> The mind is the root from which all things grow if you can understand the mind, everything else is included.
> -Bodhidharma

IMPORTANCE OF KNOWLEDGE IN EDUCATION

Knowledge is like a magnet, which attracts the surrounding information towards itself. If we have better knowledge about anything then it is easier to assimilate that information or fact. Knowledge plays a very important role in everyone's life. Only knowledge teaches us the way to live life. The journey of acquiring knowledge starts immediately after coming into this world. The newborn first acquires knowledge through his senses. Through touch he comes to know who is his own and who is a stranger.

Common Knowledge helps children develop their knowledge about what is happening in the world. This is necessary to understand a common language. The meaning of a word in the mind depends on the knowledge and background of the reader. Reading is a good source of knowledge. This not only enhances the meaning of the words but also makes the ability to understand easier.

As already said, reading is the best source for knowledge. It is also the key to developing students' vocabulary skills. The more we read, the more we learn different words and how and where to use them. The importance of prior knowledge in education can be understood. Background knowledge enables readers to have more choices among the multiple meanings of words.

From Exam Stress to Success

■ DR. SUBHAS SARKAR

In the challenging academic landscape, where exams can feel like scaling a steep mountain, stress becomes an unavoidable companion. Envision this ascent as a tricky journey, with everyone carrying a heavy backpack of expectations. Peer support is akin to having companions on the same climb, making the journey less daunting.

Imagine walking up the mountain together, step by step. Peer support revolves around the exchange of experiences, grounded in the belief that those who've conquered challenges can guide others. This friendly support is a crucial asset in navigating the stress associated with academic challenges, acting as a guide on the bumpy road to success.

In his book 'Exam Warriors,' Hon'ble Prime Minister Narendra Modi Ji encourages every student to "be a warrior, not a worrier". The narrative unfolds as each student embraces the role of a warrior, conquering academic challenges. However, amidst this journey, some of our fellow warriors face heightened stress and troubles during exams. Just as being a warrior involves navigating personal challenges, it also means extending support to our brothers. Walking side by side, helping each other through the journey, and making it easier for fellow warriors is an essential aspect of being a collective force. In the spirit of Exam Warriors, it becomes imperative for all of us to embody that warrior spirit not only for ourselves but also for our fellow warriors, creating a supportive and united front during challenging times."

Peer support, defined as assistance from individuals with similar life experiences, holds deep-rooted historical significance in various contexts. Its principles are based on the notion that those who have triumphed over adversity can provide unique insights, encouragement, and hope to others facing similar challenges. In the realm of mental health, peer support has been a longstanding practice, making it a relevant and effective approach in addressing the unique stressors associated with academic pursuits.

The benefits of peer support are multifaceted, encompassing empowerment, social support, empathy, stigma reduction, and the fostering of hope and motivation. Empowering individuals to overcome the stigma and social isolation associated with mental health difficulties enhances self-esteem and confidence-crucial components for facing academic challenges head-on.

In the context of academic stress during exams, the principles of peer support find practical application. Learning from others' experiences becomes a valuable asset as peers share coping mechanisms and strategies for managing exam stress. Seniors in school or college, having faced similar situations, serve as valuable resources for guidance and support.

Moreover, the clarity in thoughts that peer support offers becomes particularly valuable on the days before an exam when confusion and anxiety often hinder clear thinking. Providing a space to express emotions, peer support facilitates the sorting through of thoughts and emotional clarity, reducing the feeling of isolation often associated with exam stress.

While peer support plays a pivotal role in alleviating stress during exam times, creating a supportive environment requires a collaborative effort from educational institutions. Recognizing the interconnectedness of mental health and academic success, institutions must prioritize the well-being of their students.

Furthermore, the integration of peer support programs into the institutional framework enhances the accessibility of support for students. Creating designated spaces for peer support sessions and promoting awareness about these resources ensures that students are aware of the available avenues for assistance.

Strengthening peer support during exam times is not solely the responsibility of individual students; educational institutions play a crucial role in creating an environment that prioritizes mental health. By acknowledging the symbiotic relationship between mental well-being and academic success, institutions contribute to the holistic development of their students, preparing them not only for academic challenges but also for the broader spectrum of life's experiences.

I encourage all my young friends not to stress about the future or compare themselves to others' achievements. Trying to emulate someone else's path is like following a conventional route, instead, opt for the road less traveled. Let's set specific goals that propel us forward without causing undue stress, following the wisdom of Mantra 26 from PM Modi's 'Exam Warriors':

"An ideal goal is one driven by passion and inspiration, not pressure."

As the anticipation builds, the nation eagerly awaits this year's edition of 'ParikshaPeCharcha'. The prospect of witnessing Prime Minister Narendra Modi engaging with students, educators, and parents, sharing valuable insights and encouragement, adds an extra layer of excitement. It's a collective eagerness to participate in an event that not only addresses the challenges of exam preparation but also inspires and empowers individuals on their academic journey. The countdown to ParikshaPeCharcha has become a symbol of hope, unity, and the shared commitment to creating a positive and supportive environment for our students. The nation is poised for an enriching experience, eagerly looking forward to the wisdom and motivation that will unfold in this unique and impactful interaction.

(The Writer is Minister of State for Education, Government of India).

Krishi Vigyan Kendras' @50: Steadfast & Indispensible

■ DR. PARVEEN KUMAR

The 75th year of India as a republic coincides with 50th year of establishment of Krishi Vigyan Kendras' (KVKs); institutes that all through these five decades have proved their indispensability in the transformation of agriculture sector in the country. As a part of the front line extension system of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR), their contribution towards bringing about socio-economic upliftment of the farming community in which a majority of the farmers are small, marginalized and resource poor is immense..

After independence, it started in 1960s. Like other sectors, the agricultural sector in the country was also witnessing some institutional reforms as well as structural changes. As agriculture was the backbone of the economy, revival and strengthening of the farm sector needed to be prioritized. The second education commission 1964-66 under the chairmanship of Dr. D. S. Kothari recommended for the establishment of agricultural polytechnics to provide vocational education in agriculture to school drop outs and other rural youths. After threadbare deliberations by the representatives of Ministry of Education, Ministry of Agriculture and the Planning Commission (NITI Aayog); the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) as a follow up to the recommendations emerging out of the deliberations constituted a committee in 1973 under the chairmanship of Captain Mohan Singh Mehta of Udaipur to work out a comprehensive plan for establishment of such institutes. Captain Mohan Singh Mehta thus came up with the institutional design in the form of Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK) and the first KVK was established in the year 1974 in Pondicherry (now Puducherry) under the administrative control of Tamilnadu Agricultural University (TNAU) Madras in Tamilnadu. Since the establishment of first KVK in 1974, these district level institutes are at the forefront of technology dissemination and a vital and integral part of the National Agricultural Research System (NARS) of the country. Their role and contribution in the agricultural sector of the country has been immense.

At the district level, it caters to the diverse needs of farming communities working in different agro-climatic zones and different farming situations. Presently, each KVK has a team of six scientists of different disciplines with each one taking care of the subject matter of his/her area. Although, the initial idea of setting up of these KVKs was to provide vocational training to rural youths in agriculture and other allied sectors; but with the passage of time the roles and responsibilities of these KVKs changed. Today KVKs provide a platform for interface between farmers, researchers and extension functionaries to address the problems of agriculture and allied sectors. These institutions are engaged in on farm testing to assess the location specific needs of the farm sector; front line demonstrations to establish production potential of technologies on farmers' fields; to conduct training programmes for farmer, youths, farm women for their skill development, to act as a resource and knowledge centre of agricultural technologies for supporting initiatives of public and private sector for improving the agricultural economy of the country and the state in particular in which they are located and to provide agro advisories to the farming community using Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) and other tools.

With the passage of time KVKs mandate has changed from a single commodity approach to a broad based that now includes not only cereal crops but to other crops like horticultural, medicinal, oilseed, pulses and all other crops that are grown within the concerned district. Besides, KVKs are now training young person to become entrepreneurs, providing farm and weather advisory services, celebration of important days, and in devising technologies that help in drudgery reduction. There is also a lot of reporting work in the KVKs. So a meagre strength of six, finds itself overloaded and difficult to cope with the increasing responsibilities. Also a single KVK in districts having population in crores is not sufficient to cater to the needs of all.

A statement of the Press Information Bureau (PIB) reveals that there are 731 Krishi Vigyan Kendras' in the country of which 38 are under the control of state governments, 66 under ICAR institutes, 103 under NGOs, 506 under State Agricultural Universities, 3 under Central universities, 3 under Public Sector Undertakings, 7 under deemed to be universities and 5 under other Educational institutes. Uttarpradesh leads the states in having the maximum 89 KVKs. All the KVKs are now under 11 different Agricultural Technology Application Research Institutes (ATARI) previously called as Zonal Project Directorates (ZPDs). ATARI Zone 1 at Ludhiana has 72 KVKs including UTs of Jammu Kashmir and Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand and Punjab. ATARI zone II at Jodhpur has 66 KVKs of Delhi, Haryana and Rajasthan; ATARI zone III Kanpur has 89 KVKs of Uttar Pradesh alone, ATARI zone 1V Patna has 68 KVKs of Bihar and Jharkhand, ATARI zone V Kolkata has 59 KVKs of Odisha, West Bengal and Andaman and Nicobar Islands, ATARI zone V1 Guwahati has 47 KVKs of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, ATARI zone V11 Barapani HAS 43 KVKs of Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland and Tripura, ATARI zone V111 Pune has 82 KVKs of Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa, ATARI zone 1X Jabalpur has 82 KVKs of Chattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, ATARI zone X Hyderabad has 72 KVKs of Tamilnadu, Pondicherry, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana and ATARI zone X1 Bangaluru has 48 KVKs of Karnataka, Kerala and Lakshadweep.

A high powered committee on management of KVKs was set up under chairman ship of Dr. R. S. Paroda. It came up with a slew of recommendations regarding the Krishi Vigyan Kendra. It recommended the change of vision of KVKs to 'Science and technology-led growth leading to enhanced productivity, profitability and sustainability of agriculture', where as the Mission should be 'Farmer-centric growth in agriculture and allied sectors through the application of appropriate technologies in specific agro-eco system perspective'. The new mandate of the KVKs as recommended by Paroda Committee was 'Technology Assessment and Demonstration for its wider Application and Capacity Development' (TADACD). It also called for an additional Krishi Vigyan Kendra in the district be established only based on specific criteria such as large rural population, bigger geographical area, higher net sown area, relative Executive Summary backwardness norms of the district, more Tribal/Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe population, and those in mountainous (above 5000 feet above mean sea level) and difficult/border areas.

A third party evaluation of KVKs carried out by National Institute of Labour Economics Research and Development (NILERD), an autonomous institute under NITI Aayog in 2018 came out with findings which reveal that the KVKs all across the country are doing a tremendous job accomplishing and achieving many milestones. The evaluation found that KVKs are playing a proactive role in transferring new technology at field level with beneficial impacts and that these institutes have an edge over other service providers by virtue of having better technical expertise and demonstration abilities. The technologies demonstrated by KVKs were immediately adopted by 40 percent of the farmers and 25 percent adopted them by the next agricultural season. On an average a KVK covers 43 villages and 4300 farmers every year and 80% of villages covered are 10 kilometers away from KVK. The evaluation further said that 96 percent of the farming queries were attended by the KVKs and 42% technologies adopted by farmers resulted in higher productivity and 20 percent resulted in drudgery reduction. About 25% of the persons trained by KVKs started their own self employment ventures.

Since their establishment KVKs have been proactively contributing to the development of farms and farming community by way of disseminating of sustainable technologies, their awareness and sensitization, skill development of youths and farmers including farm women, developing adequate linkages with private and public institutes, collaborations with all relevant stakeholders, providing marketing support, mobilization of this largely static entity and much more. The OFTs and FLDs laid out by KVKs in lakhs in the farmer fields have resulted in a huge increase in the production and productivity of the farms ultimately benefitting the farming community. Most of the flagship programmes of the government are now reach out to potential beneficiaries through these district level institutes.

(The author writes on agriculture and social issues).

The pros and cons of digital life

■ MOHAMMAD HANIEF

Nowadays, it is uncommon to come across an electronic gadget or piece of equipment that doesn't use digital technology in some capacity. Recall a time when communication required sending pigeons or letters, which took days or weeks. Thanks to digital technology, the world has become smaller, and it is now simple to communicate with someone located elsewhere. Because of the centralization and accessibility of data, the digital age has made a wide variety of information available at the touch of a button on your mobile phone.

People now, for instance, rely heavily on computers and mobile devices with internet access, which provide instant answers to any questions you may have. You do not need to sit beside a PC to access the Internet; your phone (or smartwatch) does it all!

The digital technology revolution has had a significant impact on our lives. We have saved a ton of time using credit card payment methods, internet banking, automated cars, health tools, and washing machines for our laundry.

Many miles away, patients can speak with their doctor and get an authorized prescription. A digital signature has made it possible to sign contracts and make other essential decisions using a simple electronic device.

The millennial generation has the option of learning something new every day. Before, learning required searching for relevant information, applying for courses if desired, traveling to the specified location, and devoting a specific amount of time.

The digital generation, however, does not have to endure as much. They only need to click to search for lessons they might be interested in. Once accepted, they can enroll in the program and finish it without leaving their room!

The days of physically visiting a library and borrowing books are long gone. In those times, the alternative was to purchase books, which were typically out of everyone's price range. Today's digital generation has free access to almost all educational tools. The free material available in almost every corner of the world accelerates the learning process.

Since the beginning of dial-up, internet speeds have multiplied. Large data files can now be sent almost instantly across the web thanks to ever-faster broadband, making it possible to access data from nearly anywhere in the world and watch video and audio in real-time.

With the proliferation of digital tools that enable us to send messages to one another in various formats instantly, digitalization has fundamentally changed how we communicate.

Technological digitalization has also improved our communication ability and sped up the spread of new ideas. Anyone can now communicate their ideas; they are no longer limited to society's wealthiest and most influential people.

Because of the Internet's ability to allow for offshore outsourcing, digitalization has created a new world of job opportunities and digital learning. There are now entirely new job roles, such as internet technical experts, and anyone can start their own online business, which is a fantastic new benefit.

We can now complete many jobs without complexity from tens or even hundreds of miles away. Many other flexible working arrangements are now possible without requiring all workers to be in the same building.

Machines are becoming more intelligent as a result of digital technology. In some cases, devices no longer require humans to operate, liberating employees from repetitive jobs to pursue more exciting opportunities.

In other cases, more intelligent computers mean higher safety standards or an enhanced user experience. Products and services become less expensive and more widely available as technology advances. Many tasks, such as booking a vacation, can now be completed directly by customers rather than through a mediator, even with moderate technology skills.

Without a second thought, digital technology is one of our crucial aspects today. However, it has had its own set of drawbacks that are not always considered. The Internet is fertile ground for nefarious operations with its globalized nature, vast scale, and users' relative privacy.

While technology eliminates human error, it is not resistant to failure, so we potentially lose control of our assets if we rely on something that is not 100% dependable. Giving up control also exposes us to digital crime, such as hackers, who have unidentified destructive capabilities.

Personal privacy is challenging to keep in the digital age, especially given the risks of your personal information being accessed, stolen, and sold. In public locations, digital cameras can monitor and record our movement patterns.

Furthermore, data security is vulnerable to breaches as hackers develop new methods and viruses to infiltrate people's computer systems and cell phones. Social networking sites like Facebook, Weehat, and Instagram are intended to bring humans together. Still, they may have the inverse result in some cases because they are primarily active on social media platforms.

People prefer to mingle and communicate through digital platforms rather than in person. It causes a sense of disconnect and exclusion. Many people suffer from depression and other forms of social anxiety and mental illness due to a lack of real-life communication.

The performance of a task has increased exponentially with modern technology, which is frequently used to justify why technology may be capable of replacing humans soon. A rise in digital technology ensures that machines and technology can now complete tasks that humans could previously perform. As a result, there will be a labor shortage.

Companies nowadays prefer technology that can perform tasks more accurately than humans. As technology advances, humans are increasingly being replaced by algorithms and robotic systems.

Another harmful impact of digital technology on the societal structure is its addictive nature, which has harmed performance. Too many people nowadays waste hours on the Internet for no explicable reason.

Students and workers alike have grown so accustomed to playing online games, placing bets, and interacting in virtual chat sites that they have forgotten to attend to more critical activities. People will spend hours consuming and listening to movies and musical shows on Netflix, YouTube, or TikTok. Otherwise, constructive person hours are being squandered.

The digital generation is the most misled and swayed by digital media. Digital media manipulate people into buying items they do not need, causing them to splurge more and more cash unreasonably.

Technology enables people to remain anonymous, hide behind a mask, or assume the authenticity of someone else to spread hatred and other unjust objectives. The interaction with these people has an impact on the mental well-being of the digital generation.

Conventional ways of life have been subverted due to significant overreliance on gadgets. For instance, our reliance on digital gadgets such as laptops, smartphones, smartwatches, social media, and the like implies that we are progressively wandering away from our biological environment.

The bad influences of digital technology partly cause the deterioration of social values we see all around us. When young people are exposed to explicit images, pornographic material, and an infinite number of films that glamorize crime and violence, the future of society is jeopardized.

It is no surprise that digital is sweeping the globe; things are being digitized everywhere we look! The pace of technological advancement is not going to slow down. It is getting faster by the day. Because of the introduction of new technologies, the way we work, shop, and spend our leisure time differs vastly from a decade ago.

Today, we hope to have revisited both sides of what digital technology brings to our daily life and that digitization is a two-edged sword that we can wield in either direction.

(The author can be mailed at m.hanief@gmail.com)

Importance of Parental Support to Manage Children's Stress during Examination

■ DR RAJKUMAR RANJAN SINGH

In today's rapidly changing world, where students must compete in every aspect of their academic life, academic stress can be worrying for parents and students. Examinationstress leads to the unpleasant psychological situations that occur due to the educational expectations from parents, teachers, peers and family members along with the pressure due toacademic achievement and existing examination system.Exam stress can increase anxiety due to the pressure of exams that affects the student before, during and after the exam. This is an important issue that students deal with throughout their academic lives. Exam stress can have a significant impact on students' mental health leading to anxiety, depression, and other emotional problems due to some anticipated frustration associated with academic failure or even an awareness of possibility of such failure.

There are various causes of stress in a student's life such as too many assignments, competition with other students, failure, bad relationships, constant pressure to study, examination, future plans, etc. Specially, in exam time, there are few factors that can contribute to exam stress in students. They are as follows:

i) Strain to perform well :Some children due to understudies or family pressuremight feel strain or tension while taking the pressure to perform well in examinations.

ii) Fear to be failed : There are a lot of students who worry about failing an exam, which can make them feel stressed and anxious. This dread can be particularly intense for understudies who battle with a specific subject or who have experienced issues with tests previously.

iii) Absence of readinesss :Students who are not sufficientlyequipped/prepared for an examination may experience tension and stressed out. This can be due to a lack of understanding of the material, a lack of study time, or other factors.

iv) Time restraints: Tests frequently have tight time imperatives, which can be unpleasant for understudies who are not used to working under tension.

In fact, students experience academic stress because of their expectations of success, the expectations of their parents and teachers.It is evident that parents' expectations from their children put pressure to accomplish well in examinations. However, it is suggested that certain amount of examination stress can be considered to be operative and effective leading to attentiveness and cautious behaviour before the exams in children. But, keeping high expectations from children during examinations can be a basisfor exam stress/pressureand poor performance.

It is generally recognized that parents play an important role in the cognitive, behavioural, emotional and social development of their children. In their role, parents provide children with socialization to cultural and societal norms and values, with the aim of preparing them to meet the needs of the communities as well as prepare them for future.

Parentsalso have an important role in guiding and managing positive or negative influence of academic aspirations on children. Parents can help their children in handling the exam pressure by recognizing some physical, social, behavioural and psychological signs of exam stress.

Recognizing the Signs of Exam Stress in Children

It's likely that young people won't feel comfortable to discuss exam pressure and stress, but parents can look for any signs of stress in their children and talk tothem about it.Educational or academic pressure can sometimes be difficult to detect, especially in more mature children who may not feel the pressure or lack the ability to express their feelings. Here are some of the most common symptoms of stress that can be seen in children through physical (e.g., headache, grinding teeth, high blood pressure, indigestion, fatigue, insomnia), psychological (e.g., anxiety, irritability, defensiveness, anger, mood swings, depression helplessness, hopelessness) and behavioural symptoms (e.g., overeating of loss of appetite, procrastination, withdrawal/isolation, poor personal hygiene).

Role of Parents in Managing ExaminationStress or Pressure in Children

If the child is struggling with exam stress, one of the most important things one can do as a parent is to be as understanding and supportive as possible. Make sure to communicate and remind them that they have more important things in their life and these exams are just one part of the bigger picture. Let them know that you will always be there for them and, while you will naturally want them to perform well, you won't blame them if they don't.

"Beawareofchild'sbehavioursandemotions before and during exams.

"Buildmutual trustwithyourchild.

"Communicate that parents have unconditional positive regards to their children.

"Encouragethemtotellyouiftheyfeeloverwhelmed.

" Inspirehealthyanddiverserelationships.

"Cheerphysicalactivity,goodnutrition,andrest.

"Remind your child of his or her ability to get through tough times, particularly with the love and support of family and friends.

"Assist your kid with choosing suitable cocurricular exercises.

"If your child is going to face a challenging paper or has already faced one, don't forget to boost his or her self-assurance.

"a decent audience and assist your kid with positive considerations.

"Maintain a pleasant and stable home environment.

(The writer is MoS for External Affairs and Education).