



SCHOOL OF THOUGHT

She is the Founder and Managing Trustee of Shikshantar, the school with a difference. Her journey in Integrated Education started at Mirambika New Delhi. **SUBURB** in conversation with **Minoti Bahri**, a progressive academician and a firm believer in the principles of Inclusiveness, Organic Growth and Free Progress.

Vineeta Jerath Grover

Q. In Shikshantar, it is a culture to call the teachers 'didi & bhaiyas.' What is the psychological significance behind it?

A. Building relationships is the hallmark of our work with children. How one addresses another person lays a psychological ground for the nature of the relationship that can develop after that. Children seek human connections and learn best from adults when they connect with them at an approachable level. When addressed as 'didis and bhaiyas,' a natural and instant bond gets created. There is no fear of making mistakes or going wrong. Children feel safe, take initiatives and feel free to express their

thoughts or ask questions. This relationship marks the beginning of a collective journey based on trust and faith. The sense that 'didis & bhaiyas' are real people who learn along with us and can make mistakes is comforting for children.

Q. How has the role of school teachers changed in last decade and a half?

A. A teacher's role has only become more challenging, fun and diverse! Teachers are now getting to explore self-growth and self-learning as one of the outcomes of emphasis on teacher development. Interaction with parents is growing.

Teachers realise that they need to make the classroom practices and





process of education an engaging one for each child. Teachers are building nurturing relationships with their students. They are making a conscious effort to build trust, love, mutual understanding, respectful acceptance of differences with their students. In the process, they need to keep a delicate balance between formal and informal communication. The teacher is no more the person who knows it all. A teacher is a helper, a guide, a mentor.

Q. Why do you think the younger generation is not motivated enough to take up the profession of a teacher?

A. It is a very pertinent question. In a world where there are countries that are thinking of new ways to implement practices to attract the best minds towards education, we in India don't even offer a B.El.Ed (Bachelor of Elementary Education) degree programme in colleges with male students! The 4-year B.El.Ed programme is a robust, detailed, well-structured and sensitively

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There is a HUGE impact of media on the psychological framework. With both parents being at work, monitoring TV & other social media becomes imperative.

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thought out programme that creates some of the best teachers at Elementary level. In case a male student wants to aspire to be a teacher, he needs to go the academic route of Masters and doctorates in a particular subject.



He cannot become an Elementary level teacher. In a largely still patriarchal society, until this glass ceiling shattered for men, we will not have young visionary men aspiring to be teachers!

Remuneration too pays a significant role in the selection of professions. While the 7th pay commission has upped a teacher's remuneration to at least bring it in a decent bracket. There remains a large gap between the cost of living index and the average salary of a teacher.

Q. How and why has parenting changed over the years? How it is impacting the children and the school?

A. While parents these days are better informed in some ways; however, excessive,

exaggerated and subjective information is leading to anxieties of different nature – social, emotional and mental. These anxieties are sometimes getting transferred on to the children, thus leading to psychological and cognitive-developmental concerns in some children.

Urban city life has pulled and pushed which if succumbed too in a non-selective manner impacts the state of mind of the parents. All the external social pressure sometimes leads to unrealistic expectations from the child. Simple family togetherness is getting overtaken by the ambitions of parents and reduced family time.

Many families are also developing a frank, open and friendlier relationship between parent and child. Possibilities of that too may not have existed two generations ago.

With the rise in pressure of parents and increased physiological and psychological

concerns, the teachers have to regularly counsel and dialogue with families.

Contemporary parenting sometimes stretches the parents and the child in ways that could lead to psychological & physiological concerns. The cases of burn out, stubbornness, restlessness & attention span concerns in children on an incremental.

Q. What challenges as a school head you face from parents?

A. As a school mentor, one has to be available more and more to dialogue with parents over their increasingly growing doubts, fears and unfounded concerns.

Stressed adults make stressed parents. For the wholesome growth of children and a balanced, healthy community, one has to continuously design and develop new workshops, Open House themes and projects. Also, at the same, address the concern of stress and its related problems.

One needs to assess continually and even pre-empt teachers needs and provide for them, so the educational practices come from a place of experience, conviction, confidence and vision. **S**

