Education for Peace and Transformative Learning
The Possibilities of RTE

January 4-7, 2014
New Delhi

Supriya Roychoudhury

Wiscomp
Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace
Foundation for Universal Responsibility
New Delhi
Contents

Acknowledgements ........................................................................................................... 5
Background ....................................................................................................................... 7
Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 10
Right to Education: Intention and Reality ................................................................. 12
Realizing the Vision of NCF 2005 ................................................................................ 15
Relevance of Gandhi and Non-Violence in Contemporary Society ................................ 20
Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation and Facilitation .............................................. 27
Unpacking Multiculturalism ......................................................................................... 30
Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation and Facilitation II ........................................... 36
Beyond Words: Arts Creating Dialogic Space ......................................................... 42
Curriculum through a Peace Lens ................................................................................ 45
Free and Compulsory: Film Discussion ....................................................................... 51
Looking Ahead: Opportunities and Challenges for Educators ...................................... 54
Participant Feedback .................................................................................................... 57
Workshop Programme .................................................................................................... 62
Profiles of the Resource Persons .................................................................................. 65
Profiles of the Participants ............................................................................................. 67
Glimpses ........................................................................................................................ 71
Acknowledgments

This report is based on the proceedings of a workshop that was organized in New Delhi on January 4–7, 2014 under the *Hum Kadam*: Education for Peace initiative of Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) and its partner the Foundation for Academic Excellence and Access (FAEA). WISCOMP is grateful to the FAEA Board members for their unwavering support and to Prof. V. R. Mehta, for mentoring the project.

WISCOMP is grateful to Mr. Rajiv Mehrotra and the Foundation for Universal Responsibility of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for their constant guidance and encouragement. Special thanks to Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath, Founder and Director, WISCOMP, for her vision and ideas that have shaped the *Hum Kadam*: Education for Peace Initiative.

The support of colleagues at WISCOMP, Seema Kakran, Manjrika Sewak, Shilpi Shabdita, Bani Gill, Harish C. Bhatt, Sree Kumari V, Devender Kumar, and Asavari Bharadwaj (Intern), is gratefully acknowledged.

Supriya Roychoudhury
Background

The workshop on Education for Peace and Transformative Learning: The Possibilities of Right to Education was organized as part of the Hum Kadam: Education for Peace initiative, which is a collaborative effort of Women in Security, Conflict Management and Peace (WISCOMP) and the Foundation for Academic Excellence and Access (FAEA). This initiative seeks to constructively channelize the potential and zeal of the youth to build trust across the divisions of conflict and to foster active coexistence. With a view to maximize impact on the youth, it also explores various approaches that can enable educators to empower children and youth to:

- Develop an understanding of, and accommodation for, the differences that may exist in experience, ethnicity, religion, and political beliefs;
- Transform prejudices and build trust and relationships across myriad faultlines (religion, race, nationality, gender, class, ethnicity, to name a few);
- Develop skills in dialogue, active listening, and other forms of nonviolent communication; and,
- Promote coexistence and multiculturalism in their communities and society.

Training workshops and dialogues are organized for educators as part of the Hum Kadam initiative to foreground the contemporary issues that impact education in India. Issues of access, equity and quality, as also concerns about biases in curricula and flawed teaching methodology are part of the dialogues. The workshops are premised on the understanding that the domain of education as a possible liberatory space that empowers as well as sensitizes individuals to deprivation faces severe challenges. These challenges emanate from three distinct but interrelated trends in the Indian society and polity. First, the threat to secular spaces from different fundamentalisms; second, the growing legitimacy of a culture of militarism; and third, the dislocating and bewildering changes imposed upon it by the processes broadly described as globalization and its consequent inequities.1

---

As these trends and concerns collide and cohere, they raise serious questions about the capacity of educational spaces to renew their role in engendering social transformation and providing effective responses to conflicts and their resolution. For instance, how can Indian education resist the impulses of sectarian forces? Can it be made capable of countering these influences or is it doomed to implicate itself in a ‘closing of the Indian mind’? Can contemporary developments in the revision of curricula move from a narrow focus on skill based, instrumentalist aims of education? Can education provide avenues for the politics of the possible, without surrendering to partisan and cynical political interests and stakeholders? Can it provide a vocabulary and space for transformative learning?

There is a policy framework currently in place which addresses some of these issues, and reinforces the importance of adopting a more holistic and multifaceted approach to education. The NCF 2005 identifies a number of broad objectives for education, for instance: encouraging independence of thought and action, developing sensitivity to others’ wellbeing and feelings, learning to respond to new situations in a flexible and creative manner, participating in democratic processes, and developing the ability to work towards and contribute to economic processes and social change. Yet implementation of the NCF has been weak.

In response to these issues, many educational scholars argue that education in India today is informed by two opposing strands of thought. One, that can be discerned from the neo-liberal frame of standardization, teacher accountability and learning outcomes that regards education as an ‘enterprise of efficient delivery’. They also assert that such thinking underpins the Right to Education Act, which is considered progressive and transformative by most human rights proponents. In contrast to this efficient delivery model, the national school curriculum framework and the teacher education curriculum framework reaffirm the central role of teachers as agents of social transformation and rely on their ability to rise above social prejudices and biases and educate for and in a diverse society.

WISCOMP believes that while efficiency cannot be completely ignored and may find relevance for assessing infrastructural needs, a truly

---

liberatory and transformative educational experience requires that the pivotal role of the teacher be recognized. In this backdrop, WISCOMP organizes workshops for educators that provide space for discussing issues of diversity and difference.

The workshop on Education for Peace and Transformative Learning in New Delhi brought together 30 educators from Kashmir and Delhi to facilitate an understanding of the principles and vision of The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education 2009 (RTE) and also incorporate practices of Transformative Learning in spaces of teaching and interaction. It also wove together sessions on Multicultural Learning and Teaching and exercises in Conflict Resolution and Nonviolent Communication as pragmatic praxis not only to deal with disagreeable situations in general but also to develop skills in dialogue. The workshop drew on the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005 that has served as a guide for evolving a national system of education to realize the democratic vision enshrined in the Indian Constitution.
Introduction

The four-day workshop on *Education for Peace and Transformative Learning: The Possibilities of RTE* began with an introductory session by WISCOMP Director Meenakshi Gopinath, in which the transformative potential of education was highlighted. Education in the current context is very often used to advance a neoliberal agenda which reinforces the importance of skills, capacity development and employability, and leaves its potential to engender social transformation largely untapped. How then do we begin to transgress these limitations in order to make education much more socially responsive to the political challenges of our times? For instance, how do we enable education to respond to the challenges of an increasingly sectarian society and politics?

In her opening remarks, Gopinath explored the relationship and interplay between peace, conflict and education. Adopting a peacebuilding lens, for instance, could enable one to identify whether and how conflict manifests itself in education. At the same time, education can itself be used to further peace—a fact that has come to be acknowledged by the NCF. Its corollary was also highlighted, which is the potential for education to reinforce or legitimise structural and systemic forms of violence. That society’s current threshold for the acceptance of violence is remarkably high could invariably be linked to processes through which education is transmitted.

Gopinath then went on to explore the relationship between identity, diversity and education. She noted that India is essentially a land of minorities. If one positions oneself in relation to the rest of India, one is essentially a minority. Identity in the present-day globalised context is also constantly in a state of flux; yet one may still identify as a global
citizen. What is required is the presence of a safe, catalytic space where differences are recognised and prejudices are overcome. This is especially needed in educational institutions and the media, where nuance and ambivalence are very often compromised. Attempts to create these kinds of spaces, however, have been met with resistance. The legal requirement for private schools to admit 25% of their students from the economically weaker sections of society was met with resistance by several schools in Delhi. However, it is this process of acknowledging and respecting all forms of difference that will ultimately result in education for peace. The process of ‘de-classing’ of wealthy, privileged students is a fundamental part of that process. Inverting the pyramid of leadership is also necessary in order to associate leadership and excellence not only with high academic performance but also the kind of labour applied to overcome several obstacles and be admitted into school in the first place. This is the kind of leadership that needs to be extolled. Finally, education for peace also requires the demilitarisation of vocabulary we employ on a day-to-day basis. The language we use must be reflective of a certain ethos which foregrounds empathy, inclusivity, compassion and understanding. Far from being a purely academic discipline, peace education is in fact a lens which allows one to view things from a different perspective each time. Encouraging these kinds of reflexive patterns of behaviour will result in the kind of holistic and mindful learning that is much needed in today’s context.

Following the opening remarks, ice breaking exercises were conducted by WISCOMP staff members – Seema Kakran and Manjri Sewak. The ice breakers were also used to set ground rules for the interaction so that the participants collectively decided how ‘respect’ for diverse opinions will be demonstrated.
Right to Education: Intention and Reality

In this session, Anita Rampal (Professor, Department of Education, University of Delhi, Delhi) discussed the particular challenges facing the Indian education system today, particularly from the perspective of educational outcomes. Quality educational outcomes are those which delink the academic performance of children from their social backgrounds. The education system should be one in which students from a diverse set of backgrounds are encouraged to study with one another. Developing an understanding of different social realities is valuable from both a personal as well as an academic perspective.

A major concern confronting the Indian education system is that of assessment. Broadly speaking, there are two key approaches to assessment: the remedial-based approach and the enrichment-based approach. An example of the remedial approach would be the education system in Singapore, where children are placed in a separate track of study if they fail their examinations in class four. Such a technocratic approach is designed to set up schools of excellence for the brightest students, whilst side-lining others. This model of education has begun to be questioned in Singapore. In Delhi, schools modelled on such an approach similarly exist, although they run against the very spirit of equity enshrined in the RTE. Activity-based learning is disregarded or reserved for the ‘slow’ students, when in fact, it should be applied to all students. Activities which should be considered could involve the participation of different people from the neighbourhood; from the community members to the school management committee members to the parents as well as the teachers.

Rampal went on to question the value of the examination as an effective assessment and learning tool. Not only do examinations encourage high levels of unhealthy competition among students, they also alienate
students from the more disenfranchised communities. Moreover, the key medium for examination-based learning is the textbook, which is itself often compromised and not in alignment with the guidelines of the NCF. There are, however, examples of schools where creative methods are employed to facilitate learning. In the schools located in the Malappuram district of Kerala, songs are often sung before the start of an examination to alleviate the stress, fear and intimidation associated with the examination process. This technique resulted in a demonstrable positive impact, with the previously low performing students of Malappuram now being awarded school scholarships. Issues around learning methodologies have been raised by civil society with the government and Rampal referenced a roundtable discussion which had been held with Kapil Sibal (who was the Human Resource Development Minister at the time) in this regard.

The RTE is a radical tool in many respects as it is asking educators to adopt those methodologies that have theoretically been proven to result in better learning outcomes. A key element of learning is linked to confidence-building and providing support. Whilst asking for support or help is generally stigmatised under the remedial approach to education, it is wholly encouraged under the enrichment approach to education. Furthermore, support can come from multiple sources; not merely the classroom but also from the community itself.

Ultimately, the RTE is a powerful Act which gives everyone the right to feel responsible for the children in this country. Everyone is guaranteed the right to question the court on different aspects of the Act, including why a child has been made to fail in a school examination. The greatest contribution of the Act has been to encourage people to reflect closely on what it means to say that every child has the right to an equitable and quality education. The responsibility to question the court on the lack of implementation of the RTE should lie with the adult and not the child per se.
Education is of course linked to nutrition as without the latter the learning process may be hindered. This is another facet of education that needs to be considered from early childhood itself. The importance of the Midday Meal scheme must therefore not be overlooked. There is also a social dimension to what appears to primarily be a scheme focused on meeting the nutrition needs of children. The Midday Meal scheme has facilitated a process of social cohesion by bringing together children from diverse communities, castes and religions, to commune and eat together. Class barriers may be transgressed by admitting children from the economically weaker sections of society. This has been particularly successful in Loreto School in Sealdah, Kolkata where 50% of the students pay school fees and the remaining 50% are provided a waiver.
Realizing the Vision of NCF 2005

The focus of this session was to reflect on the NCF 2005 and the discourse around it, and to better understand the letter and spirit with which it had been written. Several textbooks which were written post the creation of the NCF in 2005 are now being used by nearly 14 states. Far from centralizing the process of curriculum development, the NCF encourages states to adapt the framework in accordance with their respective local and regional contexts. The NCF 2005 and NCFTE 2009 (National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education) are being used as guiding frameworks for Jammu and Kashmir to revise their teacher education curriculum programmes.

Reflecting on the history of the NCF, Poonam Batra (Professor, Maulana Azad Center for Elementary and Social Education, Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi, Delhi) spoke of the National Curriculum for School Education (NCFSE) which was developed when the NDA government was in power (1999–2004). The textbooks which were written at this time were mired in controversy due to their content. Although educators, school teachers and academics were deeply disillusioned at the way ideology was being thrust upon school curricula, the episode opened conversations on the issue of curriculum construction and design. What does ‘curriculum’ mean and who should be tasked with designing it? Although teachers and educators began to have these discussions within their respective silos and forums, little was publicly articulated by them in the printed media. Batra’s reading of the situation was that teachers lacked the confidence to express themselves in public, in part because of the role that was ascribed to them as implementers of education and instruments of the State rather than as independent and political beings with agency.

Eventually, the NDA’s attempts to rewrite textbooks resulted in a stay order by the Supreme Court. When the UPA government came to power, one of the key objectives of the Ministry of Human Resource Development was to undo the changes made by the previous regime in the school curriculum. What followed then was the appointment of a team under the leadership of Krishna Kumar to restructure the curriculum, not only in terms of removing its ‘ideologically compromised content’ but also in terms of re-evaluating the kind of knowledge that
was being imparted and placing the perspective of the teacher and the child at its core. The NCF 2005 was the result of this process. For the first time, it began to reflect issues around diversity, learning and local knowledge.

Batra went on to describe her journey in this field, explaining how her research in education and clinical psychology inspired her to reflect more closely on the role of education in personal development. The commodification of education in the current neoliberal context has resulted in the delinking of education from this kind of holistic development, focusing instead on the accumulation of degrees and certificates. This has negatively impacted teacher education as well. For instance, the B. Ed Programme, which dates back to the colonial period and has not been modified since, does not encourage prospective teachers to engage critically with the textbook. Teacher educators will often instruct teachers on how best to teach a particular subject.

On the issue of pedagogy, it was noted that often teachers of different subjects and disciplines will employ the same methods⁴ instead of adapting them to the subject being taught. For instance, history can be taught in a way that encourages students to directly engage with the sources of information on which historical narratives are constructed. This kind of pedagogy, however, does not strictly lie within the ambit of existing instructional frameworks. Methods should be infused with subject content in order to develop a truly meaningful subject-specific pedagogy. Teacher education, however, does not fully recognise the importance of this. Without this kind of engagement, subjects such as history will continue to appear ‘irrelevant’ to the children who are taught it. History will continue to be regarded as a subject of the past, unless it is linked to the everyday and contemporary lives of

---

⁴ The question-answer method, the discussion method, the project method, the inductive method, the deductive method, the lecture method, the translation method, so on and so forth.
children. For instance, while teaching children the life and times of Shah Jahan or the Delhi Sultanate, attempts could be made to mask students to reflect on how the common person lived their life during this period. This would more likely resonate with the student. Of course, the issue is further compounded by the fact that contemporary history is not taught in schools. The importance of linking subject matter with disciplinary knowledge and teaching methods has been reinforced by the NCF 2005 and the NCFTE 2009.

Additionally, both frameworks engage with the issue of learning. The B.Ed. programme distinguishes between teaching and learning, instructing prospective teachers in the theories of both and essentially compartmentalising the two functions. However the everyday experiences of teachers demonstrate that these two functions cannot and should not be separated. A good lecture, for instance, needs to be linked to whether students have essentially learnt and grasped what is being taught. The responsibility to teach and ensure that students are indeed learning what is being taught rests on the teacher and not the student. However teacher education relies on imparting conventional theories which have resulted in alienating teachers. Effective teaching takes many forms and could even include singing and dancing in the classroom, which is not to say that the process of learning is trivialised, just that these forms may result in ‘joyful learning’. A lot of interesting research also points to the fact that a child’s thought processes differ qualitatively from that of an adult.

The NCF further reinforces this by stating that learning is a social activity. Yet, within the context of the classroom children are often discouraged from talking and are instead told to ‘focus on their work’ as though this were an individual-centric activity. Every child is also located within a particular social, economic, cultural and political context—a fact that is often disregarded by teacher training programmes. The need to factor in this plurality (rather than multiculturalism) of the Indian context is mentioned by the NCF. Unlike multiculturalism which is often used in the Western context to describe diverse societies that have come about on account of migration of populations, the situation in India can best be described as one of ‘plurality’ where diversity has historically been embedded within the social fabric. Sensitivity to plurality and an engagement with social differences must be integrated within school curricula, pedagogy and teacher training programmes. Whereas this may
at first appear to be a daunting task, the idea is really to focus on local knowledge, local and regional issues and local ‘heroes’ who are often sidelined from mainstream historical narratives. National narratives which extol national icons such as Gandhi and Bhagat Singh need to be supplemented by more contextually relevant narratives. The NCF 2005 reinforces this idea.

Yet the emphasis on localising knowledge, as was pointed out at the time by members of the Left-leaning CPI and CPI(M), also meant legitimising those local practices and customs (for example, sati practiced in Rajasthan) that went against the very grain of India’s constitutional values. To resolve this, the NCF states that only those forms of local contextual knowledge which align with the basic constitutional values of liberty, freedom, fraternity, democracy etc., will be integrated within the school curricula and teacher preparation programmes.

The NCF 2005, unlike the previous framework, also questioned the neutrality of the textbook. Education was previously thought to be a process by which value-neutral information was transmitted from the knowledge holder to the recipient. Since the time of Gandhi and Tagore, traditional notions around knowledge and knowledge ‘transmission’ began to be questioned. Tagore, for instance, spoke of educating children in spaces close to nature, thus demonstrating that education is laden with values.

The issue of value-neutrality applies not only to the way textbooks are written but also to the process by which students are examined and subjects are taught. A student who comes from an economically weaker section of society whose mother irons clothes all-daylong is expected to take the same public examination (CBSE, ICSE, etc.) as a child whose parent might be a professor. A level playing field is thus clearly absent. Subjects are also taught in ways that reflect the subjectivity and values of those who are tasked to teach and instruct. For instance, even in the seemingly objective field of mathematics, examples used to explain key concepts (such as percentages) reflect a particular ethos and set of values. Percentages, for instance, are often explained using examples premised on profit and loss when they could actually be explained using more socially relevant examples such as calculating the number of people of a particular community as a proportion of the State’s total population. These two distinctly different approaches to teaching percentages clearly reflect two disparate set of values.
Another key limitation of the current education system is the lack of agency given to teachers. Even the landmark RTE legislation primarily regards teachers as implementing agents, rather than as active influencers and shapers of texts and school curricula. This needs to change if teachers are to become truly empowered agents and transformational changes are to be introduced into the system. To this end, teacher education programmes will have to be rectified to reflect the fact that teachers are best placed to understand the needs of their students. The wealth of knowledge they possess in this regard needs to be harnessed for the greater good. Teachers must be able to develop their own frames of analysis to assess their students’ strengths, and apply these within the classroom context. The two-year B.Ed. Programme and the four year B El. Ed. Programme being offered by Delhi University offer some interesting courses; the latter for example offers a compulsory course on gender and schooling.
Relevance of Gandhi and Nonviolence in Contemporary Society

In this session, the idea of using heritage walks as an experiential tool for learning was explored. In a highly globalised context where children are increasingly subsumed by information and new forms of technology, it becomes equally important to connect with one’s heritage and tradition. Looking at the particular case of Gandhi Smriti, heritage education scholar Navina Jafa invoked the participants to critically analyse the fame and martyrdom with which Gandhi is traditionally associated. Foreign leaders and dignitaries who visit India are often taken to Raj Ghat, and not to Gandhi Smriti (the location of Gandhi’s assassination). The value of the heritage walk thus lies in its ability to make students think critically and debate issues. Additionally, it allows for the participation of the students’ parents, thus ensuring that the learning is taken back to the community and is not simply contained within the confines of the classroom.

Jafa went on to discuss the importance of children evolving into inspired and fulfilled individuals. Gandhi is an example of one such individual.
In his deliberate attempt to become the ‘Everyman’, he demonstrated the potential of ordinary people to spread positive energy around them. Teachers and educators today similarly have the potential to transmit this kind of energy to their students. Students should also be encouraged to utilise all their internal energy points. Gandhi’s principle of ‘Nai Talim’ which states that knowledge and work are not separate is as applicable today as it was during his time.

The importance of oral tradition as a fundamental part of education was also highlighted. Whether these narratives relate to dance or mathematical principles such as calculus and fractions, the wealth of information transmitted orally over the generations has resulted in a kind of democratisation of knowledge. A vegetable seller, for instance, without a formal degree or education is able to do mathematical calculations mentally, in part due to this rich historical legacy.

Culture defines who we are as a civilisation. The politicisation of culture by politicians is what results in conflicts over religious, linguistic, racial and other types of identities. In that sense, culture is much more potent tool than weapons. Yet culture can also be used to create spaces of communal harmony and nonviolence, and this is what needs to be highlighted to children.

Jafa narrated an anecdote involving Gandhi and the agricultural Minister to highlight the limitations of materialism. She contrasted Gandhi’s aversion to materialism with children of the present generation who appear to be trapped within a highly consumerist and materialistic culture. Where does one draw the line? With regards to creating a counter culture that provides an alternative to this kind of ‘popular’ or materialistic culture, Jafa highlighted the particular relevance of SPIC MACAY (The Society for the Promotion of Indian Classical Music And Culture Amongst Youth) SPIC MACAY as a voluntary youth movement has been promoting intangible aspects of Indian cultural heritage among young people.
Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation and Facilitation

Communication gaps exist between the teacher and the student(s) in the classroom setting. Educators often face such challenging situations in their daily life which often create problems. Being able to communicate well with others is considered essential to problem solving as problems inevitably occur in our private and professional lives. Having good interpersonal communication skills enables us to work more effectively in groups and teams. WISCOMP understands the significance of having effective communication skills which allows the individuals or group(s) involved in the conflict to resolve the situation and move towards building consensus.

The session on the second day of the workshop aimed at introducing Conflict Resolution Skills. Conflict resolution is the process of resolving a dispute or a conflict by meeting at least some of each side’s needs and addressing their interests. Knowing how to manage and resolve conflict is essential for having a productive work life, and it is equally important for community and family life as well. The field of Conflict Resolution and Negotiation is decades old. The findings have been applied to the curriculum of several universities abroad. Post the end of Second World War, the need was felt to develop a mechanism which would facilitate in resolving the differences without being aggressive or violent. It’s important to note that these mechanisms were not developed with the help of judicial system, rather they were put to use outside the domain of Judiciary. The two key conflict resolution skills that the workshop dealt with were Mediation and Facilitation.

Mediation involves a conflict that needs resolution, while facilitation requires management of a process where participants have a common interest. A mediator helps those in conflict find solution that is satisfactory to all involved. A facilitator on the other hand helps a group engage around a common goal. It involves a group of people and require guidance of that group through education, discussion and perhaps decision making. Facilitator’s skills may also cross over and contribute to a mediation process.

4 http://www.pon.harvard.edu/category/daily/conflict-resolution/
To further debate and discuss these skills, the facilitator for the session Sarah Beth Fascitelli, (Independent Trainer and Consultant in the field of Conflict Resolution) explained the importance of good communication skills. She said that it is very important to effectively communicate with others because it diminishes the possibility of any misunderstanding to exist. At the same time Fascitelli also explained that communication could be tough. If one is not able to communicate effectively and express his/her opinion, the communication is often constrained. There can be many barriers to communication and these may occur at any stage in the communication process. Barriers may lead to your message becoming distorted and you therefore risk wasting both time and money by causing misunderstanding. Effective communication involves overcoming these barriers and conveying a clear and concise message.

In order to clarify this point, Fascitelli led the participants into a goal oriented exercise. She asked the participants to pair themselves with someone they don’t know and ask the following questions from each other:

- What is their name?
- For how long have they been teachers?
- Which subjects and grades they taught?

Participants were then asked to introduce their partners and the main purpose of the exercise said Fascitelli was to understand why communicating with a stranger is difficult.

As discussed above, one has to overcome all the challenges that cause hindrance to having a clear and concise conversation. It is equally crucial to determine the reasons behind difficult conversation. For this purpose, the facilitator then described the various parts of the brain as they are understood in cognitive psychology and neuro-sciences.

The reptilian brain controls the body’s vital functions such as heart rate, breathing, body temperature and balance. It is reliable but tends to be rigid and compulsive. Its main function is to help with survival.

The limbic system houses the primary centre of emotion. It includes the amygdala (important in the association of events with emotions like fear, pity, anger, or outrage) and the hippocampus (converts information
into long term memory as well as memory recall), and links emotions with behaviour.

The neo-cortex, also called the cerebral cortex, constitutes five-sixths of the human brain (and is more prominent than in other mammals). It makes language, including speech and writing, possible; makes logical and formal operational thinking possible and allows us to see ahead and plan for the future. It contains two specialized regions for voluntary movement and processing sensory information.

Rarely is only one part of the brain active; generally they work together. However 98 percent of our reactions are emotional and are a result of the functions of the reptilian and limbic systems. The first reaction to a threat or criticism is from the reptilian brain, which feels either safe or threatened and under threat engages physiological reactions such as increased heartbeat. The second reaction is from the limbic system, which connects the current experience to memories of other experiences, creating meaning and invoking feelings such as contentment, sadness, excitement or shame. The third reaction is from the neo-cortex which questions and analyses the experience. The neo-cortex supports logical thinking, and this is required to think critically about either our own reaction or the actions of people around us. Thus the neo-cortex is crucial to our ability to think creatively and promote change either in ourselves or in society.

The reptilian brain and limbic system both serve important purposes. They take charge of behaviour following trauma, trying to protect us from further harm. But they can keep traumatized children and adults captive to a cycle of negative emotions and reactions.

Fascitelli then introduced some context specific tools and skills which allowed the individual or the party involved in the conflict to manage a
difficult conversation. A pre-requisite to an effective communication is the ability to ‘listen’ what the other has to say. We usually hear the other but never listen to what they say. Active listening is a crucial step towards having effective communication. As Rachel Naomi Remen said, “The most basic and powerful way to connect to another person is to listen. Just listen. Perhaps the most important thing we ever give each other is our attention.”

She leads the participants into an experiential activity titled, ‘Can you believe it?’ …

The objective of the activity was to make the participants understand the significance of having good listening skills.

The activity required participants to pair themselves with another participant whom they haven’t interacted with before. Out of the two individuals forming the pair, one of them (Person A) would be a speaker and the other (Person B) would be a blocker. The activity had three rounds:

- In round one, the speaker is required to think of a belief, a value or an opinion which is very important to him/her. S/he should then share this belief, value or an opinion with their partner. The speaker should be able to discuss the significance of the same with their partner. The blocker on the other hand is required to patiently listen and not interrupt the speaker.

- In round two, the speaker would remain completely quiet while the blocker should completely trash and refute what the speaker said in round one. Even if the blocker agrees with the speaker in real life, s/he should criticize what the speaker said and think of all the reasons which would falsify speaker’s perspective.

- In round three, the speaker should respond to what the blocker had said. The blocker on the other hand should continue to refute/criticize the speaker and block them.

Effective listening requires concentration and the use of your other senses, not just hearing the words spoken. Effective listening involves observing body language and noticing inconsistencies between verbal

---

5 http://www.skillsyouneed.com/ips/listening-skills.html#ixzz35YMO7783
and non-verbal messages. There are three integral components linked with listening skills—Advocacy, Inquiry and Acknowledgment.

To examine and practice further skills for dialogue, the facilitator moved into differentiating between advocacy, inquiry and acknowledgement and expounding on the ‘why, what and how’ of using each of these skills. Each of these if used properly could help the people we communicate with, feel protected and at the same time it would enable them to absorb whatever we need to tell them.

The facilitator and participants collaboratively defined advocacy, in the context of communication theory, as pushing or putting across someone’s idea or statement or need. Advocacy is the process of taking and working for a particular side’s interests in a conflict. Lawyers engage in advocacy when they represent a client in a legal proceeding. Disputants can also engage in advocacy themselves arguing for their own position in negotiation, mediation, or a political debate. Any attempt to persuade another side to agree to your demands is advocacy.

However, it might become counter-productive in a conflict situation if we are only advocating. This happens because said Fascitelli, both the parties involved in the conflict are extremely high on advocacy but low on inquiry and acknowledgement. Basically, more emphasis is laid on advocacy and people don’t involve themselves in the process of knowing what the other person is saying or feeling. The other person also has an opinion and in a conflict situation when individual(s) or groups are highly sensitive, they don’t acknowledge or accept what the other individual or group is advocating. This in turn doesn’t help in resolving but aggravating the conflict.

This restricts the neo-cortex from processing information and makes the situation all the more difficult. However, it can be avoided and eliminated with the help of two other components namely, Inquiry and Acknowledgement.

Inquiry, explained Fascitelli, simply means asking questions, investigating, trying to find out. The reason behind asking questions in a conflict situation is to understand the conflict and acquire more information about the situation. This is an essential step as it provides an opportunity to resolve the conflict. Conflict Resolution involves humanizing the other and not judging them. This could be done when
we carry out the needs assessment of the individuals or groups involved in the conflict. This provides us with a holistic perspective in resolving the conflict.

There are different kinds of questions one could ask. Fascitelli along with the participants distinguished between a close-ended question, open-ended question and a leading question.

A close-ended question is one which limits the scope of a conversation. It restricts the information that a respondent could give during a conversation. It would be used when we have already explored our feelings and options for solving a problem and are ready to move into decision-making. It’s important to note that a close-ended question is not a ‘Yes or No’ question. For instance, when you ask someone, ‘How old are you? Or ‘When is your birthday?’ these questions have a very restricted response.

An open-ended question on the other hand, widens the scope for a conversation and often leads to more questions as the respondent feels that the questioner is interested in interacting with him/her. For example, ‘What do you like to do in your free time?’…it allows the respondent to reply in any which way s/he wants to.

The third type of question is a leading question which allows the questioner to lead the conversation in a particular direction. It could be manipulative in the sense that a leading question might be used in a polite way to make someone do a particular action. They do not come from ignorance but instead are phrased as questions to “make you believe that you have a choice, but without actually giving you a choice.” Questions like this create anxiety at multiple levels, and are a tactic to “get my way without being completely transparent.” For instance; ‘Don’t you think you should work on that report this weekend?’ …is a manipulative question as it is politely asking someone to do something. It is interesting to note that a leading question doesn’t allow the respondent to have a choice, rather in a subtle way it coerces or forces the person to do the required action.

Fascitelli explained to the participants that a leading question must be used carefully. Often the respondent feels vulnerable and judged by the
questions s/he is asked. For this reason it’s critical to identify qualities that make a question pure and not manipulative.

One of the first qualities that a question must possess in a challenging conversation is Curiosity. It is always advisable to ask curious questions as it enables the respondent to feel that the questioner is willing to learn and know more. It provides the respondent with the assurance that questioner is not judging him/her.

The other key quality that a pure question must have is that it should be relevant. Questions should be meaningful, in the sense that they should be relevant to both the person who is asking the question and to the person who is responding to it. Relevant questions provide the questioner with more accurate information which later could be analysed in order to find solutions to the problems.

The facilitator moved the discussion forward by introducing the third skill, Acknowledgement which would enable in managing difficult conversations. Acknowledgement refers to accepting or recognizing the truth or existence of something. The questioner must acknowledge what the respondent has to say and acknowledgement implies that the questioner has understood the respondent. Fascitelli discussed with the participants the different ways an individual could use to acknowledge the respondent.

- One of the ways to acknowledge is to summarise whatever the respondent had said and then repeat the same to him/her. This would eliminate any chances of miscommunication. One could even use phrases like ‘Have I understood you correctly?’ or ‘Yes, I understand what you are trying to say.’… This would make the respondent feel that s/he has been heard and understood.

- Another way to acknowledge is to empathize and not sympathise with the respondent and reflect their feelings and emotions. This would assist in starting a conversation.

Acknowledging the ‘other’ individual or group is an integral part of better advocacy. At the same time, it’s significant to differentiate between agreement and acknowledgement.
Agreement refers to a condition when we are in accordance or harmony with an individual or group over an opinion or a perspective. However, acknowledgment as discussed before doesn’t mean the same. “You may not agree with the other person but you try to understand why they are saying, what they are.” Hence, it is usually suggested to always acknowledge, even if you don’t agree.

In concluding the session for the first day, resource person, Fascitelli asked the participants to do an assignment. The main purpose of the assignment was to enable participants understand the key nuances of effective communication skills. The assignment required the participants to have a conversation with someone (a colleague, friend, family member, spouse or anyone). During the conversation, they should ask a genuinely curious question and then listen to what the respondent has to say. It needn’t necessarily be a conflict based conversation; rather it could be about anything.
Unpacking Multiculturalism

In this session, Gurpreet Mahajan (Professor, Center for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University) sought to unpack the discourse of multiculturalism, particularly in the context of the Indian education system. The NCF, after all, mentions the importance of equality, social justice and diversity in education. Diversity in classrooms is captured by their heterogeneous student composition: of different class, language, culture and gender. Diversity entails being mindful of these differences and treating these differences in a manner which is both just and respectful. What often happens, however, is that all marginalised groups regardless of their particular issues and concerns, are clubbed together and homogenised. There needs to be a disaggregation of these groups in order to recognise that each group or community is unique and experiences vulnerability in a different way. Often, there can even be a clash of interest between these different groups. The challenge therefore is to be cognizant of these differences and reflect on ways to accommodate them within the broader social fabric. Strategies for accommodation will also be group-specific; there is no single approach that applies universally to all groups. Strategies need to be carefully negotiated.

Diversity is not simply about the coexistence of different groups. It also represents the will of these different groups to coexist whilst recognising these differences. This is needed to secure social equality and justice. There are societal practices and which are often reflected in the classroom. At times these may be responsible for creating tensions between different groups; yet there are other occasions when these practices need to be respected and reflected in the classroom context.

Prof. Gurpreet Mahajan, Center for Political Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University.
In the West, the idea of multicultural education gained traction in the seventies, during which time there was a large influx of immigrant communities from different parts of Asia and the Caribbean. Distinctions were drawn on both national and religious lines. The low performance of students belonging to migrant communities triggered off a broader conversation around the need for a culturally sensitive education system. The assumption till then was that talent was randomly distributed and bore little to no connection to one’s socio-economic, racial and ethnic background. Yet the fact that students of certain communities consistently underperformed disproved that assumption. Outside of the classroom it was found that there was very little intermingling between people of different communities, even in cases where one might have expected a higher probability of its occurrence due to external interventions. For instance, even in cases where government accommodation was provided for those belonging to lower income groups (which often included people from migrant communities), there was little assimilation by some of these communities. It was later discovered that the housing provided did not meet the cultural specifications of these groups, thereby rendering them unacceptable. This is an example of how one’s cultural background and beliefs are intrinsically linked to one’s access to opportunities. In the context of classroom education, it is possible that there were similar factors at work which prevented students from realising their full potential. Other questions raised issues around whether schools recognised talents that did not strictly fall within the remit of the curriculum.

All of this resulted in the commissioning of various studies by government to better understand the root cause of these issues and explore possible options to tackle these. The studies showed that teachers often normalised those actions which would have otherwise been regarded as offensive by certain communities. For instance the dietary requirements of particular groups were disregarded in schools. Offence caused as a result of this meant that parents were reluctant to send their children to these schools, which in turn impacted their performance. Racism in classrooms also manifested itself in more subtle forms, for instance by stereotyping certain group identities. Eventually, teachers began to have open discussions with parents of these students to better understand their cultural needs. In some cases this resulted in the setting up of an ‘inter-cultural’ day in schools. Different experiments were undertaken – from introducing bilingual education to revising the school
curriculum itself in order to enhance the participation and involvement of these students. These experiments may go a long way in reversing the negative stereotyping of these communities. Their positive portrayal in the collective imagination can also contribute to a greater sense of community pride. The need to experiment with multicultural education also stemmed from a basic democratic impulse to not have any member of society left behind.

Accommodating diversity differs from context to context. Opening the floor to discussion, a participant described an incident where one of her Sikh students was being troubled by his peers. To redress this, the participant decided to take up the issue in one of her value education classes. She described how and why exactly Sikhs are expected to dress in a particular way, linking to a historical context. As A Sikh herself, she was able to empathise with her student. By incorporating this into the class lesson itself, the teacher-participant was able to avoid assigning blame to those students who were responsible for ridiculing their Sikh classmate. Instead, they became sensitised to the issue of religious differences. Mahajan used the anecdote to highlight the importance of recognising these kinds of episodes as distinct cases of discrimination vis a vis routine bullying.

Another Kashmiri participant described how she uses joint project activities like dance and performance to bring together students and teachers from different districts. Yet another participant described how her students (coming from diverse backgrounds) do not ostensibly face any issues around intermingling. Yet she observed that with the exception of certain project activities and programmes students are quite comfortable to lapse back into their respective silos. Mahajan responded to this by stating that some degree of huddling is to be expected, given the insecurities and preconceived notions children often take with them inside the classroom.

Another participant spoke about her personal experiences with studying at one of the Army Public Schools, where frequent transfers from one state to another in a sense compelled her to adapt quickly to new social and cultural contexts. She also spoke about her observations at one of these schools in Assam, where she felt that the Bangladeshi children were insecure and unwilling to mingle with the other students. Mahajan used the incident to highlight the human tendency to externalise
insecurities, for instance, by labelling people in advance. The language of binaries, of us versus them, often sneaks into our subconscious without our realising it. It is necessary to be mindful of this, to ensure that students do not internalise such discourses.

As another participant pointed out, Army schools are social levellers because all children of army staff, regardless of their rank in the Army, study in the same school. However, even in these schools, class-based discrimination does indeed take place. Issues around the medium of instruction were also raised. As one participant highlighted, a Hindi speaking student admitted into an English medium school struggled until the teachers decide to make an intervention. Language is an especially important factor for consideration in primary school. At the state level, there exists a policy for teaching in the mother tongue yet this is rarely recognised or operationalized. Although language can be divisive in certain contexts, in the particular case of India, there is not much evidence of mistrust between communities of different linguistic backgrounds.

Another participant spoke about an inter-community relationship between two students at his school, which attracted a lot of censure from other staff members. The participant encouraged the students to focus on their studies and their careers instead, as a means to negotiate these other considerations around caste and class. The students ended up becoming very successful, and the teachers who had previously rebuked them, congratulated them on their success. Mahajan once again referred to how social perceptions are all too easily generalised. One needs to be able to recognise these instances of generalisation. The media is partly responsible for disseminating stereotypes and generalised perceptions. In textbooks, it is often challenging to talk about a particular community without stereotyping them. Identifying icons from within that community can be a useful tool for self-affirmation, but it does not necessarily reduce mistrust between different communities.

Another participant narrated an incident where her son’s underperformance in school was linked to his association with underperformers of the Muslim community, by his own teacher. It is critical therefore that teacher constantly check themselves and their prejudices to avoid these from also percolating down to their students.

A suggestion from one of the participants was to organise events where the commonalities of different religions are unpacked and highlighted.
Mahajan, however, cautioned that any attempt to gloss over differences would be counterintuitive. Whereas there may be a single ‘truth’ which unites different religions, practices which define these religions vary considerably – and this needs to be given due acknowledgement and respect.

A participant from Delhi Public School in Srinagar spoke about the insecurity experienced by Muslims wearing a skull cap and beard, who felt that no such objections were raised against Sikhs wearing turbans. If religious practices are not given recognition, it could lead to a significant degree of aggression. Having a dress code could potentially be alienating. As Mahajan indicated, one’s clothing should not hinder one’s access to education. We tend to sometimes think that the assertion of one’s group identity leads to divisiveness. Yet for multiculturalism to work in its truest sense, some expression of one’s identity is necessary. Another participant pointed out the importance of training children to understand how and why difference is perceived as a threat. Children need to be equipped with these skills from an early age in order to manage these issues at a later stage in life. Not doing this would be a disservice to society.

The session concluded with a reminder to pluralise experiences and to understand how the same community may respond differently based on their geographical context.
Reflections

The objective of this session was to encourage participants to briefly reflect on the previous day’s discussions. Participants raised a number of issues:

- Whilst the session on multiculturalism the previous day raised many important questions it did not culminate in an analysis of possible ‘solutions’. However, it was also stated that solutions could possibly only organically emerge from the educators and teachers working within the system itself, rather than the resource people.

- The importance of implementing all that is being learnt at this workshop in the everyday, ‘real life’ contexts of educators and students. Also, sharing this knowledge with the students themselves.

- Sense of empowerment resulting from the knowledge that teachers have a stake in curriculum design.

- Encouraging students to critically engage with different issues and see things from different perspectives for their overall personal development. Concrete examples of how this could be achieved were offered, taking up online media literacy modules to encourage critical thinking and involving parents in their children’s day to day activities.

- Encouraging more face time between students and teachers through direct, personal interaction. The possibility of integrating this within the curriculum was also raised. In some schools, such student-teacher interfaces take place on a daily basis, either during the first or last (‘zero’) period of the day.

- Discrimination against children with special needs or those belonging to a different ethnicity or race.
Conflic Resolution Skills:  
Mediation and Facilitation-II

Sarah Beth Fascitelli, continued the discussion on Mediation and Facilitation skills that had started on Day 1. She requested the participants to discuss their stories from the assignment she had asked them to complete. The participants however raised some doubts which have been listed below:

- Most of the participants felt that the respondent’s mind-set had the possibility of influencing his/her response.
- Some of the participants also felt that the respondents generally question the ‘subjectivity’ of the question asked. This is so because the respondent might perceive the question as being judgemental.

Fascitelli clarified to the participants that one can’t immediately engage in the conversation. The pre-requisite of any conversation is to build trust. Trust building enables in building rapport and it helps the respondent to feel protected in a comfortable space where s/he doesn’t feel vulnerable or judged. She further explained that to avoid such difficult situations one must always ask an open ended question. Apart from this, the tone of the questioner’s voice, intention behind asking the question, the way questioner frames the question creates the difference between whether the respondent reacts to the question or responds to it.

She also distinguished between a talking spree and patiently listening to someone. The emphasis was laid on the fact that individuals must listen to each other. She urged the participants to ask themselves during any conversation whether they are talking at people or having a two way conversation.

Having already stated the significance of effective communication skills, Fascitelli involved the participants into a few role play exercises. Role play exercises added a level of resistance to the basic idea with several rules for interaction. It was assumed that it would enable the participants to understand how challenging conversations could be managed.
Fascitelli decided to use real life situations in order to explain to the participants how communication skills could be used in the conversations we have in our daily lives. The different role play exercises demonstrated by Fascitelli in the workshop have been explained below:

**Exercise 1**

The hypothetical situation involved a senior teacher (Shobha) who was not informed about the alterations suggested by the junior teacher (Nandini) in the category of teaching and learning methodology in the school. The school decided to implement these suggestions. However, during the meeting the senior teacher felt that such alterations were inadequate and she critiqued the suggested proposal. This halted the meeting and it concluded without offering any concrete solution. The junior teacher, Nandini decided to speak with Shobha regarding the meeting and why she found the proposal problematic. Shobha was disappointed to have not been consulted before presenting the proposal. When Nanidni approached her, she completely refused to talk to her or understand her point of view.

Fascitelli essayed the role of Shobha and one of the participants portrayed the role of Nandini. Shobha’s character required Fascitelli to be a strong willed teacher who would prefer helping those students who would want to study instead of those who don’t want to. She is reluctant towards change. Nandini’s character on the other hand is someone who would want to always resolve a problem and she wants to help each and every student even those who find it hard to study.

The exercise required the participants to one by one interact with Fascitelli (who played Shobha’s character) and ask her what problems she had pertaining to the meeting or why was she so disappointed with the meeting. A few excerpts from the conversations that were held as part of the exercise are reproduced below:

*Nandini (junior teacher):* Hello Ma’am. How are you doing?
*Shobha (senior teacher):* I am doing well! How are you?
*Nandini:* I am fine. Thank you! Ma’am, I wanted to know what do you feel about the meeting yesterday. Would you please tell me?
*Shobha:* Oh! Now you think you should ask me about the meeting? You people decide and do whatever you want to and we have to face the brunt then.
*Nandini:* Okay, we stand corrected. I should have asked you...

*Shobha:* Now I am not interested in it and I don’t know what you people are trying to do.

*Nandini:* But, we are all working for the students ...

*Shobha:* So, you mean to say that I am not working for the students? *Nandini:*...

In the above mentioned dialogue, it is very clear that the senior teacher is not very keen on continuing the conversation. Educators usually face these situations in their daily life which are not only with their colleagues but could also be with their students and the parents of the students or their own family members.

The resource person felt that the participants should *genuinely* listen to the other person and (in the case mentioned above) should avoid using close ended questions, for instance, *would you please tell me?* The respondent could easily refuse to speak or share his/her feelings. *Curious* and *relevant* leading questions should be used during the conversation. However, the leading questions shouldn’t be manipulative or diplomatic as it often *agitates* the respondent and makes him/her uncomfortable.

At the same time, in the above mentioned excerpt, there is no sign of acknowledgement. Fascitelli emphasized on the need to acknowledge the respondent because it explains to the respondent that s/he has been understood. Acknowledging the ‘other’ often results in accepting what is the other’s point of view. It is not necessary that you would agree with them but a mere acknowledgement provides an opportunity to the respondent to share his experience and perspective without being in a vulnerable situation.

The resource person also clarified that one must not apologize for something they aren’t guilty about. If they have done the correct thing, they shouldn’t be apologetic, even to someone who doesn’t agree with their point of view.

The objective of this role play exercise was to learn how a challenging conversation could be managed and the different kinds of ways through which a questioner could remove the possibility for vulnerability.
Exercise 2

The hypothetical situation involved three friends (A, B, C) who live in a rented flat. Two friends (A and B) are fighting over the only orange in the larder. Each friend must have the entire orange for herself, any less is impossible. The third friend (C) asked each of the girls (in private) why she wants the orange. One explains she wants to drink the juice; the other wants to use the rind to cook a pudding. The third friend (C) acted as an arbitrator who tried to resolve the problem. In this case, the simple solution was to give the friend (B) the rind after the juice has been squeezed for the other friend (A), thus meeting the interests of both.

The primary role of an arbitrator is to resolve the dispute and conflict. In the above excerpt, participant C plays the role of a neutral third party who is unbiased, sensitive to parties involved in the conflict and has the ability to listen and tact.

Sometimes an intermediary must make statements to keep the conversation moving for the good of the group. The ability to do so carefully and kindly is critical. It is unacceptable for the intermediary to express personal feelings about situation or make derogatory statements about either party.

Often arbitrators also act like investigators. They inquire and ask several questions in order to understand the situation better and enable in making the conversation move ahead.

The resource person discussed with the participants that one should avoid holding assumptions about the ‘other’ in conflict situations as it creates a void in the information one could access. In the exercise mentioned above, the arbitrator or the third party didn’t hold any assumption and this was essential because many a times, the third party assumes something without really taking into the account of the reality.

Fascitelli moved the discussion forward and explained to the participants the importance of Interests. Interests said the resource person must be distinguished from positions. In the exercise mentioned above, what each participant wants is her position and why she wants it is her interest. The friend who acted as an arbitrator negotiated successfully with the other two friends who were involved in a dispute over an orange. Negotiations are successful when arbitrators focus more on
understanding the interests of the parties involved in the conflict. Inquiry should be used to uncover the interests and both the parties involved in the conflict must acknowledge each other’s perspective.

It was equally important to differentiate between a dialogue, a monologue and a debate.

*A dialogue* is a means of dealing constructively with conflicts. It is a literary and theatrical form consisting of a written or spoken conversational exchange between two or more people. It is an inclusive process which entails learning, recognizes one another’s humanity and stresses a long term perspective. Dialogue could facilitate recovery from crisis and could assist in conflict resolution. Dialogues often pave way for greater communication and build trust between the two feuding sides. In a dialogue everyone wins as it is a game where people play with rather than against each other. Advocacy, Acknowledgement and Inquiry are the building blocks of a perfect dialogue.

*A monologue* on the other hand is a long speech given by a character in a story, movie or play by a performer. It is a one sided conversation and it restricts the other person(s) from talking. It is a literary composition written in the form of a soliloquy. A monologue is addressed to other characters or to the audience.

*Debate* is different from both a dialogue and a monologue. In a debate, the atmosphere is usually threatening, with interruptions expected. Participants express unwavering commitment to their own point of view. In a dialogue on the other hand, one could search for strength and value in ‘other’s’ position. A dialogue assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and collaboratively they could craft a solution and work towards a common understanding. Debate entails listening to find flaws and make counter arguments and one search’s for weakness in other’s position. Unlike arriving at a collaborative solution, debate focuses on seeking a conclusion that ratifies his/her own position.

Fascitelli concluded the session by asking the participants to focus on key questions that revolve around the issue of Mediation and Negotiation. The questions were:

- *What is the presenting issue? (Identify the issue)*
• What is the conflict really about?
• What are the interests of the people involved in the conflict? (Identify the interest)
• What are the positions of the parties from where they are advocating their opinion?

These questions would assist educators in developing efficient and effective communication skills and at the same time would enable them in resolving the problems that exist in their class room setting.
Beyond Words: Arts Creating Dialogic Spaces

Often during conflicts, the most important information is transferred through the nonverbal expressions. It is significant to our understanding that important communications are usually wordless. WISCOMP acknowledged the fact the individuals and groups involved in the conflict must move forward to accept and recognise the nonverbal expression as a skill to conflict resolution.

Educators could develop creative thinking apart from critical thinking in students to find solutions to human problems. WISCOMP felt the need to engage the participants in various exercises and discussions where they could understand the importance of body and its senses in the inter-personal communication.

The facilitator for this session was Akanksha Joshi, a story teller, an award winning filmmaker and photographer who uses films, sounds, text and dance to share her experiences of the visible and inner worlds.

Creating dialogic spaces is an integral step through which a fluid space is provided that assists in the process of Conflict Resolution. It needn’t be a physical space but could use theatre, art, music, and dance as a means to create a dialogic space. This gives space for nonverbal communication.

In order to explain the significance of creating dialogic spaces to the participants, the resource person Joshi, led them into an experiential activity.

She asked the participants to think of a new name for themselves (it could be anything… inspired from anywhere). The participant who
would be revealing his/her new name was required to look at the other participants and state clearly and loudly their name. They are not to communicate with each other verbally. However, they are required to maintain an eye contact with one particular participant. That participant in turn is required to be the next person who tells his/her ‘new’ name.

The purpose behind the activity is to make participants understand the importance of nonverbal communication and how critical is attentiveness to the understanding of educators. The participants are needed to remember the ‘new’ names of the participants and address each other with that very name. Being an attentive listener is a very important step towards effective communication. Conflicts happen because we don’t listen.

The resource person wanted to engage the participants in building capacity in order to motivate them to use the various forms of expression to make classroom a truly dialogic space where verbal expression is not the only means for communication.

The next creative exercise introduced by Joshi was titled as ‘Birthing Tunnel’. The objective behind this exercise was to make people realize that every name has a story and there is a deep connection of an individual with that story. *(This was said in the context of the participants acquiring the ‘new’ name for them. This new name would have some connection with them).*

To further clarify, Joshi explained that our identity in this world is marked by the name assigned to us. Our name has a story to tell and similarly when we choose a different name for ourselves …there is a connection or link which our inner selves have with that name. *(For instance, said Joshi that if my birth name is Divya, but the name that I choose for myself is ‘Shakti.’ This would mean that Shakti which basically refers to power or force expresses my personality.)*

- There should be two participants who join hands with each other and create a tunnel through which other participants could pass. Turn by turn, every participant should pass through the tunnel, but before entering s/he should take a name that defines them, their personality and which has a deep connection with their individuality.
This enables the participants to understand that everyone in the world enters as an equal human being. Identity markers like caste, class, religion, region, gender, language, ethnicity and even our individual names don’t have the power to express our inner selves. They only define our presence but don’t reveal our inner self.

Joshi concludes her session by bringing together all the participants and asking them to acknowledge each other’s presence and effort in coming together. However, she wants them to nonverbally express their gratitude. Joshi uses spiritual music as her background score so that the participants feel more relaxed and calm. She said that it is music has the power to heal people of their stress and anxiety.

Art, theatre, music and dance act as healers. They have transformative power of communicating expressions that otherwise are challenging to express. Joshi’s session concentrated on using these means as therapeutic approaches. They were meant to relieve the pressure, stress and dilemma that educators face in challenging situations. At the same time, educators were exposed to these mechanisms that would help them tackle similar situations in their classroom settings.

Joshi further emphasized that the planet we live on, belongs to us and not to the nations and the land we have drawn boundaries on. All of us are the caretakers of this planet and we must collectively play a role to look after this planet. Nations and boundaries de-unite us and this paves way for conflicts to occur. Therefore, it is essential to move beyond the territories and boundaries that are set for us and respect the larger humanity which exists in the hope of a more peaceful future.
Curriculum through a Peace Lens

Narayani Gupta (Consultant, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage) began the session with an anecdote. At an NSD (National School of Drama) workshop, children of various classes were asked to present on different aspects of history. The youngest children performed a song and dance. The students of classes six and seven performed a satirical piece in which they mocked the person who conducted the heritage walk for them. Students of the ninth and tenth classes conducted a spirited debate on Tughlaq. The students of the eleventh and twelfth classes used placards to summarise their respective associations with history. What followed was the creation of a number of placards with the words ‘regionalism’, ‘casteism’ and ‘fundamentalism’ (among others). Gupta used the incident to demonstrate the cynicism of students as they get older. By the time they reach secondary school, India represents little more than a series of irresolvable problems.

Today there exists a sense of alienation with regards to the study of history. It is primarily associated with memorising and recalling a series of historical dates. The problem lies not necessarily with the inadequacy of teachers but with the way history textbooks are written and designed. The first set of textbooks under the British regime, succeeded by the first batch of textbooks written under NCERT, contained passages in which the ‘fair and handsome’ figured Aryans from the North were juxtaposed against the ‘dark’ Dravidians of the South. In the sixties, the concept of nationhood assumed importance in the collective imagination, and the presentation of history in school textbooks reflected this ethos and sentiment. Thus the expansion of empires was introduced as an area of study in the teaching of history. The textbooks of this period also conflated the entire medieval period with Delhi, and the entire phase of modern history with Calcutta, thereby disregarding geography altogether. The nineties witnessed the rise of Hindu chauvinism, and textbooks were rewritten to reflect this. Post 2000, textbooks were written using the lens of globalisation.

There is a plethora of challenges facing those who are tasked with the crafting textbooks, including how these books can speak to children in a much more effective way. As a member of the textbook committee of the NCERT, Gupta often challenged the kind of vocabulary used in
textbooks. Phrases such as ‘a great king’ need to be unpacked and qualified. What exactly is implied by ‘greatness’ and how does it manifest itself? Another key limitation is that historical narratives often exclude a regional perspective. School textbooks are rarely reviewed, and university professors are often reluctant to get involved in the process, although it would appear that this is beginning to change.

Gupta then opened the floor to discussion to enable the participants to share their stories of how they deal with peace and conflict issues in textbooks, and how children react to these. One participant from Kashmir raised the issue of whether teachers treat students as mature beings or whether they feel the need to protect them. Students often ask to be given the ‘full picture’. She also pointed out that students in Kashmir are often involved in stone pelting and mass movements without having a clear sense of the historical roots of the conflict itself, or the knowledge that Kashmir has its own Constitution.

Gupta highlighted the disconnection between history, which is perceived to be ‘out there’, and the present day context. This disconnect is linked to the fact that Indian history textbooks do not cover the post 1947 period. This knowledge gap thus prevents young students from connecting incidents and episodes reported in the press, to larger systemic causes which have their origins in this critical phase of contemporary history. Understanding one’s local history can also lend itself to a greater sense of connect between the past and the present. For instance, students of architecture could potentially analyse buildings from the perspective of genealogy – how do architectural needs change over time? Another way to bridge this divide between the past and the present would be to start teaching history in a reverse chronological order. For instance, instead of starting off by teaching ancient history, one could begin with contemporary and local history and make one’s way backwards. One could begin by using the mohalla as a reference point, instead of the State. The reference point then becomes one’s local history, which is

Narayani Gupta, Consultant, Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)
linked to the ‘everyday’. History loses its abstractness and is interwoven into the daily lives of students. By way of examples, Kashmiri art can be historically traced back to other countries in Central Asia, and this would be an interesting link to explore from the perspective of the students. These connections are often difficult to establish, but as Gupta pointed out, it is well worth the effort.

The study of geography is as political as the study of history. The process of conflict mapping illustrates this well. In it, conflict situations are mapped out to analyse its key actors and stakeholders as well as actions and processes which resulted in the conflict to begin with. Students are then asked to improvise and take on the role of any of the key stakeholders. The process allows history and geography to be opened up as spaces for exploration, and new maps are created by the students to reflect these revised interpretations.

Another participant raised the difficult issue of differentiating between revolution and terrorism. Our labelling of different events and people is often anachronistic; a revolutionary hero belonging to another era may just as easily be regarded as a terrorist today, using conventional standards. How do we resolve such issues? Teachers cannot and indeed should not lay claim to having all the answers. Information and facts can at best be presented before the students.

History is not just the narrative of royalty, of kings and queens. The study of Hamdani, for instance, could be widened to include the tracing of his lineage to Kashmir and an exploration how, where and how he travelled. It need not just be confined to the study of his teachings.

Although there are a number of ways in which history could be explored imaginatively, teachers face huge time constraints and pressures to complete an exhaustive syllabus. Moreover, the connections between different disciplines are hardly ever established. That a strong foundation in history is intrinsically linked to a solid understanding of Political Science, for example, need to be emphasised.

Other participants raised issues around the limitations of the textbook. It was agreed that the textbook at best serves as a kind of scaffolding, or a reference point for questions and pictures. Education must be much more enquiry-based. Students should be left with questions in their minds, rather than answers. Some participants stated that they used projects,
paper presentations and discussions to encourage this kind of enquiry-based approach to education. Other possibilities referenced by Gupta included conducting heritage walks and exhibitions, and tracing one’s genealogy. History can also be mediated through questions about food. For instance a little known fact is that chillis were introduced into India by the Portuguese. The study of travelogues which, for instance, describe the journey of haj could yet be another innovative way to explore history.

In primary school as well, concepts such as transportation can be taught in interesting ways. For instance, children could be encouraged to find out how the elderly members of their family used to travel in their youth. Such a conversation would also allow the child to understand the socio-economic context of those times.

On the issue of interdisciplinary teaching, the facilitator asked whether subject planning only involves teachers of that discipline, or whether it brings together teachers from a wide range of disciplines. Whilst some teachers design integrated projects that bring together a broad cross section of teachers, another teacher stated that lesson plans at the primary school level are designed to bring about a greater degree of interdisciplinarily. In the senior classes, due to time constraints, this is much more difficult to accomplish.

The participants then spoke about the innovative ways in which children can be taught. Films and visuals often work very well. One participant spoke about the Kashmiri bhands’ rendition of King Lear, which was exceptional. A teacher of geography stated that she often took her students out on walks. The fact that her school was located on the banks of the Jhelum made the teaching and learning of geography all the more enjoyable. Summer camps are also periodically organised. Another participant spoke about how the study of Anne Frank stimulated an interest in both reading and journal keeping.

Gupta also illustrated how the study of religious texts can lend itself to a deeper engagement with both history and geography. For instance, the historicisation of religious texts such as the Bible and the Quran enables one to develop a stronger understanding of the geographical landscape of Mecca, Arabia etc. Additionally, the study of these texts may stimulate a broader interest in the ancient civilisations which formed the bedrock of these beliefs.
On the issue of religious dogmatism, Gupta commented that such sentiments tended to stem from ignorance. Dogmatic statements need to be deconstructed to reveal the stupidity that informs them. For instance, when a student of Professor Gupta’s stated that he ‘hated Muslims’, he was unable to actually qualify his statement with the names of those he disliked. Deconstruction of such statements needs to start from an early age, so that such beliefs do not become embedded in the minds of children.

On the particular issue of religious fundamentalism, Gupta stated that the narrative wasn’t always one of ‘Hindus vs. Muslims’ as is popularly constructed in the contemporary context. Although 1100-1200 AD is typically regarded as the period of ‘Muslim invasion’, this is strictly not the case. This was merely another episode of a Central Asian influx into India, not necessarily linked to conversion. Figures of conversion are often exaggerated, sometimes by Muslim historians themselves. The language associated with this phase is associated with war and battle. Yet the details of how wars were actually fought by Muslim rulers are rarely ever discussed. By shifting the focus away from the religious identity of these rulers to the kinds of military strategies and techniques adopted by them, one could potentially render an interpretation of history which is far more interesting and far less communal in tone.

Another issue raised by Gupta related to secularising religion and its manifestations. For instance, what is it about temples that make them sacred? Is its value associated with the deity or the gold with which it has been constructed? Temples also occupy a great deal of land, especially in Delhi. An analysis of the secular manifestations of religion could be an interesting exercise.

Gupta ended the session with the following set of ideas for participants to reflect on further:

- Identities and stereotypes: Stereotypes tend to encompass the mostly negative aspects of one’s identity. It is important to be critical of what is being seen as mainstream. Tagore, for instance is often regarded as the poet of the modern period, when there are in fact many other poets and literatures (from the South, for example) which also belong to this epoch but are disregarded.
• Nationalism and universalism: Nationalism is often presented as a positive phenomenon, yet this needs to be questioned, as it can very easily also border on chauvinism.

• Glory and conquest: The latter is often associated with the former but this needs to be questioned.
**Free and Compulsory: Film Discussion**

In this session, the film *Free and Compulsory*, by Malati Rao focusing on the public education system was screened, followed by a discussion facilitated by Deepti Priya Mehrotra (Gandhian Scholar, Writer and Human Rights Activist). The film screening was prefaced by a few comments and questions by Mehrotra to provide a context for the participants.

After the RTE was passed by the Parliament in 2009 the enrollment figures grew steadily, yet, the drop-out rates also increased. Filmed inside municipal schools in Pune, Maharashtra, through a series of classroom sessions, mid-day meals and teacher-student interactions, *Free and Compulsory* reveals what goes on inside our schools. It asks whether the RTE will lead the first generation learner, the prime beneficiary of this historic Act, to stay in or out of school.

Mehrotra remarked that although the RTE provides free of cost education to children, just how ‘free’ these children actually are is debatable. ‘Compulsory’ education as prescribed by the RTE also does not carry positive connotations. Additionally, the public education system is under threat by growing privatisation. Studies show that parents would prefer to send their children to private schools, but what is the reason behind this? Two decades ago, government schools were not stigmatised to the degree they are today. So what has changed?

**Discussion**

The discussion began with an analysis of the public education system, and whether it should be privatised, given that it is failing to deliver. Whilst several participants made a case for privatisation, Mehrotra cautioned against it. The quality of government school education was never this poor. Two generations ago, the children from economically better off families went to these schools. Today the situation has reversed.
with children from marginalised backgrounds attending government schools, and those from more privileged backgrounds opting for private education. The ruling elite, including policymakers, prefer to send their children to English medium private schools.

Another participant raised the issue of why the RTE is confined to the 6-14 age groups. It appears, however, that the government is rethinking this. Mehrotra responded to this by saying that education for all is premised on the principle of equality, and as such, is made possible by a democratic set up. As a basic, fundamental right, it must not be forsaken and surrendered to the private sector which is driven by monetary considerations. Greater public resources need to be allocated to the public education system. The myth that the private sector ensures efficiency and quality needs to be exposed.

Privatisation of the health sector testifies to the shortcomings of involving the private sector in the provisioning of public goods. Experiments with privatisation have and indeed continue to take place in the form of private-public partnerships. The impact of such models needs to be understood and analysed much more closely. One participant questioned the need to have private schools at all. If the public education system was all there was to offer, it would be in everyone’s best interest to ensure that it was functioning properly.

Furthermore, studies conducted by the NGO, Pratham, in Kashmir have shown that there is no significant difference between the learning and performance outcomes of students studying in public and private schools. Thus, quality of education should not automatically be linked to privatisation.

Privatised education also makes certain professions and skills desirable, particularly those demanded by the forces of globalisation. Yet as the world continues to change, new skill sets will be required.

Another participant stated that the problem with poor quality of education is linked to teachers who are burdened with multiple responsibilities. Yet another participant stated that the issue in Jammu and Kashmir is not one of excess burden for the teachers, but is related to health.

Mehrotra commented that textbooks are also responsible for poor learning outcomes. They are often of bad printing quality and contain
content which is communal, casteist and patriarchal. In particular, children from disadvantaged backgrounds are deserving of high quality textbooks, since these are the only kinds of books to which they have access. As one participant commented, in Mexico primary school textbooks are launched by the President. As books that are being consumed by the country, its Head of State ensures that he is involved in the process.

Educating children also has positive ramifications for the community. As one participant illustrated, when the children of her illiterate house-help received an education, they took it upon themselves to transmit this learning to their parents. Thus the education of an individual is linked to the education of the community.

Learning outcomes were also linked to food and nutrition issues. The quality of food provided by the Mid-Day Meal schemes needs to be inspected.

The issue of inclusivity of schools was also debated. Whilst certain participants advocated for the segregation of certain students up to a certain point, to bring them up to par with their contemporaries, there were others who strongly contested this. It was argued that the principle of ‘separate but equal’ does not actually work. There was concern that segregation on academic lines could potentially make way for segregation on far more controversial lines such as religion or caste. To make education more inclusive, mainstream school curricula need to be altered. As one participant suggested, education should take into consideration the realities and problems being faced by children of diverse backgrounds. There are examples of schools in India where this is already taking place.

The Gandhian principle of education based on work – be it crafts, pottery or weaving - was also discussed. The principle is premised on the idea that children must engage in meaningful activities which are more tactile in nature. Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) that is part of Indian school curriculum appears to be a diluted manifestation of this principle. However as one participant pointed out, vocation based training is historically associated with casteism, and one must ensure that this kind of education does perpetuate caste-based discrimination.
Looking Ahead:  
Opportunities and Challenges for Educators

In this concluding session, Meenakshi Gopinath, Director, WISCOMP, facilitated a discussion to extrapolate feedback and learning from the participants. Participants were asked to break out into groups based on their institutional affiliation, to address the following questions:

– What is the learning that you feel has been most valuable from interactions here?
– Which of these can be begun to be introduced into your workspace?
– How will you start?
– Who will you engage in this process in your school?
– Is there any particular person from another school with whom you will continue this conversation to share these experiences of change?

Gopinath then went on to extrapolate and highlight some of the key issues and ideas that emerged during the course of the four day workshop.

Text and context: It is essential to escape from the tyranny of the text, and to ‘de-topicalise’ one’s pedagogy so that the topic being taught merely serves as a trigger for inspiration. One should not become a prisoner of one’s syllabus. In fact, every time one transacts the text, the experience is uniquely different from the previous occasion. The text is simply a context for exploration. Additionally, there is no need to attempt to cover the entire gamut of the syllabus; concentrating on a few nuggets would suffice. Learning happens in spite of examinations.

Dialogue: Education should be premised on dialogue and active listening. Dialogue is itself a process of transformation; both parties are transformed as a result of it. Essentially, it is about introducing qualitative changes into interpersonal relationships.

Multiple intelligences: There are several forms of intelligence, beyond those that merely serve as a medium for achieving academic excellence. There are, for examples, intra and inter-personal intelligences. There is a need to recognise that every individual is intelligent; and a work of art in his/her own way.
**Overcoming imagined ‘geographies’**: Political boundaries are as illusory as the boundaries which circumscribe individual subjectivity. Political boundaries need to be crossed in order to develop a greater sense of connectivity to the world. At the same time, the individual imagination needs to free itself from a compartmentalised approach to engaging with the world and different disciplines.

**Peace in education**: There is a need to mainstream peace into school curricula. One must not confuse vocationalisation (linked to skills development and employability) with education in its truest and most holistic sense. Educators are the greatest peace-builders, and this needs to be recognised.

**Re-evaluating ‘success’**: Learning should be linked to the benchmarking of difficulties overcome. Children from more marginalised backgrounds have had to experience multiple levels of difficulty just to be able to enter the classroom. These children are the real heroes, and this needs to be recognised.

**Quality education**: The issue of quality education needs to be addressed, whether this applies to private or public schools. Rather than pitting one type of school against the other, one needs to contextualise the reason behind the sudden and rapid increase in the number of private schools. Why is there such a glaring gap between the two systems? Education is a public good, and if the State is withdrawing from its responsibility in this area, this needs to be questioned.

**Group Discussion**

Bluebells School International, New Delhi

- Key learning related to conflict resolution and conflict management strategies: methods to improve interpersonal relationships, be more patient, develop active listening skills and view things from multiple perspectives.
- The importance of addressing the structural causes of issues; delving into the real causes behind underperformance in schools.
- This process of transformation will begin by sharing positive case studies of transformation, with students. Technology (What’s App, Facebook, emails) could be used to share this information with
students from the eleventh and twelfth standards. Include the lesser privileged, behavioural issues, go into the roots of why the child is not performing academically and in terms of values, looking at the same child differently every day. Sharing case stories of where transformation has taken place with students.

- Sharing of all the learning gained through this workshop with the faculty and Heads of Department; conducting similar workshops.

Presentation Convent Higher Secondary School, Srinagar

- Key learning related to a greater awareness of child rights and the need for inclusion in the education system. Education is about people. Create a multicultural learning environment which addresses the needs of all children. Avoid generalising communities and places.
- Recognition of the need for teachers to be involved in the creation of syllabi. This will lead to a greater sense of ownership by them.
- The syllabus needs to take into account the particularities of the regional and local context.
- The process of transformation could begin with the use of innovative techniques such as the use of 3D visuals, games-based stimulation, reflexology (use of hands and feet) etc.

Mixed Group 1- New Delhi (St. Mary’s School, The Indian School)

- Appreciation that this workshop was able to bring together students from both government and private school.
- Key learning related to the advocacy, enquiry and acknowledgement approach to conducting dialogue. These skills will be taken back to the classroom context and implemented there.
- Recognition of the need to challenge the vocabulary of education; move away from terminology such as ‘average’ and ‘above average’; avoid labelling.
- The importance of learning history through heritage walks.
- Greater awareness of the RTE
- Multiculturalism
- Greater involvement of local women in SMBCs as per the RTE.
Army Public School, Srinagar

- The importance of listening to one another with patience
- Encourage inclusive learning processes
- The importance of heterogeneity and diversity in class composition, fostering respect for differences
- This learning will be shared with parents and teachers; they will be involved in the implementation of these principles

Delhi Public School, Srinagar

- Recognition of the ‘voice of an educator’. Educators are harbingers of peace. The curriculum needs to be developed accordingly.
- The need for enhanced communication skills.
- Taking this learning back to the community by training educators through workshops like these – with educators, students and parents.
- The idea that the socio-economic background of a child affects his/her ability to perform well in school.
- The need to address the issue of aggression in children.
- Taking this learning back to the community by conducting workshops with children and schools. The communication skills learnt will also be applied within the classroom.
Participant Feedback

On the final day of the workshop the participating teachers were provided time to fill the workshop feedback form. 30 participants filled these written evaluation forms. Of those who identified themselves in the form, 14 were from Kashmir and 9 from Delhi, remaining 7 forms did not have the name of the respondent.

The participants came to the workshop with a diverse set of expectations which included the following:

- To gain knowledge about specific ideas/ themes/ issues like Right to Education, Multicultural learning, National Curriculum Framework, Transformative learning;
- To learn new techniques as a teaching professional;
- To get ideas for personal growth;
- To learn how other schools address the challenges they face; and
- To interact with peers from different schools and regions.

One of the Delhi participants wrote, “My expectation from the workshop was to listen to elite educators. Even learn something from them, also to have an interaction [sic] with the teachers from different schools in Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir.” Several participants from Kashmir mentioned ‘learning about conflict and building peace’ in their expectations.

A teacher from Kashmir stated that she came to the workshop with very low expectation. She wrote, “I was not expecting this [sic] much from the workshop, I have attended some workshops of a couple of NGOs in Srinagar, that had put some limits to my expectations, but it was entirely different here, it was so good and above my expectations that I can go on writing about it for hours together.”

To the question in the feedback form that asked the participants to state if the workshop met their expectations completely or partially or if it did not meet their expectations, 20 (66%) participants said that the workshop completely fulfilled their expectations; 10 (33%) said that the workshop fulfilled the expectations to some extent. Two educators
from the group who felt that it partially fulfilled expectations mentioned that it changed their perspective on some issues. Three also felt that time constraint was a problem and two felt that they will need to implement the ideas they learnt to be able to know for sure if the workshop met their expectations or not. Only one of the 30 participants observed that he/she was not completely satisfied as the resource person/s were not open to their views. However, none of the participants said that the workshop did not meet the expectations they came with. Some of the feedback on the expectations was expressed in the following words:

“My understanding about education in government schools & working got reinforced & was encouraged to see individual garb breaking & collective [voice] replacing it.” (A teacher from Srinagar)

“I learned so many things from my fellow participants. One of them was how to shake certainties.” (A participant)

“The workshop broadened my horizons of thinking and new enthusiasm & energy. New ideas to implement.” (A teacher from Srinagar)

“Great coverage on aspects of inculcating calmness in children/students beyond the divides of caste/religion etc.” (A teacher from Delhi)

“The reality of RTE was bought forward in private and government schools. The activities carried out to resolve conflicts & hence exercise peace were very well conducted leaving a happy feeling thereafter.” (A teacher from Delhi)

To the question about the most useful learning, most of the participants mentioned Conflict resolution skills or dialogue as a key learning. One participant stated, “Give others a chance to reveal their story, listen to them, acknowledge them and try to understand their issues and problems.” Some other statements about learnings were:

“The most useful learning that I take back is the ability to listen.”

“It helped me to understand the students and my co-workers in a better way.”

In addition the participants also mentioned that they better understood the role of education in building peace and especially addressing socio-
economic differences. Some of the reasons cited for liking the sessions on RTE and on inclusivity were:

“Education has an important role to build peace through curriculum and engaging people.”

“That it is time we started thinking beyond our comfort zones!”

“These sessions left me with a question mark as to how I was viewing certain aspects of education.”

“Excellent way of evaluating and thinking critically of the terminology being used.”

“These sessions provided me a space to have a look into my own psyche and in a way I emerged as a committed teacher. I got conscious of so many flaws within me that need therapy to wipe away.”

Some of the participants also felt that the workshop sessions helped them to look at curriculum and pedagogy differently. The following two statements reflect this learning:

“It [Beyond Words] was a very relaxing, peaceful and heart-touching experience. For the first time, I felt nature through a new perspective. I look forward to practice it in school & daily life.”

“Inclusive & Integrated learning concept, Linking textbooks of various subjects.”

The participants were also asked to share if any of the sessions were not up to the mark or did not fulfill their expectations. Two participants stated that policy makers / administrators should have been involved and five felt that the session on Multiculturalism left them with many more questions than answers. They had come to the session with the hope that some answers for the difficult issue of inter-cultural understanding will be offered, but the resource person had ended the session by asking them to explore their own context specific solutions.

In response to the question about limitations of the workshop a large majority of participants felt that the workshop should have been of longer duration. 12 participants made this observation. Two also mentioned
that some of the sessions were long. Two participants from Kashmir suggested that a visit to one of the local schools would have enriched the workshop. On participant felt that the interaction between teachers from different schools was limited and mixed group work should have been factored into the workshop programme. Two teachers felt that the workshop focused a lot more on the macro level issues but did not include enough on classroom situation and handling everyday issues that teachers face.

An important question that sought to see how the educators proposed to use the learning from the workshop in their school/family/community elicited various responses from the participants. While many of them responded with a general comment that they would implement the learnings in the school/community. Some participants were very specific. Seven participating teachers categorically stated that they would use empathetic listening or communication skills they learnt at the workshop in the personal and professional lives. Five participants said that they would share the ideas they had picked up from the workshop with their peers through presentations. Two participants who were both senior administrators stated that they plan to create a roadmap for implementing RTE in partnership with the staff and parents at their school. One of them said, “As a principal, I am going to make a large number of changes related to inclusive learning in the classroom - get rid of fear of exams, better methodology etc. Have training session of teachers in this direction.”

Three participants shared that the idea of integrated learning appealed to them and they would try to use the NCERT books in the manner that was suggested by the workshop resource persons. Cultivating a ‘spirit of enquiry without judgment’ or ‘asking the right kind of questions’ was another learning that the participants took back and wished to share with their students. The general idea of taking learning beyond books and curriculum and looking at multiple perspectives on different issues were also noted by two participants as something they desire to practice once they go back to their schools.

To the question in the form that asked if they would recommend the workshop to someone else 29 participants responded that they will certainly recommend it, one person said that he/she may recommend. All participants (100%) expressed their willingness to participate at a future WISCOMP workshop.
The interactive sessions with hands-on activities were rated highest by the participants which included the sessions on conflict resolution skills and using art. Over 90% of the participants rated them highly. The sessions on RTE (60%), NCF (50%), Gandhi’s Relevance and Film discussion session (46%) and Looking Ahead (60%) were also rated highly by participants as they provided new knowledge and ideas that participants had not been exposed to in the past. The sessions on curriculum and multiculturalism were only mentioned by 1/3rd participants. It appeared that the Delhi teachers found these sessions more useful in comparison to their counterparts from Kashmir.

In the post workshop communication some of the participating teachers shared that they presented the ideas learnt at the workshop to their colleagues and their principals.
Workshop Programme

DAY 1: January 4, 2014 (Saturday)
Venue: IIC Annexe
Registration: 9:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m.

Session 1
Welcome and Opening Remarks
Speaker: Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.

Session 2
Introductions & Ice Breakers
Facilitators: Ms. Seema Kakran, Ms. Manjri Sewak
Time: 10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Tea Break: 11:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Session 3
Right to Education: Intention and Reality
Lecture and Discussion
Speaker: Prof. Anita Rampal
Time: 11:45 a.m. – 1:15 p.m.
Lunch: 1:15 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Session 4
Realizing the Vision of NCF 2005
Lecture and Discussion
Speaker: Prof. Poonam Batra
Time: 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.
Travel from IIC to Gandhi Smriti: 3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Session 5
Relevance of Gandhi and Nonviolence in Contemporary Society
Heritage Walk and Discussion
Venue: Gandhi Smriti, 5 Tees January Marg
Facilitator: Dr. Navina Jafa
Time: 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
DAY 2: January 5, 2014 (Sunday)
Venue: IIC Annexe

Session 6
Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation and Facilitation
*Interactive Workshop*
Resource Person: Ms. Beth Fascitelli
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Tea Break: 11:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Session 7
Unpacking Multiculturalism
*Interactive Workshop*
Facilitator: Prof. Gurpreet Mahajan
Time: 11:45 a.m. – 1:45 p.m.
Lunch: 1:45 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

DAY 3: January 6, 2014 (Monday)
Venue: IIC Annexe

Session 8
Reflections
*Participant-led Roundtable Discussion*
Facilitators: The WISCOMP Team
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.
Tea Break: 10:15 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Session 9
Conflict Resolution Skills: Mediation and Facilitation (Contd.)
*Interactive Workshop*
Resource Person: Ms. Beth Fascitelli
Time: 10:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.
Lunch: 1:00 p.m. – 1:45 p.m.

Session 10
Beyond Words: Arts Creating Dialogic Spaces
*Interactive Workshop*
Facilitator: Ms. Akanksha Joshi
Time: 1:45 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Mid-Session Break: 3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
DAY 4: January 7, 2014 (Tuesday)
Venue: IIC Annexe (Basement)

Session 11
Curriculum through a Peace Lens
Interactive Workshop
Facilitator: Prof. Narayani Gupta
Time: 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
Tea Break: 11:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Session 12
‘Free and Compulsory’: A Film by Malati Rao
Film Screening and Discussion
Facilitator: Dr. Deepti Priya Mehrotra
Time: 12:00 noon – 1:30 p.m.
Lunch: 1:30 p.m. – 2:15 p.m.

Session 13
Looking Ahead: Opportunities and Challenges for Educators
Roundtable Discussion
Facilitator: Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath
Time: 2:15 p.m. – 3:45 p.m.

Session 14
Feedback and Closing
Roundtable Discussion
Facilitator: Dr. Meenakshi Gopinath
Time: 3:45 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.
Tea: 4:45 p.m.
Profiles of the Resource Persons

Akanksha Joshi is a story-teller who uses films, sound, text and dance to share her experiences of the visible and inner worlds. She is an award winning filmmaker and photographer. Her oeuvre stretches from films on conflicts and compassion (Passengers: A Video Journey in Gujarat), to films on ecological changes exploring many indigenous cultures across different ecosystems in India (Chilika Banks, Earth Witness). Ms. Joshi also facilitates workshops combining her journey into healing arts, as a communicator, a dance therapist, and a meditator to enable creative experiences.

Anita Rampal is a Professor in the Department of Education at the University of Delhi. She has been Member, Planning Commission Steering Committee for Elementary Education and Literacy, and Member, Working Groups and Sub-Groups for the 12th Five-Year Plan on Adolescents, Teacher Education, Secondary Education, and Adult Education. Prof. Rampal has published several books and monographs and is a regular contributor to the International Journal of Children’s Rights.

Beth Fascitelli is an independent Trainer and Consultant. Until recently, she served as Head of Consulting and Senior Trainer at Meta-Culture, Bangalore. At the organization, she worked on building consensus among various stakeholders in India’s garment sector, facilitating dialogue with Christians and Hindus, and working at the national level to help institutionalize collaborative processes in dispute resolution and public policy-making.

Deepti Priya Mehrotra is an independent Scholar and Activist. She works extensively with civil society organizations and has taught political science, philosophy, peace, and gender studies at the University of Delhi and Ambedkar University. Her book Burning Bright: Irom Sharmila and the Struggle for Peace in Manipur (2009) draws attention to nonviolent modes of struggle for justice and human rights. As a Fellow of the Center for Conflict Resolution and Human Security (New Delhi), she has written a monograph titled Education for Peace: A Gandhian Perspective.
Gurpreet Mahajan is a Professor in the Center for Political Studies at Jawaharlal Nehru University. She has written extensively on issues of multiculturalism, secularism, and civil society including *Identities and Rights: Aspects of Liberal Democracy in India* (1998), *The Multicultural Path: Issues of Diversity and Discrimination in Democracy* (2002), and *Religion, Community and Development: Changing Contours of Politics and Policy in India* (2011). In 2010, Prof. Mahajan authored a paper titled ‘Responding to Identity Conflicts: Multiculturalism and the Pursuit of Peaceful Coexistence’ for WISCOMP’s South Asian Journal of Peacebuilding *Peace Prints*.

Narayani Gupta is a Consultant with the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH), New Delhi, and a member of the Indian Council of Historical Research. An accomplished author on the history of Delhi, Professor Gupta retired from the Department of History and Culture at Jamia Millia Islamia in 2004. She was also associated with the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)’s Textbook Development initiative.

Navina Jafa is a Heritage Educationist, Classical Dancer, and the Director of Indian Cultural Heritage Research. She specializes in creative activities including academic cultural tourism, cultural representation, cultural diplomacy, arts in development programs, and conflict transformation through the arts. Dr. Jafa is the author of *Performing Heritage: Art of Exhibit Walks* (Sage, 2012).

Poonam Batra is a Professor at the Maulana Azad Center for Elementary and Social Education (MACESE), Central Institute of Education (CIE), University of Delhi. She has been involved in a decade-long action research in the restructuring of curriculum, pedagogic practices, and the learning experience of children in government-run elementary schools in the educationally disadvantaged areas of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Kerala. She has helped develop the framework for the Bachelors’ Program of Elementary Education, India’s first four-year professional elementary teacher education program since 1992. Over the last three decades she has served on several Government of India policy committees including: the national review of the New Policy on Education (1986), the 11th Plan Working Group on Teacher Education 2006, the National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education 2009.
Profiles of the Participants

Arshad is Principal of SAADI Memorial School, Pulwama, where he heads the Junior and Higher Secondary levels of the institution. He was among the Founding Members of the Kashmir Creative Education Foundation, Pulwama. Arshad actively participates in the conceptualization of all educational programs of the Foundation.

Bhawana Pathak is a Teacher at Army Public School, Srinagar. Pathak holds a Bachelors’ degree in Education and Masters’ degrees in English and Education.

Bilquis Qadir is a Teacher of Mathematics at Delhi Public School, Srinagar. She teaches students of grades 3 to 5 at the School.

Dhira Madan is a Teacher at Presentation Convent Higher Secondary School, Srinagar. Serving at the School since 1999, she currently teaches Functional English to students of grade 12.

Gurmeet Kour is an Assistant Professor in Department of English at College of Education, Srinagar.

Hakeem Showkat Hussain is a Teacher of Chemistry at Delhi Public School, Srinagar. He teaches students of grades 11 and 12 at the School.

Iajaz Ahmad is a Teacher of Mathematics at Delhi Public School, Srinagar. He teaches students of grades 6 to 8 at the School.

Iram Majid is a Teacher of English at Presentation Convent Higher Secondary School, Srinagar. She teaches students of grades 7 to 9 at the School.

Jigyasa Kathuria is a Teacher at St. Mary’s School, New Delhi. Kathuria holds a Bachelors’ degree in Education and a Masters’ degree in Political Science.

Komal Bhardwaj is a Teacher of Music at Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi. She teaches students of the Primary wing and grade 6 at the School.
Masarat Wanchoo is a Teacher of Geography at Presentation Convent Higher Secondary School, Srinagar. She teaches students of grades 6 to 10 at the School.

Mridula Pant is Principal of Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi. She teaches Economics to students of grade 12 at the School.

Nausheen is a Teacher at The Indian School, New Delhi. She teaches students of the senior section at the School.

Neha Katiyal is a Teacher at Army Public School, Dhaula Kuan, New Delhi. With a teaching experience of 13 years, she currently teaches all subjects to students of the Primary wing at the School.

Nowsheen Bashir is a Teacher of Biology at Delhi Public School, Srinagar. She is the Academic In-Charge of grade 10 and teaches students of grades 9 and 10 at the School.

Priya Barua is a Teacher at The Indian School, New Delhi. She teaches students of the Primary section at the School.

Renu Dube is a Teacher at Little Flower Convent School, Panchkula. With a rich teaching experience of 20 years, she currently serves as the Class Teacher of Nursery and grade 1 at the School.

Rubia Raza is a Teacher at Presentation Convent Higher Secondary School, Srinagar. She teaches Moral Science, Science, and Computer to students of grades 5 to 10 at the School.

Ruqaya Jabeen is a Teacher of English Literature at Government High School, Pulwama. She teaches students of grades 9 and 10 at the School. She is also Visiting Faculty at Kashmir Creative Education Foundation College of Education, Pulwama.

Saba Gulzar is a Teacher at Army Public School, Srinagar. She completed her schooling from Presentation Convent Higher Secondary School, Srinagar and holds Bachelors’ degrees in Science and Education and a Masters’ degree in Education.

Sandeep Kumar Marhatta is Principal of Army Public School, Srinagar. He holds a Bachelors’ degree in Political Science, Geography,
and Education; Masters’ degrees in Political Science, Hindi, and Education; and an M.Phil. degree in Hindi from Himachal Pradesh University, Shimla.

**Shabnam Ara** is a Teacher at Kashmir Creative Education Foundation Law College, Pulwama. She holds a Masters’ degree in Law from the University of Kashmir and has over six years of teaching experience.

**Showkat Ahmad Ganai** is a Teacher of Geography at Delhi Public School, Srinagar. He is Teacher In-Charge of grade 9 and teaches students of grades 9 and 10 at the School.

**Sushma Dudeja** is a Teacher of Mathematics at Bluebells School International, New Delhi. She holds Bachelors’ degrees in Mathematics from Sri Venkateswara College and in Education from Annamalai University.

**Tariq Wani** is Principal of Merry Land Secondary School, Pulwama. He holds a Bachelors’ degree in Education and a Masters’ degree in Sociology from the University of Kashmir. Previously, he has also worked as a Correspondent with HBN, a local television channel in Pulwama.

**Uma Anand** is a Senior Teacher at St. Mary’s School, New Delhi. She has a teaching experience of over 17 years. Ms. Anand holds a Bachelors’ degree in Education and a Masters’ degree in Mathematics.

**Vimmi Ghai** is a Teacher at Bluebells School International, New Delhi. Serving at the school for over 10 years, she currently teaches Environmental Studies at the School. Ghai is also a Special Educator in the Primary Department of the School and actively offers counselling.

**Waheed Raja** is a Teacher at a Government School in Pulwama.

**Zeenat Ara** is a Teacher with the Government Education Department of Jammu and Kashmir in Pulwama. Previously, she has taught at Kashmir Creative Foundation College of Education, Pulwama and Zakir Memorial College of Education, Pulwama.
Glimpses