



**Breaking Silos,
Building Bridges**
It's all about collaboration

Collaboration – Breaking Silos, Building Bridges



Kalyani Gokhale
General Manager,
Academics & Training

Picture this!

You are in the midst of an educational space vibrant with activity. A space in which there is positive interdependence amongst all stakeholders. A place where intrapersonal and interpersonal relationships are fostered, where learners set off on a journey of lifelong learning in a joyous, fear free, nurturing space, and where immersive experiences that encourage higher order thinking are an integral part of the process of receiving and giving education. Would it help to be part of such a learning environment? If you had been a part of such an ecosystem, would you have learnt differently? As importantly, can such an environment be created or is it just a utopian aspiration?

At MSFDA, we are tasked with nurturing and empowering educators in the higher education domain through continuous professional development and capacity building, a vision that we draw from NEP 2020. As a part of this mandate, we create opportunities for teachers that help make such “can these be for real?” visions as authentic and as implementable as possible.

**“If you want to go fast, go alone.
If you want to go far, go together,”
says an ancient proverb.**

MSFDA serves as a **catalyst for collaboration** and “togetherness” amongst different stakeholders in the higher education domain, attempting to drive transformative outcomes for educators and learners alike. That, then, is the focus of this piece of writing –

Why collaboration, not competition, and why सहयोग, not स्पर्धा, will lead to a stronger, better, safer, happier learning environment.

The theory underpinning collaborative learning is that of **Constructivism** (my personal favourite as a learning approach!). I see great value in educators being able to create opportunities and educational experiences for their learners that are active, empathetic, safe, engaging, student-owned, and that encourage higher order thinking (and feeling!). Collaborative learning helps facilitate most of these experiences, and I do believe that it ought to be the basis of how we function in educational organizations both, within and outside learning spaces. I am fortunate that collaboration is inherent in the activities of our **six academic centres** at MSFDA, each centre being associated with a theme that reflects our values. Here's how.



Inclusion and Diversity -

We are the World:

Inclusive education is a cornerstone of MSFDA's ethos. Collaborative initiatives such as programs on inclusive teaching practices, sensitization workshops, and an awareness about diverse needs empower educators to create inclusive learning environments where all learners feel valued, respected, and supported in their educational journey. By partnering with organizations that advocate for marginalized and unrepresented communities and by penetrating every geographical district in Maharashtra, MSFDA attempts to address issues of social justice, diversity, and inclusion in teacher training programs.

Leadership Development -

Taking Charge, Sharing Charge:

In the realm of higher education, collaboration is a great way of nurturing leadership development among faculty and students. Through collaborative experiential activities at outbound venues, educational leaders, both present and future, learn the art of motivating the people they work with. Cohorts of academic leaders put their heads together to discuss ethics and values in education, discover inherent leadership styles and learn the best practices of academic leadership. The immersive group activities bring out the best in interpersonal and intrapersonal leadership.

Innovation & Cutting-Edge Technology -

Sharpening the Axe:

Collaboration with partners specializing in nurturing innovative, industry-oriented practices, and in the use of cutting-edge technology enables MSFDA to equip educators with the tools, resources, and strategies needed to innovate and respond to the needs of 21st-century learners so as to prepare them for the not just the workplace of the future but responsible, global citizenship as well. When industry and academia come together, it helps facilitate the development of innovative technological solutions that address the digital divide and ensure equitable, democratic access to education for all.



Value and Position of Art in Human Life in collaboration with JJ School of Art, Architecture & Applied Arts

Multidisciplinary Curriculum and Pedagogy - Learning Sans Borders:

NEP 2020 advocates a shift towards multidisciplinary education, where students have the flexibility to explore diverse fields of study and integrate knowledge from various disciplines. MSFDA helps higher education institutions embrace a holistic approach that integrates new thought with rootedness in Indian values, break down silos, and facilitate the exchange of ideas and perspectives emerging from diverse fields of study.

Assessment & Evaluation - Together We Can:

Can assessment be a collaborative activity? The truth is that if it were made so, it would answer its very purpose really well. Assessment as learning, for learning, and of learning become possible in the classroom when students collaborate with each other for peer review (which a great way to reap benefits of collaboration on otherwise solitary activities), peer feedback and co-graded assignments. At MSFDA, we support faculty in creating teacher-student and student-student led formative assessments that support metacognition, guide content and the teaching learning process, use technological tools for efficiency, and can be delivered without the stress and intimidation, one classically associates with them.

Resources - It's About Joining Forces:

By embracing collaboration, institutions can harness the collective expertise and knowledge of faculty and students to optimize resources and maximize their impact. Whether pooling together academic resources, optimizing technological tools, or working on curriculum development and assessments, the collaborative approach enables institutions to **leverage their internal resources more efficiently**. Collaboration also facilitates the **integration of external resources**, such as industry partnerships, community engagement initiatives, and interdisciplinary partnerships and help higher education institutions unlock the full potential of their resources.

Our centres work together collaboratively, symbiotically and in synergy, creating a whole that is much bigger than the sum of its parts. We are always happy to team up with academia, industry, policy makers, and the community to create positive change. We hope that you and MSFDA, together, will work as a team to foster a transformative learning environment aligned with the aspirations of our land and its people.

We present the fourth issue of Warta, the quarterly publication of MSFDA, offering an insightful exploration of our values and programs. In viewing education as a journey rather than a destination, we recognize the importance of creating meaningful pauses for reflection and growth. At MSFDA, we prioritize the cultivation of positive relationships between educators and students, fostering qualities such as sensitivity and open-mindedness. Our ethos revolves around collaboration over competition, nurturing a culture of collective learning and growth.

In a recent newsletter cover article, Kalyani Gokhale, General Manager at MSFDA, delves into our multifaceted approach to fostering collaboration and building a 'Nexus of Good'. From initiatives promoting inclusive education to leadership development, cutting-edge technology, and innovative pedagogical practices, MSFDA endeavours to provide enriching learning experiences for faculty in higher education.

Similarly, the Discover India Program at FLAME University, a collaborative partner of MSFDA epitomizes the principles of student-centric education, empowering students to take ownership of their learning journey. Meanwhile, the journey of the TYBA batch of 2023-24 from St. Xavier College, Mumbai, through Gadchiroli serves as a poignant reminder of the transformative power of experiential learning. Amidst tales of resilience and hope, students discover the true essence of education - a journey of self-discovery and service to humanity.

In reflecting on these inspiring narratives, we are prompted to ask ourselves: How can we further foster collaboration and student-centered approaches in education? What innovative approach can we implement to create more meaningful learning experiences for both educators and learners? Together, let us explore this journey and embrace the true purpose of education which leads us to develop good humans.



अमृत बंग

युवा उपक्रम प्रमुख, निर्माण
सहसंचालक, सर्च
amrutabang@gmail.com

“आता माझी मुलाखतीकरिता निवड झाली नाही तरी चालेल पण हा फॉर्म भरूनच मजा आली. असले प्रश्न आजवर मला कोणी विचारलेच नव्हते. तुम्ही विचारलेत त्याबद्दल धन्यवाद!”

“तुमच्याशी एक तास बोलणे हा एक भारी अनुभव होता. वेळ कसा गेला कळालेच नाही. ही कुठेही फॉर्मल मुलाखत वाटली नाही, कुठले दडपण देखील जाणवले नाही. इतका मोकळा संवाद मी याआधी कोणाशीच केला नव्हता. तुम्ही जे प्रश्न विचारलेत, जे मार्गदर्शन केले, ज्या असाइनमेंट्स सुचवल्यात, त्या फार उपयोगी आहेत आणि मी नक्की त्यावर काम करेन. आता पुढे कार्यशाळेकरता निवड झाली तर उत्तमच आहे पण नाही झाली तरी काही हरकत नाही. तुम्हाला भेटून, बोलून फार चांगले वाटले.”

कुठल्याही एखाद्या निवडप्रक्रियेदरम्यान इच्छूक उमेदवारांकडून या प्रकारची प्रतिक्रिया कितीशी बघायला मिळते? आमच्यासाठी मात्र हा दरवर्षी सातत्याने येणारा अनुभव आहे. जुलै ते ऑक्टोबर हे चार महिने म्हणजे निर्माण या आमच्या युवा उपक्रमाच्या नवीन बॅचसाठीच्या निवडप्रक्रियेचा काळ. ‘निवडप्रक्रिया ही विकासप्रक्रिया देखील असली पाहिजे’ या भूमिकेतून आम्ही करत असलेल्या प्रयत्नांना दरवर्षी हमखास मिळणारा हा सुखद प्रतिसाद!

पहिलीपासून ते पुढे उच्च शिक्षणापर्यंत मी अनेक परीक्षा दिल्यात, आपण सर्वच देतो. माझा वैयक्तिक अनुभव असा की परीक्षेसाठी केलेल्या अभ्यासाने माझे काहीतरी भले झाले, मला काहीतरी शिकायला मिळाले. पण परीक्षाकेंद्रावर जाऊन प्रत्यक्ष तीन तास पेपर लिहिण्याचा जो खटाटोप होता त्याचा मात्र मला वैयक्तिकदृष्ट्या काहीही उपयोग झाला नाही. अमृत बंगवर (किंवा इतर कुठल्याही विद्यार्थ्यांवर) किती मार्कांचा शिक्का मारायचा हे ठरवायला परीक्षकांना आणि विद्यापीठाला नक्कीच मदत होते पण प्रत्यक्ष त्या विद्यार्थ्यांला मात्र केवळ एक 'चिंतातूर रेस अगेन्स्ट टाईम' अनुभवायला मिळते. पहिली ते बारावी, आणि पुढे बॅचलर्सची साधारण चार वर्षे, असे एकूण 16 वर्षांत, दरवर्षी सुमारे तीन तासांचे किमान दहा पेपर्स, म्हणजे एकूण जवळपास पाचशे तास, प्रत्येक विद्यार्थी लेखी परीक्षा देण्यात घालवतो. यात प्रात्यक्षिक व तोंडी परीक्षांचा, आणि जर्नल कंप्लिशन सारख्या तद्द्वन टुकार गोष्टींचा वेळ पकडलाच नाही आहे. पाचशे तासांना आठने भागल्यास साधारण दोन महिने एवढे 'वर्क डेज' एका विद्यार्थ्यांचे व्यतीत होतात.

भारतातील 26 कोटी युवांना हे गणित लागू केल्यास 4 कोटी वर्षे एवढे 'वर्क डेज' / कार्य कालावधी हा निव्वळ परीक्षा देण्यात जातो.

ही ढोबळमानाने केलेली आकडेमोड आहे हे मानले तरी ऐन तारुण्यातील एवढा मोठा काळ जी परीक्षा नावाची गोष्ट बळकावणार आहे तिच्यावर 'निव्वळ विद्यापीठांसाठी मार्कशीट बनवण्याची सोय' या पलीकडे जाऊन प्रत्यक्ष विद्यार्थ्यांसाठी किमान काही उपयुक्तता असण्याची नैतिक जबाबदारी आहे असे मला वाटते. शिक्षणप्रक्रियेतील मूल्यांकन पद्धती ही देखील एक शैक्षणिक अनुभव असायला पाहिजे ना? तो सगळ्या विद्यार्थ्यांसाठी केवळ बिनडोक माहिती पुनरुत्पादनाचा आणि काहीसाठी तर आत्यंतिक दडपणाचा अनुभव होऊन कसे चालेल? "संपली परीक्षा, सुटलो बुवा एकदाचा" अशा सार्वत्रिक निश्वासापेक्षा "मजा आली, बघुया काय होतयं" असा उल्हास नको का?

व्यापक बदल कधी होईल ते माहीत नाही पण किमान आम्ही चालवत असलेल्या निर्माण प्रकल्पामध्ये तरी हा विचार कसा अंमलात आणता येईल याचा गेले दशकभर आम्ही सातत्याने प्रयत्न केला आहे. भारतीय तरुणांना 'फ्लरिश' होण्यास व त्यांचा 'पर्पज' शोधण्यास मदत व्हावी, आणि त्यांच्यात सामाजिक बदल घडवून आणण्याची प्रेरणा व कौशल्य विकसित व्हावे या उद्देशाने 2006 साली निर्माणची सुरवात झाली. सर्च संस्थेचे संस्थापक डॉ. अभय व डॉ. राणी बंग आणि एम. के. सी. एल.चे श्री. विवेक सावंत यांच्या प्रमुख मार्गदर्शनाखाली निर्माणने भारताच्या 21 राज्यातील हजारो तरुणांसोबत काम केलेले आहे. आम्ही चालवत असलेल्या विविध उपक्रमांपैकी गडचिरोलीला होणारी शिबिरे आणि त्यानंतरचा सातत्याने होणारा पाठपुरावा हा एक अतिशय सघन उपक्रम आहे.

आमच्या वेळेच्या आणि संसाधनांच्या मर्यादा लक्षात घेता हे 'इंटेन्स इनपुट' कोणाला द्यायचे हे ठरविण्यासाठी आम्ही दरवर्षी एक निवडप्रक्रिया करतो आणि साधारण दीडशे युवांना निवडतो.

ही निवडप्रक्रिया तीन टप्प्यांमध्ये असते:

- **अप्लिकेशन फॉर्म**
- **इंटरव्ह्यू**
- **असाइनमेंट्स**

निर्माणच्या वेबसाईट वर एक अतिशय सुंदर आणि आत्मनिरीक्षणात्मक असा अर्ज आहे. मी सगळ्या युवा वाचक-मित्रांना आवाहन करीन की त्यांनी तो किमान एकदा तरी बघावा. यातील प्रश्न हे युवांना स्वतःच्या जीवनाबद्दल अंतर्मुख व्हायला तसेच बाह्य सामाजिक परिस्थितीविषयी विचार करायला भाग पाडणारे असे दोन्ही प्रकारचे आहेत. त्यांचे कुठलेही एक ठराविक योग्य उत्तर असे नाही तर ते पूर्णतः 'ओपन एंडेड' स्वरूपाचे आहेत. हे प्रश्न सोडवतांना इतर ज्ञानस्तोतांचा वापर करायची देखील पूर्ण मोकळीक विद्यार्थ्यांना असते. आणि हो, यातील प्रश्न हे दरवर्षी काही प्रमाणात बदलत असतात त्यामुळे त्यातली उत्सुकता व नावीन्य टिकून राहते.

वानगीदाखल यातील काही प्रश्न असे:

१. शिक्षण पूर्ण झाल्यावर तुम्ही काय काम करू इच्छिता/ सध्या काम करत असल्यास, काय काम करत आहात? हेच काम करावे असा निर्णय घेताना काय विचार केला?
२. आजच्या घडीला तुम्हाला स्वतःच्या आयुष्याबद्दल पडलेले असे कुठले प्रश्न आहेत ज्यांचा तुम्हाला शोध आहे?
३. तुमच्या जीवनातील असा एखादा प्रसंग सांगा जिथे तुम्ही सोय, फायदा किंवा इतरांचा विरोध याची चिंता न करता स्वतःच्या मूल्यांना सुसंगत अशी नैतिक भूमिका घेतली.
४. दर वर्षी, आरोग्यसेवेवरील खर्च न झोपल्यामुळे सुमारे 5 कोटी भारतीय जनता ही दारिद्र्यरेषेखाली ढकलली जाते. तुमच्या मते अशी परिस्थिती उद्भवण्याची काय कारणे आहेत?
५. कुठल्याही शासकीय संस्थेला अथवा कार्यालयाला भेट देऊन तिथे काही तास व्यतीत करा, आजुबाजुच्या लोकांशी बोला. तेथे येणा-या लोकांना काय अडचणी जाणवतात याबद्दलची तुमची निरीक्षणे सांगा.

अशा प्रकारच्या विविध चालना देणाऱ्या प्रश्नांमुळेच की काय पण आम्हाला अनेकदा अशा प्रतिक्रिया मिळतात:

निर्माणच्या अर्जातील प्रश्नांची उत्तरे देणे हा एक आनंददायी अनुभव होता. माझ्या मनात नेमके काय चालले आहे ते एक पॉज घेऊन समजून घेण्याची संधी मला यामुळे मिळाली.

माझे विचार खूप विखुरलेले आणि खंडित स्वरूपात होते. पण या फॉर्मने मला माझ्या स्वतःच्याच जीवनाशी संबंधित प्रश्नांचा ठोस व नेमकेपणे विचार करण्यास मदत केली.

समाजकार्य करायला कुठल्या पदवीची गरज नाही पण विचारांची, प्रेरणेची, क्षमतेची आणि सातत्यपूर्ण परिश्रमांची मात्र नक्कीच गरज आहे. या अनुषंगाने आम्ही या निवड प्रक्रियेमध्ये वेगवेगळे पैलू बघतो. अर्थातच या उपक्रमाचा उद्देश्य हा स्वःच्या पलीकडे जाणे असा असल्यामुळे केवळ स्वतःच्या आर्थिक प्रश्नांमध्ये गुरफटून न राहता त्याच्या पलीकडे जाता येणं, मी इतरांसाठी काहीतरी केलं पाहिजे असं आतून वाटणं, हा निर्माणमध्ये निवड होण्यासाठीचा महत्वाचा निकष आहे.

त्याबरोबरच सामाजिक कार्य हे निव्वळ आपल्या हौसेखातर करायचे नसल्यास ज्याने इतरांना उपयोग होईल, त्यांची काही समस्या दूर करता येईल असे काही ज्ञान, कौशल्य, क्षमता अंगी असणे देखील आवश्यक आहे.

आणि केवळ बोलून भागणार नाही, तर याला कृतीमध्ये उतरवण्याची धमक असली पाहिजे किंवा त्याचा अनुभव असला पाहिजे. भारतातल्या अनेकविध नामांकित कॉलेजेसमधून जसे विद्यार्थी निर्माणमध्ये निवडले जातात तसेच अनेक युवा असेही आहेत ज्यांचं फारसं औपचारिक शिक्षण झालेलं नाही, ज्यांनी जीवन-विद्यापीठातूनच शिक्षण घेतलं आहे मात्र प्रत्यक्षात काहीतरी करून दाखवलं आहे. अशी शैक्षणिक आणि भौगोलिक विविधता हा एकूणच अनुभव अतिशय संपन्न करते. सोबतच फार आनंदाची आणखी एक बाब म्हणजे निर्माणच्या निवडप्रक्रियेतील प्रत्येक टप्प्यावर आणि शेवटी निवडलेल्या गटातदेखील मुला-मुलींचे प्रमाण हे जवळजवळ अर्धे असते, कित्येकदा तर मुली कांकणभर जास्त असतात. समाजबदलासाठीच्या निर्माणसारख्या उपक्रमात मुली हिरीरीने भाग घेताहेत हे अत्यंत आश्वासक आहे.

या पहिल्या टप्प्यानंतर आम्ही साधारण पाचशे जणांना मुलाखतीसाठी निवडतो. स्वतःची मूल्ये, मनातील प्रश्न, पुढील दिशा, समाजातील समस्या, त्यांची कारणांमांसा, त्यावरील संभाव्य उपाय, रोल मॉडेल्स, इ. बाबत युवांच्या कल्पनाशक्तीला चालना मिळेल, आणि त्यांच्या भावना, संभ्रम ते मोकळेपणे सांगू शकतील



Flourishing of Youth, SEARCH-Nirman, MSDFA, Pune

असा हा **विकासात्मक संवाद** असतो. निरुत्तर करणाऱ्या प्रश्नांपेक्षा विविध प्रकारच्या शक्यता ज्यातून उलगडतील, स्वतःच्या भविष्याविषयी 'खुल के' कल्पनारंजन होईल, स्वतःच्या भूमिकांची चाचपणी करता येईल, त्यावर चर्चा आणि भिन्न मतांना सामोरे जाता येईल, व हे सर्व होताना एका अस्सल परस्परसंवादाचा आणि मानवी नात्याचा अनुभव येईल असा हा विलक्षण प्रकार असतो. वैयक्तिकदृष्ट्या माझ्यासाठी वर्षातील अत्यंत समाधानकारक असा हा भाग!

तासाभराच्या प्रदीर्घ संवादानंतर आम्ही प्रत्येकाला काही असाइनमेंट्स देतो आणि मग त्यावरून साधारण दीडशे जणांची अंतिम निवड करतो. या अभ्यासकृती देखील युवांना विचारप्रवण आणि कृतीशील बनवणाऱ्या असतात. समाजातील खऱ्या गरजूंसोबत समोरासमोर येण्याची, त्यांचे जीवन, त्यांच्या अडचणी समजून घेण्याची आणि शक्य असल्यास तत्काळ काही योगदान देण्याची संधी या निमित्ताने अनेक युवांना प्राप्त होते. सामाजिक प्रश्नांविषयी जिज्ञासा, वंचित घटकांप्रती सहानुभूती आणि स्वतःच्या सामाजिक जबाबदारीची जाणीव अशी तिहेरी उद्दिष्टपूर्ती व्हायला यातून मदत होते. या संपूर्ण निवडप्रक्रियेतील महत्वाची गोष्ट अशी की यातील प्रत्येक टप्पा हा स्वतःमध्ये स्वयंपूर्ण आहे, आणि आज तो युवा जिथे आहे त्यापेक्षा त्याला काही पावलं पुढे जायला मदत करेल असा आहे. ही आमची युवा मित्रांना कमिटमेंट आहे. मी सगळ्या युवा वाचक-मित्रांना आवाहन करीन की त्यांनी किमान एकदा तरी हा अनुभव घ्यावा. स्वतःच्या फ्लोरीशिंगची सुरुवात आणि सोबतच समाजाला योगदान या जोडप्रक्रियेची ती नांदी असू शकते. निव्वळ अर्थप्राप्तीपेक्षा त्यासोबतच अर्थपूर्ण जगण्याच्या शोधात असलेल्या युवांना भेटायला आम्ही उत्सुक आहोत!



निर्माणच्या पुढील बॅचची निवडप्रक्रिया आता सुरु झालेली असून याविषयी अधिक माहिती पाहण्यासाठी QR कोड स्कॅन करा.

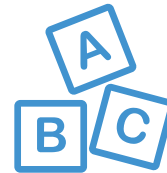


Empowering Educators, Enriching Higher Education in Maharashtra

MSFDA is dedicated to fostering excellence in higher education throughout Maharashtra.

Multidisciplinary Education

We acknowledge and endorse the importance of creative arts and the integration of vocational education. Our aim is to address and rectify social status hierarchies associated with vocational education by promoting multidisciplinary approaches.



Our Values



Experiential Learning, Creativity, and Innovation

We embrace pedagogies that prioritize experiential learning, creativity, and innovation. Our approach encourages students to engage in discovery and questioning, fostering a culture of exploration and hands-on learning.



Our Mission

To cultivate a generation of thoughtful, well-rounded, and creative individuals through exceptional higher education.





Diversity and Inclusion

We uphold diversity and inclusion as fundamental principles across all aspects of higher education, considering them non-negotiable in our pursuits.



Learning Beyond Knowledge

Our commitment extends beyond the acquisition of knowledge. We actively promote critical thinking and cultivate a co-learning environment that fosters congeniality, devoid of fear and competition.



Networking and Collaboration

We value connecting with practitioners, expert institutions, and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Recognizing the strength of experiential and hands-on learning, we serve as a collaborative institute, providing a facilitative platform for best practices, individuals, practitioners, institutions, and resources.



Scientific and Rational Thinking

We are committed to developing scientific temper, humanism, a spirit of inquiry, and a readiness for reform as integral aspects of our educational ethos.



Our Vision

To transform the higher education ecosystem in Maharashtra by continuously empowering educators within our state's Higher Education Institutes (HEIs).

Discovering India, Discovering Self:

A student-centric program
by FLAME University



Sujatha Varadrajan

Center Head for Multidisciplinary
Curriculum and Pedagogy



The monsoon was very heavy that year. No sunshine for a month-long stretch and that brought some gloom, almost pushing me into a state of depression. Luckily that did not happen, and here I am writing this piece. 😊

The heavy rains stopped and the bright sunshine simultaneously brought an exciting plan by my friends to go river rafting at Kolad. **Excitement prevailed; joy multiplied and happiness escalated with high levels of dopamine flowing across the body and mind.** Rafting is an adventure we all enjoy. However, all good things have to come to an end. So did this transient state of mind. Why? The raft toppled and all of us were in deep waters at a place where the water was flowing with maximum speed due to high gradient. Everyone got scattered. Some were lucky to grab the rope by the side of the raft, some others were found struggling to swim against the current, and there were also the ones who were clueless about what to do and how to save their lives.

I draw an analogy here with our higher education space. After secondary school, many students get admission to the college of their choice and that brings temporary excitement. Many a times, they get driven by someone else's advice telling them what to do. However, when they move out of the college and are thrown into a real-life situation, there is a scenario resembles the river rafting experience. Of course, those who know swimming can reach the banks, no doubt. However, many students may be found looking to grab a rope, some losing direction, some gasping for breath for survival.

My questions:

Can we help students prepare to face struggles that real life offers and find their own identity and space?

What, in our education system, would place students in situations other than futile struggles of life?

What would give them a glimpse of their role in decision-making and their responsibility?

Let's see whether there are possible answers to these questions.

We all would agree that education is not only about gaining mastery of some content. Students need to start discovering their purpose in life, identifying their strengths/weaknesses, and realizing their responsibilities towards themselves, their families and the society that they live in. One more aspect is decision-making, being able to decide for themselves; where to go, how to go and what to do with their lives. If the higher education space provides an opportunity to experience these aspects, it would mean our approach is **Student-Centric Education**.

Student-centric education focuses on the student's interests, likes/dislikes, abilities, learning styles and processes of student learning.

This is quite different from the "one jacket fit for all" teacher-driven education wherein teachers decide, when, how and what students should learn.

Let me narrate to you what would exemplify student-centric education through an example from a program at **FLAME University**. FLAME University is a pioneering institute in offering a liberal arts program. Liberal Arts programs allow students to choose subjects of their liking and interest, and pursue their higher studies accordingly. Liberal Education at FLAME also allows students to select courses across different disciplines and not be restricted in the silos of the past – Arts, Science and Commerce.

One of the mandatory programs offered at FLAME is the **Discover India Program**, a four-credit course. Dr Poonam Gandhi takes immense pleasure in sharing how this program is truly student-centric. She explains that program entails right from the conception of the idea for research to writing a proposal, creating an itinerary, identifying local contact at the place of visit, and the source of data collection. All of these are devised by students. They also pre-plan for any medical emergency. Students travel in groups by train and are accompanied by a faculty mentor. They reach the destination and start the data collection which includes, photos, videos, interviews etc. A real-life experience in totality! She further takes pride in saying, that students do have disagreements, and fights as much as fun and frolic. But all of this is owned by them and resolved in the interest of their research project.

While it sounds like everything is done by students and there is no role of the teacher. It is not so, adds Dr. Gandhi. The DIP committee comprising faculty members facilitates the entire program. In her words, even after many years of experience in conducting the program, the committee members have sleepless nights till students come back. This is despite ensuring every safety measure and taking care of the minutest details. But a stress worth the learning experience offered to students, and her eyes shine while saying this.



Student Centricity in Education, FLAME University

Once the students are back they create a **documentary film** in addition to a project report. The narrative, the videography, the background score, and the visuals, everything make it feel nothing short of a high-quality professional video. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.



Here, scan the QR code to the page that hosts these videos. Have a look!

I am sure, the videos created by students would prompt you to visit the place.

This truly is an example of student-centric education. This experiential learning program at FLAME University was designed to provide an immersive experience for students undertaking their undergraduate studies. Through this program, students get the opportunity to explore and understand aspects of the cultural, historical, ecological heritage of India. They gather an understanding of the nuances associated with its unique social and economic institutions. They learn about the livelihood practices and varied ways of life.

MSFDA has collaborated with FLAME University to conduct a workshop on student-centric education. As a case study, during the workshop, FLAME describes how their program is typically student-centric; be it in their mentorship program, student-centric assessment techniques or club activities, everything revolves around students. Such an approach is bound to give students responsibility for their learning.

Exposure to learning, not only the propositional (conceptual) knowledge but also the other kinds such as the procedural, strategic, personal/moral dilemmas and explanatory knowledge leads to a holistic development.

The educational contexts are diverse and generalizability can be far from realized. Let me narrate to you an interesting anecdote related to this workshop. Participants of this workshop generally go back with some doubt about whether they can take up such an approach to education due to high demand on infrastructure and resources. Dr Gurav of **Late Dada Saheb Chavan College of Pharmacy** proved it as a baseless apprehension. He demonstrated that is all about understanding what student centricity is.

Dr Gurav tried emulating the **DIP program** offered by FLAME. He asked his students to create a narrative that centred around connecting some social issue with lab work in their college and create a video as a deliverable.



Here, scan the QR code for one such video. The efforts by students from as small a place as Masur, cannot go unnoticed.

What this experience indicates is that it's just a small inspiration that is required. The cascading effect is now seen when FLAME has offered a student exchange program with the students who created these videos to enhance their skills for improving video quality. Such is the power of inspiration. Something that MSFDA looks forward to as an outcome of every workshop.

Going back to my Kolad trip, we would like our education to be like the rafting experience.

Excitement prevailing; joy multiplying and happiness escalating with high levels of dopamine flowing across the body and mind. Don't forget; we educators need to give a life jacket! Let's all aim for it.

Gadchiroli is definitely not the perfect destination for a getaway, but it did turn out to be just that, for the St. Xavier College, Mumbai's TYBA batch of 2023-24 during their Diwali vacations.

गडचिरोली

A Trip to Reminisce...



Arnav Shantanu Joshi

TYBA batch 2023-24,
St. Xavier College, Mumbai

The academic field visit started with 14 students (including myself) and 3 professors on 2nd November, 2023 when we boarded the train to Nagpur.

The first pitstop was **Anandwan**, which we saw through the lens of Bakshi Kaka- a local guide. We visited **Shraddhawan**- a place where Baba and Sadhanatai Amte are buried and this was where Bakshi Kaka told us their life stories. The moment we entered Anandwan, it felt like I breathed fresh air for the very first time. Especially in Shraddhawan, if one is connected with their spiritual side, one will feel the blessings and presence of Baba-Tai in the utter calm of the place. The most striking of all was Baba's transformation that reflects his upbringing and core values, from being one of the richest people in Maharashtra to being an emancipator of the lepers, the ones who were banished from society for this. However, the thing that brought tears to my eyes and what, I consider to be even more special than the Amte's story, is the story of a woman cured of leprosy, who was weaving using her legs and having a broad smile on her face. It is only in these moments that one realises how minuscule a human we are and the challenges we face in front of their daily struggles. This is the ultimate lesson of life to humanity as a species!

Next, we went to the **Swaranand Orchestra** run by cured leprosy patients and differently-abled persons, who sang and danced for us. It, was a beautiful end to a day full of mesmerising experiences. Post dinner, we attended a session with Dr. Vikas Amte, in-charge of Anandwan and



Somnath projects. A qualified doctor, but with the mind of an engineer, the man is extremely ingenious and humorous, and has practically built Anandwan and allied projects from scratch.

After meeting Dr. Vikas, I rediscovered the definition of a role model. He is the epitome of invention, giving maximum output in minimum resources.

While we were touring the facility the next day, everything was equally amazing for us to see and everyone agreed with Bakshi Kaka who said, "Even if we are not differently abled, we will not be able to do anything they do as well as them or match their talent at any point in time". Except for sugar, salt and kerosene, the facility was self-sufficient in everything else! We also visited the leprosy hospital and met qualified doctors and interns who gave us a tour around the hospital, its modern equipment and hammered it in our head that leprosy was the only disease with an "expiry date".

Anandwan is now also working on skill development of the differently abled people, besides treating lepers, with sustainable technological wonders and discoveries in some other fields, which are proving revolutionary worldwide. Another observation which stood out was that even though leprosy was a highly curable and only remotely communicable disease, the societal stigma around it was responsible for the banishment of lepers from the mainstream. **The motto of Anandwan is 'to shut down' and I hope that it is soon translated into reality.**

On 5th November, the fourth day of our tour we had a free-flowing conversation with Dr. Prakash and Dr. Manda vahini at Hemalkasa. Both of them thoroughly answered my questions about tribal health and told us about their pathbreaking success in providing the tribal community with basic healthcare facilities. Dr. Prakash is a real-life example of how a person's work defines his

life and not his clothes, which is a modern western status symbol. It is magical to see how marriage and love can be synonymous and to see how the couple can really be one single entity, supporting each other throughout. We then went around **Hemalkasa's Lok Biradari Project** to discover botanical, educational and medical wonders and the efforts to empower the Madia Gond community. The most fun visit was that to the animal orphanage and care home, when we were fortunate enough to see Dr. Prakash interact with sambhar deer, nilgai, eagle, owl, bears, porcupines, snakes, and even leopards as if they were tame - interesting how man is really a part of nature and even wild beasts are harmless unless incited.

Later that day, Dr. Digant, son of Dr. Prakash gave us statistical information on tribal health. The facilities of stay at Hemalkasa were really beyond my expectations, it is an embodiment of 'जंगल में मंगल'. It is important to note how much we can learn from the tribal community and their co-existence with each other and with nature, how we treat them as 'backward and inferior' when they have some concepts like **ghotul** and absence of dowry, which are way advanced and need to be borrowed by the non-tribals.

Ghotul (गोटूल): A designated village dormitory for young adults to meet and interact freely.

The morning of the 5th day was spent at **Somnath** with our guide, one of the founders of the project with Dr. Vikas Amte. He took us around the whole village showing the 12 artificial lakes having water all the year round and many agricultural and architectural inventions. The way this project is engineered by Dr. Vikas is just beyond imagination. We also gained a lot of knowledge about traditional medicinal herbs and trees of the region. I was lucky to get to buy the local Indrayani rice, having great smell.

Post lunch, we headed to the **Society for Education, Action and Research in Community Health (SEARCH)**

located in **Dhanora, Gadchiroli**. It was a different environment altogether - I personally felt a different kind of serenity inside the SEARCH Campus. Every construction is in perfect harmony with each other and the nature, the food quality was also brilliant which gave a feeling of staying in 'home away from home'.

The story how SEARCH started literally gives you goosebumps and these life-changing experiences of Dr. Bang made me realise how much I could do to give back to the society and why is it important to think beyond oneself.

The stay in SEARCH was mentally and physically soothing as everyone went for 'Shramdaan' early in the morning when we cleaned the premises or distributed manure among the plants. It was an exhilarating experience. Next, we explored the SEARCH premises including their office, library, hospital, and even interacted with a few tribal patients to record their first-hand experiences of treatment.

Following this, we had an attractive session line-up; first on **NIRMAN** - an internship program for the Youth held by Dr. Aditi wherein we were probed to discover and state our purpose in life leading towards holistic growth and development, second was a Mental Health Session by the only psychiatry team in Gadchiroli. It was astounding to find out that even tribals had problems with depression, anxiety, even Schizophrenia, and SEARCH catered to their mental well-being!

We watched a Marathi documentary post-dinner - '**Doctor Prakash Baba Amte**', which beautifully encapsulates the journey and success story of Hemalkasa and the couple. It was an emotional rollercoaster that day, from mental health to wrapping my head around the acute problem of Naxalism portrayed in the film. The sessions at SEARCH were eye-opening and gave a sneak peek into the kind of thorough work the institute undertakes for research in the tribal area of Gadchiroli.

The seventh day was personally one of the most insightful days for me on the trip. We headed to **Mendha (Lekha)**, a small Gond village, visiting their nursery school and spending some time with the children, as well as going to a Ghotul.



Gramsabha Karyalay at Mendha

We were all set to meet Mr. Devaji Tofa, the mastermind behind the system of self-governance practiced by the villagers of Mendha. Mr. Tofa's session was as lengthy as it was insightful. What I found most intriguing was his ability to break down complex concepts like Adhyatma (spirituality) and explaining them so effortlessly in his native tongue. He narrated the historical and current governance system regarding the forest rights of the community, according to which the community (Gram Sabha) is entitled to take all decisions relating to forests in that area. It was interesting to see how a practical, uneducated man is wise enough to put in place a system of fully unanimous self-governance in an otherwise majoritarian democracy.

“

You may get knowledge from the college, but the village is the real university.



- Mr. Devaji Tofa

This statement encapsulates his entire talk and what intrigued me the most was the concept of Adhyayan groups which are like government commissions but actually provide fruitful results. We later had a session with Dr. Gaud who filled in the gaps in the talk by Mr. Tofa and presented the tribal problem holistically.



Our team with Dr Abhay Bang and Dr. Rani Bang

However, I strongly feel that unanimity and collective decision-making on every matter has been only possible in a small village like Mendha (500 people) due to the rural lifestyle and close-knit community ties, but is far from realisable in other settings. Despite certain obstacles and clashes with the government though, the story of Mendha has been a success. Back at SEARCH, in our last prayer session, we all were a bit emotional; I felt a strong connect with Dr. Rani Bang and she was like a 'motherly figure'. In the night, we discussed our insights and bonded within the group.

On 9th November, we departed from SEARCH for **Sevashram at Wardha** to visit, Mahatma Gandhi's and Kasturba's home and office. At Gandhi Ashram, one common strand to pick up from the earlier places we visited was the simple, humble lifestyle of these great men. Gandhiji lived in a simple hut (kuti). and cleaned his toilet himself. Men of such greatness! Yet their

lifestyle is so humbling and maybe, it is this humility that gets them to that stature and position. Finally, everyone bid farewell to each other with sweet memories to cherish for a lifetime when we boarded the train for Mumbai at Nagpur.

It felt like we were still ourselves, just better versions, better humans- that is what this trip taught us all: HUMANITY!

On concluding note, I would like to offer my gratitude to our Head of Department, Dr. Pratiba Naitthani, Assistant Prof., Ms. Sukhada Gole, and Head of Hindi Department, Dr. Bhagwati Upadhyay for giving their valuable time to make us experience this wonderful journey. This trip has definitely changed my approach completely. Special thanks to Pratiba ma'am for taking the initiative to implement this beautiful experience. This journey has given me the motivation to strive to do my best in life.

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अपूर्वा बर्वे, कबीर पळशीकर, कल्याणी गोखले, गजानन घुळे, गीतांजली दाते, प्रतिक ढमाल, सुजाता वरदराजन, सुहासिनी देसाई, हर्षदा बाबरेकर

मार्गदर्शक:

निपुण विनायक

अक्षर मांडणी:

रिद्धी नि. पाटील,
तन्वी गोखले

412-B, Bhamburda, Bahirat Patil
Chowk, Model Colony, Shivajinagar,
Pune, Maharashtra 411016

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