" I like the religion that teaches liberty, equality and fraternity. "

-B. R. Ambedkar

Ensuring Safety in Coaching Centers

Coaching centers play a pivotal role in enhancing students' academic and competitive skills, offering tailored instruction that complements their regular school education. However, given their critical role in shaping young minds, ensuring the safety and well-being of students in these environments is of paramount importance. Safety in coaching centers encompasses a broad spectrum of concerns, including physical security, mental health, and emergency preparedness. Addressing these areas proactively helps create a secure and supportive learning environment conducive to both academic and personal growth.

Coaching centers must adhere to strict building codes and safety regulations. This includes ensuring that the premises are structurally sound, with well-maintained facilities such as classrooms, restrooms, and common areas. Regular inspections should be conducted to check for potential hazards like exposed electrical wires, broken furniture, or inadequate ventilation. Emergency exits should be clearly marked, accessible, and free of obstructions.

Implementing surveillance systems such as CCTV cameras can significantly enhance the safety of coaching centers by monitoring activities and deterring potential misbehavior. Access control measures should be in place to prevent unauthorized entry. This includes secure doors, visitor logs, and identification protocols for staff and students.

Coaching centers should have clearly defined evacuation plans, regular fire drills, and functioning fire extinguishers and alarms. Staff should be trained to handle fire emergencies, and students should be educated on fire safety procedures. Maintaining high standards of cleanliness and hygiene helps prevent the spread of illness and ensures a healthy learning environment. Regular cleaning schedules should be established for classrooms, restrooms, and other shared spaces. Adequate sanitation supplies, such as hand sanitizers and disinfectants, should be readily available.

Coaching centers should have basic first aid kits and trained personnel to handle minor injuries and health issues. In case of more serious health emergencies, having a clear protocol for contacting medical professionals and emergency services is essential. Ensuring that staff are trained in first aid and CPR can make a significant difference in emergency situations.

Creating a positive and inclusive atmosphere is key to emotional safety. Coaching centers should have a zero-tolerance policy towards bullying and harassment. Implementing clear guidelines for reporting and addressing such incidents, and providing support to affected students, helps in maintaining a respectful and safe environment.

The rigorous academic environment in coaching centers can lead to significant stress among students. Implementing programs or workshops on stress management and mental health awareness can help students cope with academic pressures.

Coaching centers should develop and regularly update comprehensive emergency response plans covering various scenarios, including natural disasters, accidents, and security threats. These plans should be communicated clearly to staff and students, and regular drills should be conducted to ensure everyone is prepared.

Black book of activities of coaching centers should be exposed

■ PRIYANKA SAURABH

The owner of the coaching center which was preparing students in the basement did not know that there could be a problem with water logging in the basement. Youngsters were studying in the basement of a coaching center when the sudden influx of water turned into death. Many people ran away to save their lives, but three youngsters were killed in this accident. A few days ago, a youngster died due to an electric shock during rain in an area of Delhi. Both these incidents drew attention to the conditions in which students who have come to the capital Delhi from different parts of the country are living. All the coaching centres not only in Delhi but across the country are just empty promises. How innocent you become clear from the fact that you do not have any permit to run a coaching center in the basement, yet you are running a coaching center in the basement. The norms are not clear, and you do not have an NOC, this does not mean that you make your own rules. Ethics says that when there is ambiguity between personal ethics and administrative ethics, a responsible person should make a decision keeping administrative ethics in mind.

Where has this knowledge gone now? In the coaching center where the incident took place, only 30 students were sitting in the basement. In other coaching centers, 2000-2500 students sit in the basement. What would have happened if the same incident had taken place there? This is the Stone Age of man and humanity. The age of transactions of governments, politicians, officers, and businessmen. Like a mill, the wheels of their brutality and selfishness are spinning in which the common people and the youth of the country are getting crushed. In this entire episode, a car driver was held guilty. The government says that the road was filled with water, a car passed by and because of this the water moved and went into the basement. Neither the government is guilty nor the coaching center owner, but the car driver is guilty as to why he was driving the car on the road. This is our law and order and this is our justice system. This incident has exposed the monarchy, bureaucracy, media, and judiciary of India together. Here, the value of the life of a common man, a common youth is zero. Everyone is sleeping and like Andher Nagari Chaupat Raja, whenever such an incident happens, someone from the public is caught and punished. It is a good thing that the parents of the children were not sent to jail for sending their children to study. Had they not sent them to study, there would have been no death.

If an illegal building is constructed, then a bulldozer is used. Will a bulldozer be used on a coaching center as well? Why is coaching required across the country? Why can't we build proper hostels for these talented children? After all, how much will it cost or how many resources will be required for this? These children are the future shapers of our country but they will come in our priority only when they reach a higher position. The irony is that this same system surrounds these children in its insensitivity after they reach higher positions where they quickly forget their struggles. More than half of the IAS officers managing the administration must have lived the life of these children 10-15 years ago, but still, they are either not able to do anything for these children or they are not interested in it, their past is also not able to decide their priority. After all, what is the need for killer coaching? Coaching will be a private matter for a person. It does not seem to be of the government. So if any incident happens due to the negligence of anyone anywhere in such a big country, how did the system become guilty? The system will investigate this incident. And whoever is guilty should take the strictest action.

The government and the coaching institutes only want money and nothing else, they have nothing to do with whether someone lives or dies. Many other coaching centers are also running deadly libraries in the basement. If such coaching centers are running illegally, then action should be taken against them and action should also be taken against the officer. At such a time, we should not make allegations and counter-allegations but take action. The government should bring a law to regulate coaching institutes and suggestions should also be taken from the students studying in coaching institutes. The regulator should also keep an eye on the fees of coaching institutes. There was a time when even the most genius students did not get more than 90% marks, today even a person with average intelligence got 99% marks, all this is the game of coaching centers and private schools, they are in collusion with paper leakers, examination centers and result makers.

Cluster Resource sharing (Reference NEP-2020)

■ DR RASHPAL SINGH

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 of India aims to transform the Indian education system by implementing a range of reforms to improve the quality, inclusiveness, and accessibility of education. Among its many provisions, the concept of clustering resources in education is particularly noteworthy. This concept focuses on optimizing the use of available resources by creating clusters of educational institutions that share resources, infrastructure, and expertise to enhance the overall educational experience. This essay explores the cluster resources in education in reference to NEP 2020, detailing its implications, implementation strategies, benefits, and challenges.The National Education Policy 2020 is a comprehensive framework that envisions a holistic, flexible, multidisciplinary education system with an emphasis on the 21st-century skills of critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy. One of the innovative approaches introduced by NEP 2020 is the concept of clustering resources among educational institutions. This approach aims to address resource disparities, enhance educational outcomes, and promote collaborative learning environments.

Concept of Cluster Resources

Cluster resources in education refer to the strategic grouping of schools, colleges, and other educational institutions within a geographical area to share resources such as infrastructure, teaching staff, learning materials, and administrative functions. This model is designed to optimize resource utilization, reduce duplication of efforts, and foster a collaborative culture among institutions. By pooling resources, schools and colleges can offer a wider range of courses, extracurricular activities, and support services, thereby enhancing the quality of education.

Implementation Strategies

Identifying Clusters: The first step in implementing the cluster resource model is to identify potential clusters of educational institutions. This can be done based on geographical proximity, student population, and the existing infrastructure of schools and colleges. The clusters should be formed in a way that ensures a balanced distribution of resources and promotes equitable access to quality education for all students.

Infrastructure Sharing: One of the key aspects of clustering resources is the sharing of infrastructure. This includes classrooms, laboratories, libraries, sports facilities, and digital resources. By sharing infrastructure, institutions can reduce the cost of building and maintaining facilities, and provide students with access to better-equipped learning environments. For example, a cluster of schools can share a central library with a vast collection of books and digital resources, which would be otherwise unaffordable for individual schools.

Collaborative Teaching: Clustered institutions can benefit from collaborative teaching models, where teachers from different schools or colleges work together to deliver high-quality education. This can involve team teaching, exchange programs, and joint professional development initiatives. By pooling their expertise, teachers can create richer, more diverse learning experiences for students. Additionally, the exchange of best practices and innovative teaching methods can lead to continuous improvement in educational standards.

Resource Centres: Establishing resource centres within clusters can play a crucial role in supporting the educational needs of institutions. These centres can serve as hubs for teacher training, curriculum development, and research. They can also provide specialized services such as psychological counseling, career guidance, and special education support. By centralizing these services, clusters can ensure that all students and teachers have access to the necessary resources and support.

Technology Integration: The integration of technology is a cornerstone of the NEP 2020. Clusters can leverage digital platforms and tools to facilitate resource sharing and collaboration. This includes the use of online learning management systems, virtual classrooms, and digital libraries. Technology can also enable distance learning and remote access to educational resources, making education more inclusive and flexible.

Benefits of Clustering Resources

Improved Resource Utilization: One of the primary benefits of clustering resources is the improved utilization of available resources. By sharing infrastructure, teaching staff, and learning materials, institutions can maximize their efficiency and reduce wastage. This is particularly important in resource-constrained environments, where individual schools or colleges may struggle to provide high-quality education on their own.

Enhanced Educational Quality: Clustering resources can lead to significant improvements in the quality of education. Shared infrastructure and collaborative teaching models provide students with access to better facilities, diverse learning experiences, and a wider range of courses and activities. This can enhance student engagement, motivation, and overall learning outcomes. Additionally, the continuous professional development of teachers through collaborative initiatives can lead to better teaching practices and improved student performance.

Equity and Inclusiveness: The cluster resource model promotes equity and inclusiveness by ensuring that all students have access to high-quality education, regardless of their socioeconomic background or geographical location. By pooling resources, clusters can bridge the gap between urban and rural institutions, and provide equal opportunities for learning and development. This aligns with the NEP 2020's vision of an inclusive education system that caters to the diverse needs of all learners.

Cost Efficiency: Clustering resources can lead to significant cost savings for educational institutions. Shared infrastructure and services reduce the need for duplication of efforts and investments, allowing institutions to allocate their resources more effectively. This can result in lower operational costs, which can be redirected towards enhancing the quality of education and supporting student needs.

Collaborative Culture: The cluster resource model fosters a collaborative culture among educational institutions. By working together, schools and colleges can create a sense of community and shared responsibility for the educational outcomes of all students. This collaboration can extend beyond the classroom to include joint extracurricular activities, community outreach programs, and partnerships with local organizations. Such a collaborative approach can enrich the educational experience and promote a holistic development of students.

Challenges and Considerations

Administrative Coordination: Implementing the cluster resource model requires effective administrative coordination and management. This involves setting up governance structures, defining roles and responsibilities, and establishing clear communication channels among institutions. Ensuring smooth coordination can be challenging, particularly in regions with diverse administrative practices and varying levels of institutional capacity.

Resistance to Change

Educational institutions may face resistance to change from various stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, and parents. The transition to a cluster resource model may require significant changes in existing practices, which can be met with scepticism and reluctance. Effective change management strategies, including stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and transparent communication, are essential to overcome resistance and ensure successful implementation.

Quality Assurance

Maintaining consistent quality standards across clustered institutions is a critical challenge. This requires robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that all institutions adhere to the agreed-upon standards and practices. Regular assessments, feedback loops, and continuous improvement processes are necessary to uphold the quality of education and address any disparities within the cluster.

Infrastructure and Technology Gaps

The successful implementation of the cluster resource model depends on the availability of adequate infrastructure and technology. In regions with limited resources, ensuring that all institutions within a cluster have access to the necessary facilities and digital tools can be challenging. Addressing these gaps requires targeted investments, capacity building, and support from government and non-governmental organizations.

Cultural and Contextual Factors

The effectiveness of the cluster resource model can be influenced by cultural and contextual factors. Educational practices, community attitudes, and socio-economic conditions vary across regions, and these factors can impact the implementation and outcomes of clustering resources. Tailoring the model to the specific needs and context of each cluster is crucial to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

(The author is Sr. lecturer SED JK UT Ramnagar)

Importance of multidisciplinary education in today's academic environment

■ VIJAY GARG

Multidisciplinary education, which combines insights and methods from multiple fields of study, is essential in fostering the versatile and adaptive thinkers needed to tackle these multifaceted issues.

In an increasingly interconnected and complex world, traditional educational models that focus on a single discipline are no longer sufficient. The challenges of today range from global health crises and environmental sustainability to technological advancements and social inequality and a more holistic and integrative approach to learning. Multidisciplinary education, which combines insights and methods from multiple fields of study, is essential in fostering the versatile and adaptive thinkers needed to tackle these multifaceted issues. By embracing multidisciplinary education, academic institutions can prepare students not only to understand and navigate the complexities of the modern world but also to innovate and drive progress across diverse sectors. This approach nurtures creativity, critical thinking, and collaboration, equipping learners with the skills and perspectives necessary to excel in an ever-evolving landscape.India spoke to Pratik Modi, Dean, School of Management, BML Munjal University to understand of Multidisciplinary Education in Today's Academic Environment.

How do you define multidisciplinary education, and why do you believe it is essential in today's academic environment?

Multidisciplinary education integrates knowledge and methodologies from various disciplines, fostering a holistic learning approach. It encourages students to draw connections between subjects, enhancing their critical thinking and problem-solving skills. In today's rapidly evolving academic environment, this approach is essential as it prepares students to tackle complex, real-world challenges that do not fit neatly into one discipline. It promotes innovation, adaptability, and a broader perspective, equipping graduates with the versatile skills needed to thrive in diverse professional fields and address global issues effectively.

How can institutions integrate experiential learning into their curricula without compromising on traditional academic rigor?

Institutions can integrate experiential learning into their curricula by designing programs and courses that complement traditional academic rigor rather than replacing it. This can be achieved through various methods: Project-Based Learning: Incorporating real-world projects that require students to apply theoretical knowledge to practical scenarios. Internships and Practicums: Partnering with industries to offer internships that provide hands-on experience while maintaining academic oversight. Community Immersion: Integrating community immersion and engagement projects that align with course objectives, enabling students to learn and contribute to the society. Simulations and Case Studies: Using simulations, role-plays, and case studies to mimic real-world situations within the classroom. Collaborative Learning: Encouraging group work and interdisciplinary projects to mirror workplace dynamics and challenges.

What challenges do educators face when implementing multidisciplinary and experiential learning, and how can these be overcome?

Educators face several challenges when implementing multidisciplinary and experiential learning, including: Curriculum Re-design: Creating a cohesive curriculum that integrates multiple disciplines and experiential elements can be complex. Overcoming this requires careful planning, collaboration amongst faculty, and ongoing assessment to ensure alignment with learning outcomes. Resource Constraints: Experiential learning often requires additional resources, such as funding, technology, and partnerships with external organizations. Securing grants, building industry partnerships, and leveraging alumni networks can help mitigate these constraints. Assessment Difficulties: Measuring the outcomes of experiential and multidisciplinary learning can be challenging. Developing clear rubrics, using reflective assessments, and incorporating peer evaluations can provide more comprehensive evaluation methods. Faculty Training: Educators may need professional development to effectively facilitate these learning approaches. Offering workshops, cross-disciplinary collaborations, and support from instructional design experts can enhance faculty readiness. Student Adaptation: Students accustomed to traditional learning methods might struggle with the self-directed nature of experiential learning. Providing clear guidance, scaffolding experiences, and fostering a growth mindset can help students adapt. How does the approach to multidisciplinary education in international institutions compare to that of Indian institutions? The approach to multidisciplinary education in international institutions often emphasizes flexibility, innovation, and cross-disciplinary collaboration. Key differences include: Curriculum Flexibility: International institutions frequently offer flexible curricula, allowing students to choose courses across various disciplines, encouraging a broader educational experience. In contrast, Indian institutions traditionally have more rigid, specialised programs, though this is gradually changing.

Interdisciplinary Programs: International universities often have established interdisciplinary programs and research centres that promote collaboration across fields. Indian institutions are beginning to adopt similar models but are still in the early stages of development. Experiential Learning Integration: Many international institutions prioritize experiential learning through internships, co-ops, and global study programs. While Indian institutions increasingly recognize the importance of experiential learning, there are often fewer structured opportunities available.

Industry Partnerships: International institutions frequently collaborate with industry and government sectors to provide practical learning experiences. Indian institutions are enhancing these partnerships but face challenges in matching the scale and depth found internationally. Faculty Training and Development: International institutions often invest heavily in faculty development to support multidisciplinary and experiential learning. Indian institutions are improving in this area but still need to expand their efforts to match international standards.

What can the Indian education system learn from international models of experiential learning to enhance its own teaching methods?

The Indian education system can draw several valuable lessons from international models of experiential learning to enhance its teaching methods: Project-Based Learning (PBL): Emphasizing PBL can help students apply theoretical knowledge to real-world problems. Indian education can adopt structured PBL frameworks that encourage collaboration, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills. Community Engagement: Many international institutions integrate community engagement with academic coursework, promoting civic responsibility and practical skills. Indian institutions can implement service-learning projects that address local community issues, fostering a sense of social responsibility among students. Global Exposure: International models often include study abroad programs and global internships. Indian education can create partnerships with foreign universities to offer exchange programs, giving students international exposure and a broader perspective.

Use of Technology and Simulations: Leveraging technology for simulations, virtual labs, and online collaborative projects is common internationally. Indian institutions can enhance their infrastructure to incorporate these technologies, providing immersive learning experiences. Investing in Faculty Development: Continuous professional development for educators is crucial. Indian institutions can establish robust training programs to help faculty adopt experiential learning techniques and stay updated with global best practices. Assessment Innovation: International models often use diverse assessment methods, including reflective journals, peer reviews, and project evaluations. Indian education can adopt these innovative assessment strategies to better evaluate experiential learning outcomes.

(The writer is Retired Principal and Educational Columnist)

YOUR COLUMN
REDRESS HEALTH AND MEDICAL SERVICES ISSUES

Dear Editior,

Manoj Sinha, Lieutenant Governor (LG), UT of J&K, Raj Bhavan , Jammu. Sir, I Sukesh C.Khajuria, a senior social activist pursuing J&K's public issues especially relating to health and medical services, for the past more than four decades in J&K. I want to bring to your notice certain facts which pertains to the health sector and are directly affecting the general masses of J&K. There are certain decision and issues which were taken by the government for the welfare of the masses pertaining to their health and wellbeing but were not implemented on the ground due to unknown reasons. Sir, since your government has been working wholeheartedly for the overall welfare of the people of J&K, I request you to kindly look into these important issues. Your kind indulgence would be enough for implementation of these measures which were supposed to be for public good. The foremost issues is the non-implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed between Government Medical College, Jammu and Tata Memorial Centre (TMC), Mumbai for starting oncology services at State Cancer institute (SCI) at Jammu on February 23rd , 2022 in the presence of Lieutenant Governor UT of J&K. It was an effort to provide better cancer care and up gradation of oncology services from the single department of Radiotherapy at GMC Jammu to Multidisciplinary oncology services for the Jammu region at State Cancer Institute and for streamlining the Oncology services following the practice guidelines carried out at TMC Mumbai and other Satellite Tata cancer hospitals across India. But unfortunately there is no clear implementation of MOU guidelines so that different oncology specialties practice in their own area of specialization and not to venture into the areas of other specialties as it's strictly done at all Tata cancer hospitals, AIIMS, New Delhi. State Cancer Institute, Jaipur and other reputed corporate hospitals across India. Interestingly, the Principal GMC, Jammu, who has been blatantly practicing as Medical Oncologist, despite being a Radiotherapist, doing chemotherapy in Radiotherapy department, using MO (Medical Oncology) Packages prescribed in Ayushman Bharat Scheme (PMJAY) to be used by Medical Oncology, as someone who is not a radiation Oncologist cannot use RO (Radiation oncology) and SO (Surgical Oncology Package). Sir, there is another menace of private practice by the senior doctors and teachers working in the state medical college and government hospitals. I had been waging a lone battle against this practice of fleecing poor common masses by these doctors who get fat salaries from state exchequer and are minting money from their own private practices. The Government order no. 43- HME of 2013 dated January 17, 2013 by the government stated that "in the interest of administration and patient - care, it is hereby ordered that the Heads of the Departments in Govt. Medical colleges and Associated Hospitals and Govt. Dental colleges of the state shall not indulge in private practice henceforth". But it is surprising that in spite of the Govt. order all the HODs are still practicing while senior authorities are turning Nelson's Eye to these brazen violations of Govt. instructions. The Chawla committee formed to submit recommendations for the betterment of the services in the government medical college, besides numerous other recommendations had also strongly opined against private practice by senior doctors in these institutions. But, the Chawla committee recommendations were also conveniently ignored by the health bureaucracy. I have been crusading against the private practice by Govt.doctors. Sir, this private practice by the government doctors is impacting the health care services as the people are deprived of adequate and specialised medical care. This has been corroborated by the report of State health agency and the insurance company covering patients under AB - PMJAY scheme of the state government submitted to the Administrative Secretary Health and Medical Education. The list of some of the doctors involved in malpractices has also been shared with the Department. But no action has been taken against the concerned doctors. Sir, I seek your indulgence and action request your good self to issue an order through Administrative Secretary HME to strictly implement all MOU guidelines signed with tata memorial cancer Hospital, Mumbai in true spirit especially, Integrate State Cancer Institute into National Cancer Grid Tata Memorial Centre and establish standard management guidelines similar to evidence- based medicine guidelines of TMC For Organ-Based treatment in Different Disease Management Groups. The Govt.order no. 43/HME of 2013 dated January 17, 2013 by virtue where of private practice of Heads of the Departments (HODs) in GMC, Associated Hospitals and dental colleges of the state has been banned, Govt.Order No.612-JKHME of 2022 dated 12-08-2022 regarding doctors to restrain themselves from private practice during official hours/duty hours in health institution and other malpractices, notification dated 23rd April ,1998 and the recommendations of the Chawla committee should be adhered too and implemented in letter and spirit so that the revered motto of your government of "Sabka Saath and Sabka Vikas" & "Health for All" with effective services could truely benefit common people. Thanking You.

Sukesh C.Khajuria