



IMPEDING INQUISITION IN HUMANITIES: VEILED OPPRESSION AND PARALLELS: ANY EARNING?

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Abstract:

When sharing an idea or an opinion is abrogated, the possibility of questioning hardly exists. Once questioning is extinct, there originates oppression, which gets entrenched. Subjugation dismisses the thought of questioning, threatening the subsistence and the very existence; the victim being the teacher. Employing 'disrespect' and 'degrading the dignity through insult', the teacher is forced to retract from participating in any discussion, resulting in prejudiced decisions, that comply self-benefits. Belittling and levying restrictions getting an agreement signed has tethered the teacher into silence. The oppression is veiled enforcing loads of work named as 'responsibilities for growth' in the form of duties, assignments and tasks. The consequences of this has impeded inquisition in teachers. Gray, P. L. & Seiki, S. (2020) drew attention of the school administrators and teacher educators to work alongside teachers for a systemic change in student centered learning and for institutional performativity pressure in teachers to be reduced; the plausibility of creating an awareness, an earning for all the stakeholders.

Introduction to the Impeding Inquisition:

This paper is very reflective in nature and draws attention to the suffering and turmoil of the teachers from the department of humanities in institutes that are oriented towards a particular discipline like engineering or a branch of engineering rather than keeping it interdisciplinary. The superior or the inferior complex of the teachers or administrators of such institute can cause anxieties for having an advantage over the other, resulting in demeaning the colleagues that reciprocates, further resulting in rifts. The teachers from the humanities may be ignored or alienated from sharing the ideas or expressing an opinion even if it is with respect to their own courses from the humanities. The needs of the learners are hardly observed or explored, and are unattended to be considered for inclusion in their curriculum. This might be due to the egoistic nature of the curriculum developers or their behaviouristic approach of seeing only one side of the coin. This is evident in most of the institutes that are bent only towards imparting certain streams and hardly comply to the norms of either AICTE or UGC or both, considering themselves to be bracketed as 'autonomous' despite being under the umbrella of MHRD, India, despite gaining benefits and grants from them. The reluctance to abide by the rules designated by AICTE or UGC, ignoring the importance or the understanding of interdisciplinary courses due to the dearth of knowledge about their need causes imbalances that disturb the unity in diversity in the institute, constructing autocracy and despotism. The process of this construct is layered by inputs from sources that find advantage or benefits in providing misleading information. The purpose of drawing information arises only when there is inconvenience in communicating with the people in an out-ward manner or when the authority is given to new personnel who hardly has any knowledge about the history or the background of the institute or the way it functioned, its teachers, their roles, the courses they taught, etc. Partial knowledge would destroy the ideology and the very purpose of establishing the institute, and in addition to that, the misleading information would only make matters worse. Any trial in trying to correct the misled information would only lead to further problems for the teachers like denying requests, unsettling their routines, burdening them with workload, insulting them, warning and threatening them. The teachers are mentally harassed and physically worn out, and the dictatorial behavior of one-sided orders and commands cease the teachers from communicating. When the teachers of humanities sulk to convey any information, there is barely any expectation of questioning. Under the authoritarian and the hideous political gambit played by their immediate subordinate authority, the obsequious, who belong to that stream (non-humanities); the teachers of the department of humanities experiences silent suffering, leading to impeding inquisition in humanities.

There was found to be no end to the problems that were discussed. Behind every problem, there was a story, and the contexts varied from as simple as the freedom to talk, to as complex as religious and regional biases. The data was collected from as many as twenty teachers from different universities and institutes who were randomly chosen to identify the aphorisms.

With hardly any available literature pertaining to questioning the authorities, this paper provides scope for further research and from perspectives of every different stream. The analysis was phenomenological and the conclusions drawn reveal political, demographic and economic factors affecting the teachers of the humanities in several ways.

The Challenges of Veiled Oppression and Parallels:

The challenges are aplenty, and mending or countering them is beyond the power and position of the teacher. These challenges that affect the teachers directly or indirectly can be categorized as the know-how, prejudices, exclusions, threats, workload, duties, ill-treatment, forbiddance, etc.

The Know-how: An institute or a university might be established with a specific ideology or a particular purpose. The ideologies of each institute varied and in the discussions it was found that they varied from the mode (offline or online) of education system to picking students at a certain age or with some caliber, or to even be as flexible as providing free education or scholarship. Abrupt altering of these ideologies might create a lot of chaos in the institutes that that may further lead to taking decisions that are inconducive to the needs or the liking of the students, teachers or any working fraternity in the university. But these disturbances are created only when the administrative body is a newly formed team or when there is the lack of know-how on what principles the institute or the university had been established. This might worsen when there is lack of complete understanding of the aims and objectives ordained by AICTE or UGC. The teachers of humanities in several institutes complained of the same. One of the major points of discussion was on the credits that were inappropriate. The mandate provided by AICTE to have a minimum of 12 credits from the humanities courses for graduating from a B. Tech Programme is not being followed, and the teachers of humanities are forced to be quiet and distance themselves from participating in any kind of discussions on the credit system that is hardly followed in the institutes that views education system in a narrow way. The other issues that were discussed included the obstruction from floating the electives from the department of humanities without having any knowledge about the course or its benefits, despite AICTE providing a list of courses in humanities that can be floated to keep it interdisciplinary. Even the courses that were mandated by AICTE are being ignored by some institutes or some streams of engineering. There were also discussions on the teachers of engineering teaching the courses that were floated under the humanities, and within humanities, the courses were allotted to management which were designed by the teachers of English, just out to favour their friends from the other departments, and this being without any inputs from their Board of Studies (BoS). One of the teachers quoted their authority mocking the courses taught by the department of humanities “Why is that course need, what will the humanities”, and this, the teacher stated, was very humiliating. It was also found that the newly appointed authority had little know-how on the teachers or the students of that institute resulting in offending their credibility.

Prejudices: There found to be a definite amount of bias on not just the opportunity for floating the electives, or on what electives are being floated, but also in the hiring of the guest faculty, providing on-duty leaves or even in the time-tables. It was notified that certain institutes had teachers hired only into certain streams and not into the others; humanities was surely not an exception. It was also observed that the teachers of engineering were provided a three-day on-duty leave for conferences, the teachers of humanities were provided only a day, despite the conference being held for three days. The differences in time-table were also quite evident. While the teachers of engineering enjoyed the privilege to teach only till Thursday or Friday, the teachers of humanities were assigned duties till Saturday evening. Adding to that, the classes slotted for engineering were in the morning hours and for the teachers of humanities it was scheduled in the afternoon, and this was with certain streams of engineering and in certain institutes, which hardly goes noticed by the authorities.

Exclusions: The discussions were elaborate on the teachers from humanities being denied from conducting training programmes or workshops quoting ‘cost to the organization’ and, hence, there was the denial to fund. One of the teachers quoted that a teacher from the department of English was ignored from being a part of the BoS, the reasons behind which were concluded to be multifold. The alienation effect was due to questioning in some prior context or the thought of it, or the fear that the subjugation would be unveiled.

Threats: This has become a dreaded phenomena post the pandemic, the threat of termination. While some teachers stated that they were unwanted stating ‘online mode of teaching’ as the reasons, the others stated that they were threatened to be removed for being open to discussion, which seemed to be a taboo in the institute. Some teachers also stated that they had to sign an agreement to be silent, via ironical statements that the grievances can be forwarded to the authorities and none else, to exercise control over the teachers revealing the truth to the press or media. It is not that the teachers are expressing their grievances to the media, and they may not even have any contacts with the media, but the thought of they being subjected and coerced does not allow them to lead a comfortable life. One of the teachers informed that the newly appointed authority warned the teacher from entering the administrative block for trying to express his opinion as against only receiving instructions, the absolute power that is maintained in the institute.

Workload: The workload of teachers of humanities varied from teacher to teacher and from institute to institute. While some of them had twenty four hours per week the others had a decent amount of sixteen hours per week. Despite the workload of 24 hours, six days a week, the teachers had to do duties that the administration assigned. Apart from the academic duties like designing syllabus, conducting literary or cultural competitions & activities, invigilation and evaluation, multiple non-academic duties like warden, monitoring duty post the regular hour timings like 8pm to 10pm, termed as study hours, giving an out-pass for students studying in residential campuses that includes calling their parents and confirming the reasons for letting the student go out of the campus, eating in the mess at times to give feedback, writing speeches, assembly in-charge, writing the university magazine, being a sports officer, being a member of the

beautification committee, etc., have been assigned as responsibilities that accord hardly any time for writing research papers or for reading. The focus inclined more towards the secondary duties than the primary duties of a teacher, resulting in further denigration of the teachers.

Ill-treatment: The teacher is asked to tell moral stories in the assembly and in the class, but it was found that the very teacher is treated immorally by the authorities on grounds related to making them do menial work like scanning a text book, carrying bundles (as many as 30) of answer scripts, etc. The teacher are also charged for the behavior of the students if they sit next to each other in the class, and insulting the teacher in a meeting for requesting to clarify a statement or for expressing an opinion.

Forbiddance: The teachers, being wardens, also happened to face charges on the grounds of counseling the students; even the threat of removal from the institutes. Some institutes have police on the campus and their deliberate intrusion into the works of the teachers plagues them from performing their duties. Incidents such as volunteering for NSS, opening the auditorium for the students, though it was done seeking permission, the respect for the teacher is trampled, just to exhibit the superiority of the police, who also happened to say that thirty thousand call that police 'Madam', and that she doesn't call a professor 'Sir', which though was never told, even in an Indian context. Even to take extra classes for foregoing the classes due to invigilation duties, there had to be permissions taken despite the class being empty, which was not the case earlier, as stated by one of the teachers. Either ways, for taking or not taking classes post the working hours, the teacher is at the receiving end.

Aims:

- To discover the impeding inquisitions in humanities
- To voice the silence suffering of the teachers because of veiled oppressions and parallels.
- To draw attention to the policy holders and administrators and awaken them to reality.

Research Questions:

- What leads to impeding inquisition in the lives of the teachers of humanities?
- What kind of oppression and parallels do the teachers of humanities undergo?
- How will awareness be raised in the administrators and how well does that augur for the teachers of humanities?

Review of Literature:

With hardly any literature available on the questioning the authority in educational institutions, the limited resources available would however provide value to the kind of problems the teachers face working in institutes that are inclined to certain norms. The most important literature that was available was that of Fish, S. (1996), who in his *Violence and Conviction in the English Department. English as a Discipline, Or, Is There a Plot in this Play?* Is very satirical about the gambits within the department and coined the first of his long series 'Fishy academic aphorisms', and this is more so when it is between the departments. Flores, M. A. (2006) and Gu, Q., & Day, C. (2013) explored the struggles, continuities and discontinuities in the teachers due to challenges in conditions and change in settings, to find the fluctuations in their resilience while Lattuca, L. R. (2001) in 'Creating interdisciplinarity: Interdisciplinary research and teaching among college and university faculty' discussed elaborately on the importance of inter-disciplinary courses, unlike how electives have been removed in universities in the recent times without having any know-how on the importance of inter-disciplinary courses. In the literature of 'The faces of institutionalized discrimination and systemic oppression in higher education: Uncovering the lived experience of bias and procedural inequity' by Lincoln, Y. S., & Stanley, C. A. (2021), the lived experiences of faculty which are neither obvious nor transparent, attempting to demonstrate the forms of institutionalized discrimination and systemic oppression, supported by policies and procedures encoded into an institution's rules and regulations, are explored. With regard to veiled oppressions, the literature of Morales, J., & Bardo, N. (2020) in their narratives of racial reckoning: Oppression, resistance, and inspiration in English classrooms traces how language is used as a tool of racial oppression in professional lives, reflecting the same to be in education and ethnicity, was fundamental in gaining inputs into the subjugation of teachers on the basis of region, religion and language. On the role of the teachers, it was literature from Ramsden, P. (1991) 'A performance indicator of teaching quality in higher education: The Course Experience Questionnaire' it was clear that the teaching function had been ignored, but just the research outcome, and without any research outcome which is curtailed, the teachers role is neglected and menial jobs are assigned.

Research Design:

It was a qualitative research grounded on inductive reasoning understanding the challenges of twenty teachers who were then categorized into five sets based on the kind of institutes they worked in. The division of the teachers was done based on the political, economic and demographic factors of the institutes. The data collected was generalized based on the recurring patterns. A reflective journal was used to record the aphorisms of all the teachers and colour coding was followed to draw similarities and differences. The semi-structured interviews assisted in posing probing questions to draw information that the teachers otherwise would have hesitated to provide because of the ethical and integrity issues and for the fear of being terminated.

Conclusions:

Several conclusions could be drawn from the data collected from the teachers of humanities teaching in various institutes. It was clear that they suffered due to the complaints from peers on peers for their career growth. It was also because of the Political pressure applied on the new authority that they had to be totalitarian in nature. The termination was also identified to cater to the career needs of the relatives and friends of the authorities and to gain benefits from tenders. From the teacher's point of view, an inferiority complex is developed. They are mentally disturbed and are unable to maintain a good work-life balance. The zeal to teach any new courses nor show interest in the development of syllabus is completely lost, and they find ways of leaving the organization. They seem to be working for the sake of working and not out of passion. The pressure applied on the teachers is leading them to debates and arguments, and in applying pressure on students. The term 'core' applied and induced into the students for segregation of the departments to demean the teachers of humanities, also hurt the department for they have been pillars in imparting essential skills.

Implications:

A well informed and self-directed teacher who is compliant, tolerant and sympathetic may negate the oppressions, but only for a little time period. This paper may awaken the policy holders, administrators, colleagues, and the students and teachers of every department and institute. The awakening may lead to understanding colleagues from a humanitarian perspective, to be unbiased and to bring in equality.

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