

Teachers' Role in Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas: A Study

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Introduction

Navodaya Vidyalayas are unlike other schools in many respects. The various roles that Vidyalaya teachers are expected to play differ a good deal from those of teachers in most other schools. The objectives of Navodaya Vidyalayas clearly spell out the nature of activities that are to be conducted there. Besides academic excellence and all round development of learners' personality, these Vidyalayas have a social function. JNVs have been entrusted with the responsibility of improving educational standards in the district. Because of these objectives, these Vidyalayas have to function as truly pacesetter institutions. The Navodaya Vidyalaya Scheme spelt out three broad objectives viz:

1. To provide good quality modern education – including a strong element of culture, inculcation of values, awareness of the environment, adventure activities and physical education – to the talented children predominantly from the rural areas, without regard to their family's socio - economic condition.
2. To ensure that all students of Navodaya Vidyalayas attain a reasonable level of competence in three languages as envisaged in the Three Language Formula, and
3. To serve, in each district, as focal points for improvements in quality of school education in general through sharing of experiences and facilities.

Since the Navodaya Vidyalayas scheme envisaged a new experiment in school education geared to fulfillment of social functions of education and national integration, it was decided that recruitment of JNV teachers would be on all India basis, and teachers would be transferable among JNVs. In other words to ensure that JNV teachers would be able to ensure the attainment of JNV objectives, it was decided that “in service training courses for JNV teachers would be organized in institutions like Regional Colleges of Education (Now Regional Institutes of Education), managed by NCERT and “the services of experienced and meritorious teachers on deputation from JNVs, State Governments, and non Government institutions would be taken. It was planned that special non monetary incentives besides financial incentives will be provided to attract and retain talented and highly motivated teachers. In short, it was emphasized that in view of board objectives of JNVs, the quality of teachers who joined the system would make all the difference in terms of the success of the scheme.

Thus, JNV teachers are expected to serve the vision envisaged in Navodaya Vidyalayas scheme in as many ways as possible and in all contexts of Vidyalaya functioning.

1.1 In the Classroom

Like teachers in any other school, JNV teachers have their usual assignment of classroom teaching. The JNVs follow CBSE syllabus and use NCERT textbooks. Every teacher tried to provide additional learning resources through his/her classroom instruction to cover the gaps, if any, between CBSE syllabus and NCERT textbooks. Suitable bridge course have been developed for class VI students, the entry class in NVs, to help new students reach the expected level of academic achievement so that they can get along with classroom lessons and develop necessary trilingual competence.

JNVs focus on the use of new instructional technology e.g. computer assisted teaching and learning, use of new methods and techniques e.g. quiz, display, library reading, library work based individual and group assignments, use of a variety of audio-visual aids, peer guidance, self-study, supervised study, team teaching etc. Teacher competencies for effective use of these techniques and resources are accordingly developed through faculty training programmes including in-service training. Use of innovative instructional techniques and action research is especially emphasized.

Classroom instruction in JNVs is interactive and provides for diagnosis of weaknesses and gaps in learning for the below average as well as enrichment activities for the gifted children. “Learning to learn” skills including the development of reference skills and study skills receive substantial emphasis. JNV teachers pay particular attention to learners' communication and computational skills because proper development of these skills accelerates student learning and makes it more effective.

Since science is essentially experimental in nature, JNV science teachers use process skills approach. Observation, setting up experiments, classification, hypothesis-formulation, validation, etc. are emphasized in teaching of science especially up to the secondary classes. Laboratory work receives a lot of emphasis; lab work is used for helping learners.

JNV teachers are encouraged to set assignments and projects that lead to the use of library

resources. This is done through teaching of all curricular subjects. In teaching of mathematics, application receives special attention so that learners can appreciate the role of mathematics in various disciplines. In teaching languages, especially English, communicative approach is used most of the time so that proficiency in spoken language can be used advantage for developing reading and writing skills. Classroom instruction is supported by individual as well as group assignments and projects. Many co-curricular activities have their justification in strengthening the students' curriculum based learning.

Thus, JNV teachers individually as well as collectively play a variety of roles in ensuring steady curriculum- based learning by students. This is achieved by maintaining a learning-oriented ambience in the classroom and the school. The CBSE results of JNV students provide a testimony to the successful performance of JNV teachers.

1.2. Residential Culture and House System of JNVs

There is no doubt that the housemasters and the assistant housemasters have specific roles to play in running their houses. However, without the support of other teachers, the Vidyalaya residential culture cannot be very effective.

The totally of the Vidyalaya residential culture is reflected in all activities except those related to classroom instruction and those conducted inside the classroom. Sports and games are primarily organized by physical education teachers but other teachers too can lend a helping hand by participating in these activities. Inter-house activities and house activities cannot be effectively organized without the ready support of all teachers. Since teachers are part of the Vidyalaya residential culture, they participate in various activities and play the expected lead role to make them successful. During meal hours, teachers make it a point to ensure that their students are able to take their meals on time and without any inconvenience.

JNV teachers also play an important role in effective organization of co-curricular activities and inter-house competitions based on them. For example, teachers guide students in preparation of stage items, charts, models etc. Later on they may be invited for their initial i.e. first round evaluation. Items short listed for inter-school or inter-district competition are further refined and improved under teachers' guidance. Thus, there is hardly any competitive or non-competitive, curricular or co-curricular activity to which NV teachers do not contribute.

1.3 In Institutional Planning

Even though all JNVs are run by the same JNVS yet each JNV is unique in many respects. The demographic as well as socioeconomic features of a

district within a state may differ from those of others. The local community may be characterized by certain local specifics that may not obtain elsewhere. A district with sizeable tribal or nomadic population may set a different agenda for its Navodaya Vidyalaya. Since parents constitute the primary stakeholder's group, their expectation from a JNV may be uniquely different; the parents may expect the JNV to focus on particular thrust areas. The JNV is expected to know these and serve these. Hence the need for institutional planning. Simply stated, institutional planning for a session refers to a programme of development and improvement prepared by a JNV on the basis of the felt needs and the resources available or likely to be available with a view to improving the school programme and school practices in terms of attainment of its objectives. This institutional plan may be for a short or a relatively longer duration. Thus, the focus of an institutional plan is on maximum utilization of time, manpower and material resources for attainment of its objectives.

Comprehensive institutional planning provides for academic excellence and attainment of JNV objectives by taking care of: Physical infrastructure, Academic programmes and innovations, Co-curricular activities, Student services, Pace-setting activities, Community relationship, and General aspects. The variety of activities that go into the making of a comprehensive institutional plan and the scope of the institutional plan provide a testimony to the role that JNV teachers can play in making their Vidyalaya stand out in terms of its achievements.

1.4 In Continuous Comprehensive Evaluation

It is widely realized that unless the scheme of students' evaluation is well planned, continuous comprehensive evaluation cannot be reliable and valid. The National Policy of Education, 1986, revised in 1992, conceptualized and advocated learner evaluation as an integral part of the teaching learning process. It proposed that the process of continuous and effective evaluation should take care of all the three domains of learners development viz.; cognitive, affective and psychomotor so that their (i.e. the learners) integral development can be promoted. All Navodaya Vidyalayas introduced the scheme of continuous comprehensive evaluation in 1989-90.

During January 2003 the Navodaya Vidyalayas Samiti introduced a scheme of grading of Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalayas based on five criteria and comprising 100 marks as under:

- (i) Academic components : 50 marks
- (ii) Residential components : 20 marks
- (iii) Inter-personal Relationship : 10 marks
- (iv) Administration & Financial Management: 10 marks
- (v) Conduct of PTC, VMC, VAC & Alumni: 10 marks

The proforma for grading of JNVs is filled by the Vidyalaya Principal, is later on validated by the Assistant Director who is incharge of the recently introduced 'cluster scheme' and the final grade is determined by the Deputy Director i.e. the R.O. This scheme of grading JNVs can help streamline, consolidate and strengthen the Vidyalayas as Centres of Excellence. It helps fix a benchmark for each Vidyalaya in all areas of its functioning. It has been recommended that for realization of this purpose, it is very essential that performance level and standard of each Vidyalaya is assessed objectively and a systematic action plan for achieving the benchmark is developed with the support and cooperation of teachers and students. The Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti rightly hopes that this exercise of grading JNVs can help them reach the take-off stage and transform themselves as real Centers of Excellence and Pace-Setting Institutions. It can be easily seen that JNV teachers can play a pivotal role in getting a higher grade for their Vidyalaya, and help maintain it and even improve upon it.

3.5 In Developing Academic Calendar

The proforma for grading of JNVs clearly indicates that 'academic components' carry 50 marks out of a maximum of 100. This is the highest weighting and therefore academic planning and development of academic calendar are expected to engage serious attention of JNV teachers and the Vidyalaya Principal. This is indeed significant because JNVs envisage a new style of supporting growth and development of learners. For this, talented and gifted children predominantly from rural areas who otherwise would be denied opportunities of receiving quality education are identified and enrolled as students. The type of education conceptualized under the objectives of JNVs has to be carefully planned and provided to all learners.

Academic planning is carried out by JNV teachers under the guidance of the Heads of the Departments and the Principal. For this, session-end reviews provide inputs about areas of strength and areas of weakness. Areas of weakness and areas wherein academic improvement can be made are identified through faculty discussion.

Besides, every JNV teachers prepares a term plan for every class that (s) he teachers. Since the term plans flow from the academic calendar, their implementation ensures to a large extent the implementation of the academic calendar itself. Thus, it is obvious that JNV teachers take keep interest in developing detailed plans for the academic session, for teaching of various academic subjects and implementing these enthusiastically.

3.6 Teachers' Other Role

In addition to the teachers' role described so far, teachers are involved in interaction with parents and local community from time to time. It can be said that

teachers present the assuring face of JNV to parents anxious about the welfare of their children/wards enrolled in the Vidyalaya. During and before the PTC meetings, the teachers' role can allay the fear of many parents about the development and progress of their wards. Teachers' role in this context can be called truly crucial.

So far as teachers' interaction with members of local community is concerned through their role the teachers can make community resources available to the Vidyalaya to support and enrich its programmes. Though their persuasive approach, the teachers can enlist community cooperation and help; launch a number of community service projects to develop social sensitivity among students. There have even been some instances of teachers succeeding at generating financial resources from the community for initiating certain projects in JNV, which would have been nearly impossible otherwise.

JNV teachers also update their professional knowledge and competencies through participation in in-service teacher education programmes, and self-study. They take part in workshops, seminars and symposia whenever these are organized by the Samiti.

Conclusion

The above description of the teachers' role in Navodaya Vidyalayas clearly establishes that due to the distinct nature of these Vidyalayas and their objectives, the nature of the roles played by its teachers is quite unlike that of teachers' roles in most urban schools. The code of professional ethics of Navodaya Vidyalaya teachers brings it out very clearly. It appears that because of these multiple roles, Navodaya teachers become more involved in the attainment of Navodaya mission. Due to their various roles with students, parents and local community, they are perceived as teachers who are a cut above the rest and who have the development and welfare of their students as their cherished values. It should be obvious to everyone that success at playing these role does not come easily. It needs sustained commitment and self-appraisal so that an acceptable level of role performance is achieved by the individual teacher. This task becomes somewhat easier when the senior teachers work as role – models and encourage other teachers to progress and attain their level through peer feedback and reflection.

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