increased.

The deep rooted prejudices, biases and stereotypes still colour our opinions and interactions. Even our well honed education system has not prepared our younger generation to overcome this.

During one of the workshops conducted by Reachout Foundation in Bloom Public School one of the students commented "We treat our pet dogs with a lot of care and love them too. But we tend to shoo away the dogs which are roaming on the streets".Such is the effectiveness of reaching out to children as young as that. They can understand and relate to the negative impact that favouritism/discrimination of any kind can bring about. But for that to happen it is even more important for the educators to accept the importance of addressing the issue in the schools. It is important to shed our egalitarian self image that hinders us from accepting the problem in tackling challenges of diversity. As parents we have to open ourselves to the non conformist approach of young minds. We have to encourage them to think critically and to question the regressive belief systems that cut into the roots of acceptance of each other as humans and corrode away the ethos of social justice.

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR SENIOR STUDENTS

NAME-

CLASS-

SCHOOL-

Q1. Introduce yourself

Q2. Describe any 2 attributes of your closest friend

Q3. Do societal rules and norms impact you? If yes, how?

Q4. What do you think is the objective of school assemblies?

Q5. How would you describe prejudice/biases?

Q6. What are the factors that give you a sense of identity?

Q7. How do you interact with students who identify themselves differently from you?

Q8. Do you judge people on the basis of their physical appearance?

Q9. Have you ever faced bullying in school?

Q10. Do you think cultural differences lead to differences in communication?

Q11. What is your idea of justice?

Q12. What is your idea of an open minded person?

Q13. Do you think at your age the physical features determine your choice of friends?

Q14. Does your school have a written policy on interculturalism?

Q15. Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements:-

   a. Textbooks take adequate account of diversity issues.

   b. The Indian educational system prepares young people to live in a multicultural society.

Q16. Does your school adopt the following approaches:-

   a. Pupil mentors

   b. School-based counsellor

   c. Extra classes

   d. Any other approach?

Q17. In general, how satisfied are you with the following provision in your school:-

    a. Social/ personal support for students

    b. learning support

    c. Support for pupils with special educational needs

Q18. In your experience as a student have you faced sustained difficulties in the following areas:-

    a. Academic progress

    b. Social interaction with peers

    c. Behavior in class

    d. Absenteeism

    e. Involvement in extracurricular activities

Q19. If any newcomer pupil experiences sustained difficulties in any of these areas, how much would you say each of the following factors contribute to these difficulties?

    i. Cultural differences

    ii. New peer group

    iii. Bullying

    iv. Lack of parental involvement

    v. Starting in the middle of the school year

    vi. Financial issues

    vii Racism

    vii. Psychological difficulties/ trauma

Q20. Does your school have a particular approach to helping newcomer pupils settle into the school?

Q21. Do you think knowledge of your own culture and ethnic background and that of other students will be helpful in a better understanding and addressing conflicts?

Q22. Have you participated in extracurricular activities that address cultural diversity?

Q23. Compared to other pupils in your school, do you think students from different backgrounds, facial features, physical status, economic status are more likely to experience bullying?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PRIMARY STUDENTS

1.   Introduce yourself.

2.   Describe any 2 qualities of your closest friend.

3.   How do you make friends with students in a new class?

4.   Do you judge people on the basis of physical appearance?

5.   Have you faced bullying in school?

6.   How did you deal with it?

7.   Have you come across favouritism in your school? In what form?

8.   The teacher I like the best

9.   Reasons why I like her

10.   I don't like teachers who

11.   I felt humiliated in the class when

12.   The students who get selected for school functions are

13.   School assembly helps in

14.   People who sleep on the streets are

15.   When I ask too many questions in the class my teachers

16.   A good teacher should be

17.   My idea of justice is

18.   Teachers loose patience in the class because

19.   Why do students judge of your age?

20.   Have you felt excluded in the school if so why

21.   What is the role of peers in the school

22.   What is the diversity in the group of students in your class?

23.   Why do students tease each other?

24.   When did you feel humiliated in your class?

25.   Can you give a real life example of discrimination?

ACCEPTANCE OF MULTICULTURAL DIVERSITY IN Delhi SCHOOLS

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

We would be very grateful if you would complete the enclosed questionnaire. Your response will be combined with those of other schools to form an overall picture, and used to guide government policy in relation to future provision for accepting multicultural diversity in schools.

PART I: BACKGROUND INFORMATION

[Q1, Q2, Q3: If none, please write 'NONE']

1.   How many pupils in total are there in your school?   Boys :   Girls: _____

2.   How many teachers are there in your school?   Full-time: ____   Part-time: _____

3.   Approximately how many staff does your school currently have in the following capacities?

	Full-time	Part-time
School-based counsellor/psychologist		
Home-School-Community Liaison Co-ordinator		
Learning support/ resource teachers		
Language support teachers		
Special needs assistants (SNAs)		

4.   Over the past five years, has the total number of pupils coming to the school:

Increased ....$\square_1$ Decreased ....$\square_2$ Remained relatively stable ....$\square$

5.   Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the following statements.

B.Ed curriculum prepares teachers for teaching in a multicultural setting.
Textbooks and teaching resources take adequate account of diversity issues.
On the job workshops prepares teachers for teaching in a multicultural setting.
The primary curriculum takes adequate account of diversity issues.
More in-service workshops are needed for teachers in order to promote inclusion within schools.
The Indian educational system prepares young people to live in a multicultural society.

6. Do you have any written information for parents available in languages other than English/Hindi?

No ☐₁   Yes, general information   Yes, information on ⟶ If Yes, which languages?

on Indian educational system ☐₂   your school ☐₃

7. Schools use different ways of providing social and personal support for their pupils. In column (a) please indicate whether or not your school adopts each of the approaches listed. In column (b), please tick one box to indicate the approach you think is most important in your school.

		(a)		(b)
	Used in your school?			Single most
		Yes	No	important approach
a)	Pupil mentors	☐₁	☐₂	☐₂
b)	School-based counsellor	☐₁	☐₂	☐₂
c)	Extra classes	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃
d)	Other (please specify)	☐₁	☐₂	☐₄

8. In your assessment, what proportion of newcomer pupils experience sustained difficulties in the following areas?

	Nearly all	More than half	Less than half	Only a few
Academic progress	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃	☐₄
Social interaction with peers	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃	☐₄
Behaviour in class	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃	☐₄
Absenteeism	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃	☐₄
Involvement in extracurricular activities	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃	☐₄

9. If any newcomer pupils experience sustained difficulties in any of these areas, how much would you say each of the following factors contribute to these difficulties? [Please tick one box on each line]

	A great deal	Quite a lot	A little	Not a factor
Language difficulties among pupils	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃	☐₄
Language difficulties among parents	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃	☐₄
Literacy difficulties among pupils	☐₁	☐₂	☐₃	☐₄

Cultural differences	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
New peer group	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Bullying	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Lack of parental involvement	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Starting in the middle of the school year	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Homework	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Financial issues	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Racism	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Mobility between schools	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Schoolwork too challenging	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Assessed special educational needs	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Little or no previous schooling experience	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4
Psychological difficulties/trauma	☐1	☐2	☐3	☐4

10.   (a) Does your school have a particular approach to helping newcomer pupils settle into the school?

Yes ☐1   No ☐2

(b) If Yes, please describe as fully as possible the approach taken

11.   (a) Compared to other pupils in your school, do you think (students from different backgrounds, facial features, physical status, economic status,) are:

More likely to experience bullying ☐1 As likely to experience bullying ☐2   Less likely to experience bullying ☐3

(b) Does your school have a written policy on bullying?   Yes ☐1   No ☐2

Does this policy explicitly deal with racial harassment   Yes ☐1   No ☐2
(including use of racist language)?

A.   Do you try to include references from various cultural backgrounds while teaching in the class?

B.   Do you think knowledge of your own cultural and ethnic background and that of the students will be helpful in the teaching and learning process?

C.   Are you conscious of bringing in cultural inclusivity (explain) while preparing for an extra carricular event with the Students? How?

D.   Do you perceive yourself as being competent to teach students from diverse cultural backgrounds?

.E.   Do you perceive yourself as needing to develop competence to teach students from diverse cultural backgrounds?

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

1. Introduce yourself.
2. How many children do you have and which school do they go to?
3. What made you choose the school?
4. Name three close friends of your child.
5. How do you celebrate festivals at home?
6. Do you celebrate festivals of other religions/cultures?
7. In your opinion how important is it to educate your child about cultural diversity? (Please support your answer with adequate details)
8. In what ways do you inculcate open mindedness in your child at home?
9. Has your child faced bullying in the school? If yes how did you tackle it?
10. Do you think teachers in your child's school indulge in favouritism/discrimination of any sort?
11. If yes how does it impact your child?
12. Do you think that the school is taking care to educate the children about cultural diversity? If yes in what ways?
13. In your opinion do the text books take adequate account of diversity?
14. Does the Indian educational system prepares the young people to live in a multicultural society?
15. Is there an anti bullying policy in the school?
16. What is your idea of social justice?
17. Which would you choose justice or peace?
18. Are you open to the idea of your child challenging your cultural beliefs?
19. Has there been an incident in the school when a student faced discrimination because of cultural difference?
20. Does the school provide the support system to deal with problems of the students in terms of mentors/counselors?