

**Enabling Pedagogies in Higher Education in India, An E-QUAL Project Conference
March 26 and 27, 2015, Shiv Nadar University**

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The first day of the E-QUAL Conference dawned bright and sunny with the atmosphere filled with a pleasant rush associated with erudition, to the accompaniment of an excited buzz of intellectual stimulation. The registration process done, everyone occupied their seats with great anticipation about the numerous possibilities in higher education that could be extracted from the thoughts and ideas presented by the scholars in this platform. The conference was inaugurated by Nikhil Sinha, The Vice Chancellor of Shiv Nadar University. He drove home the point that this conference aimed at probing into the various opportunities that a comprehensive higher education system could present to Indians. Due emphasis was laid on the importance of a technological pedagogy in bringing us one step closer to unlocking new levels of edification. Amarjeet Sinha, Additional Secretary of MHRD, who was the Chief Guest for the day, had his thoughts aligned on similar lines. However, he reiterated that the individual who facilitates learning is irreplaceable, as he is ever ready to rise to new challenges in education. The essence of democracy was re defined to include the aspirations of our youth, which need to be fulfilled for a better future for the country as a whole. Keeping in mind that diversity is widespread and aspirations are similar, he gave the perfect opening to a series of paper presentations that encapsulated the dream of tomorrow.

The keynote address by Shiv Vishwanathan on “**Pedagogies for the Imagination: Thought Experiments with Knowledge**” was chaired by Nikhil Sinha, Vice Chancellor, Shiv Nadar University. The conference opened with an enriching speech by Shiv Vishwanathan who is a professor at OP Jindal School and an eminent figure in the academic world. He began the talk with the ironic history of education in India. For eons, education has been seen as a mere instrument and not as a means for accomplishing something. As we trace back the history of our scientists, we observe that a common feature across all great minds was the absence of colonial mindset and this highlights the need for an emancipated model of the world that allows science to be seen as an enabling entity. Thus, science demands the creation of excellence beyond the boundaries of nations, subjects, ideologies and economic divides. To comprehend this idea better, one only needs to look at the history of the planning commission for it was created by a group of physicists and not economists. Similarly, Nehru, a politician, compared laboratories to temples in Modern India since he believed that they held the key to empower our future and this was central to the idea of science. Swaminthan too, in his endeavour to create a science for the

poor, had set up a lab in a slum. Another idea crucial in the development of science was the canon of precision and honesty. These ideas soon evolved as public virtues that engendered the development of a sense of public rectitude. This captured the essence of science and the meaning of “measure” in every sense of the term. However, it is important to note that this did not imply intolerance in entirety but developed as an individual holistic sense of behaviour. With this, the element of divide between the public and the private emerged as an exclusive feature of the subject. And therefore one could establish that science couldn't be understood through abstractness for it required the support of stories. To stretch this idea with an example, he mentioned how the obsession with punctuality accompanied the invention of a clock. Similarly, the advent of detective novels like Sherlock Holmes encouraged a keen eye for analysis and a sense of passion for honest judgements of situations. These principles soon became the link that associated science with justice and rationality with order. At the same time, Vishwanathan also highlighted the importance of looking at pedagogies as a means to enable imagination. But he also made an important distinction between imagination and imaginary since it was the former that enabled different categories of science and future vision. Accommodating these two ideas together requires facilitating the growth of creativity and playfulness. And he equated these to dreams of reason. The realisation of these dreams would require us to look at Alfred Wallace's views on how a scientist has to invent his own hypothesis to challenge his text. This establishes the inevitability of diversity for no one text can ever be supreme and Vishwanathan stressed on how this idea formed the crux of pedagogies in these times. Thus, this point of time requires us to look at science as an emancipator that is not a passive constitution looking at multiple time points but as an entity that enters in discourse with nature to change its own democracy through a multitude of stories.

This was followed by an engaging question and answer session which began with Nikhil Sinha's views on the role of science in capturing excellence and liberating ideas. He highlighted that the epistemological diversity of India was rich enough to invent new ideas. Soon after this, Anannya Dasgupta from Shiv Nadar University raised a question about the position of liberal arts in this scenario. And thus Vishwanathan used this opportunity to mention that the liberal arts and science have always been intertwined. He also stressed on the importance of letting these two streams enter into a conversation with each other as this will revive the playfulness associated with science.

The first panel called **“Ideas in Higher Education”** was chaired by Jaideep Chatterjee (Shiv Nadar University) and comprised two papers - Supurna Dasgupta’s “Kaaj kori anonday”: Happiness, Work and Pedagogy: Preliminary Reflections on Tagore’s “Eastern University” and Asim Siddqui’s “Limits of normativity in enabling authentic pedagogies: teaching-learning of ethical concepts”. Dasgupta, currently a MPhil scholar from University of Delhi, drew several insights from Tagore’s essay on Eastern University and his ideas on happiness, work and leisure. Tracing the history of the concept of university, she emphasized the importance of work and pleasure in this system. Tagore espoused the ideas of *tapovans* or forest schools as natural universities. Dasgupta criticised Tagore’s perception of education as a utilitarian instrumentalist measure for his views were based on Sanskrit readings and engagement with the Hindu rituals where the guru shishya lived together. She argues that universities had always been built on the codes of hierarchy through which education trickles down to students and aligning it to prototypes of west and east will in fact confirm to another model of orthodoxy. She tries to resolve the question about the politics of happiness and labour by translating it into politics of goodness. If one would associate work with fullness and knowledge with reward, it would contribute to the development of a feudal system in education. She concluded her talk by reiterating the concepts of *mukti* and *anonday*. These two thoughts often collude but never collide and this is what lies at the heart of weaving work with happiness and leisure. Through this paper, she looked at education as an empowering mechanism and examined the extent to which Tagore’s *tapovan* model can accommodate the dynamics of a classroom of a developing country like India.

Asim Siddqui’s paper highlighted the importance of a dialectical engagement between normativity and authenticity for enabling pedagogies in higher education. Currently a doctoral candidate at the Philosophy of Education, Manipal Center for Philosophy and Humanities, Karnataka, he elaborated on how normativity demands complete conformity from its subjects and thus sets out to ignore a person’s development. On the other hand, when one employs the tenets of authenticity; body, experience and art become the centre of learning rather than punishment and awards. Here, he mentions the example of performing arts that focus on making the movement one’s own and so the experience of authentic action becomes the prime motivation for art exploration. Siddiqui also argued that conceptualising art pedagogy is not contradictory to science as both have a certain degree of playfulness embedded in them. The difference however lies in the approach as arts don’t have an objective method for they focus more on a conceptual and a contextual approach but on the other hand science derives its learning from facts and epistemological judgements. This distinction between epistemological

and moral judgments also brings forth the difference between universal and universable. Thus, by allowing the experience of truth to become the larger orientation of educational aims, authenticity becomes a crucial aspect in learning and teaching.

This discussion led some academicians to question about the fields where practice is not important. But in such cases, Siddiqui underlined the relevance of experience as it acts as a key for self reflection. He further stated that truth is not in the knowledge but in the pursuit/experience of that knowledge. Another question raised the issue of co-creation of knowledge in a digital space to Dasgupta's paper. But she answered this by shifting the gear in the direction of two caveats: the first deals with the question of who has access to this knowledge and the second dealt with the risk of structural homogeneity that leads to diminution of subjectivity. Thus, it was agreed upon that experiential component forms the crux of pedagogy and this not only involves activity but also moral experiences that create a space where both enchantment and critique to co-exist.

This was followed by the panel called "**Assessment and Learning**". This panel, chaired by Girish Agrawal (Shiv Nadar University) included three speakers - Mary Webb, S. Kumaresan, Jaideep Chatterjee. The panel spoke of the importance of assessment and its criticality for pedagogy. Mary Webb, from King's College London, was the first speaker who began with our current thinking regarding assessment. Webb's paper "Designing assessment to enhance learning: sharing, adapting and piloting assessment models in the E-QUAL project" presented key ideas about formative assessment like students "questioning" the tests to improve their learning objectives and stressed on the importance of improving peer-peer interaction, peer-peer assessment, and teacher-student interaction to enhance learning. Thus, interaction does not reduce to grading alone but also includes informative feedback. There are challenges to implementing formative assessment, says Webb, and one of the purposes of the two day conference was to help the EQUAL partners identify and understand these challenges better. One of the challenges, she says is to create a culture in which a student is happy to say "I don't quite understand that. Can you explain that to me?" Learning Design is another vision of EQUAL said Webb. Learning Design is a multi-layered plan linking aims, learning outcomes, teaching methods, staff and student workload and a schedule of learning activities. Webb explains the need to engage with Learning Design saying that such an engagement would make pedagogy more visible and explicit thereby promoting understanding and reflection. Webb briefly introduced the ADDIE approach for learning design process and added that EQUAL would use the 'E' in ADDIE, 'Evaluate', in every other step of ADDIE.

The second speaker, Professor Kumaresan from University of Hyderabad, in his paper “Suggestions for Improved Teaching and Assessment Learnt from MTTTS Programme”, spoke of reasons for the conception of the Mathematics Training and Talent Search Programme--a summer training program aimed to improve the quality of students applying for a PhD in mathematics. He was of Mary Webb's views on the importance of assessment, stating sadly that in our country, assessment was reduced to written examination and that five such examinations spread throughout a semester meant continuous assessment.

He also noted with much fascination that as a semester began, students enthusiastically put up hands and answered questions posed to the class, but as the semester progressed, the hands reduced to a predictable few. He observed that the rest of the class was of the prognosis that the answers and thus the hands would readily be put out by the few, saving them the effort to answer the problem themselves. Therefore, he explained that in MTTTS, students were encouraged not to speak the answers out loud but to write them down as a word or two and call the Professor to communicate to their understanding.

The third paper, Jaideep Chatterjee’s “Assessing Assessment: calculability and the production of knowledge”, began with the compulsion faced by universities all over the world since the last decade to adopt Academic Assessment Processes or Outcome Assessments (OAs) to check the effectiveness of the courses and programmes. Chatterjee spoke of the criticisms faced by such processes like threat to the academic freedom of the faculty and a corporatization of the university. His argument, though, did not criticise the process. Instead, it highlighted that these actually achieved the opposite of what they intended to achieve. He presented his arguments through critically examining the workings and the issues of ‘Objective Criteria’ and ‘Feedback Loop’ of the OAs. His next section on ‘Calculability and the Production of Knowledge’ explained the understanding of knowledge that the OA’s emerge from and guard with their implementation.

The discussion which followed had comments in agreement with Professor Jaideep that assessment can sometimes take over learning and what could then be an alternative way of outcome assessment if a productive one can indeed be conceived of. “Is there a logic for us to even organize the structure of a course?” asked a member of the conference, continuing to ask if not, how such an approach could work towards disciplines like engineering? The chair presented an instance where a fluid course structure was adopted for his course on “Sustainable Infrastructure” where at the end of the course students were graded by their own selves on the judgement of the efforts they had spent on the course and the learning that had come out of it to them.

The final panel of the day “**Practical Pedagogies**” was chaired by Paromita Goswami (Shiv Nadar University) and included papers such as “One Poem, Many Stories’ by Aadya Kaktikar (Shiv Nadar University), and, “Equity in the Classroom – Pedagogy For Today’s Learners” by Priti Joshi (University of Delhi). The panel which looks into practical pedagogies had two speakers from completely different backgrounds. While Aadya Kaktikar looks into her Abhinay class that focuses on understanding dance as an area of study, Priti Joshi attempts to answer the question of whether equity is possible in a classroom. Kaktikar claims, in her presentation, that she in her class has attempted to move from the literal to abstract which results in the teacher herself learning new things while exploring unexplored terrains. She uses Dr. Anannya Dasgupta’s poem in order to create six different narratives that use six different dance techniques. In short she loses control and transfers some of her power to the students in the hope that they will find their own meaning in these dance forms. Priti Joshi on the other hand looks into the disinterest in the increasing number of students. This she claims results in teachers becoming more interested in whom they are teaching rather than what and how to keep students involved. There is no interaction between the student and the teacher which is a result of control being in the hands of the teacher. Hence she claims that equity in a classroom is only possible if there is a metacognitive interaction with students taking charge of their own learning. Both the panelist of this practical pedagogies show us how it is imperative that there needs to be a power sharing between the teacher and the student to create a healthy class environment. The discussion after both the panels revolved around questions such as what would have happened if the students of the dance class would have no technique of their own to whether there were other methods that were possible to improve methods of communication among student and teachers in other fields.

The second day of the conference had **Shivali Tukdeo** from NIAS Bangalore as the keynote speaker. Tukdeo’s address ‘**The Pedagogic Project of Indian Higher Education: Reconstruction, Reforms and Justice**’ was chaired by Anannya Dasgupta (Shiv Nadar University). Dasgupta invited Dennis Dambo, the Head of research and innovation of the European Union, to share his views on higher education in India, before beginning the day’s events. Dambo begins his speech with a sense of intrigue over the ever-increasing presence of new universities in India since they are not so common in Europe. He is further intrigued by the fact that some of them such as Shiv Nadar University focus on research which indeed is common in Europe but is not seen in India. After giving a broad sense of the knowledge capital

and the absolute need to raise skill among people, he argues that this knowledge is not just limited to academic feats but also helps in solving societal challenges. He moves on with his talk by giving a brief overview of the different procedures such as Erasmus Mundus, now renamed as Erasmus plus, and Bologna process that were used in the late 90s in Europe to reform higher education. Erasmus plus is a program that focuses on scholarships to students and it is open to students of all nationalities. He further adds on to the topic of scholarships for students by talking about MSCS scholarships for researchers and PhD students of any field including that of social sciences. The aim of all this is to improve the mobility between the universities and foreign student and Project E-QUAL also has a similar ambition. He states that it hopes to improve the quality and mode of access in the Indian higher education system along with improving relations between Indian and European higher institutions. He ends his address by encouraging the audience to attend an event organized by USTI on 15th of April that aims at improving Indo European industrial relations.

Shivali Tukdeo begins her presentation by asserting that in the conversation of transformation changes and shifts in the landscape of higher education today, the question one needs to ask is what are the ways in which we contribute to the kind of knowledge and literacies that do justice to the diversity seen today? In order to answer or understand this question she claims that she will talk about four different contexts that revolve around this question. Before looking into the different contexts she informs the audience that she looks at universities as a social institution in opposition to a view that narrows it down to an organization. In the first context, she takes us through one of her field narratives that deal with the problem of Adivasi education in the Khorapur region of Orissa. In one of her encounters with two students who had just passed out of their high school and were on their way to College, she realised the problems that exist in our education system. She narrates that when the adivasi students of that village who are indeed first generation learners in their family come across the image of adivasis portrayed in their textbooks they are left with a sense of bewilderment and an identity crisis. The situation in universities could be claimed as worse in a way since there is absolutely no interest shown in understanding this. She then moves on to pointing out that while the government usually focuses on the three language system, in the case of universities there is no language choice. In a way this fails the bigger aim of literacy which is not limited to just reading and writing a particular language but also focuses on the importance of multi literacy. This focus on singular literacy she claims could be traced back to India in 19th century wherein English was seen as a tool to bring rationality and law. The second context focused on the formation of universities in India in 1857 that also marked the formation of desi administrative class. These people saw it as a status symbol and

connected the admission process to getting selected for government jobs. She claims that one of the problems though that had transpired was the fact that although there was a growing focus on these universities, primary education was completely neglected. This was indeed a huge problem since it was the primary education that most of the masses needed. This was followed by the great expansion of universities which saw a new set of problems such as the intellectual trying to find an Indian way of solving problems and the rise of community driven universities that were indeed a way to increase the capital of the elites of that particular communities. The third context focuses on the crisis of higher education in the current times. These range from the crisis in America that Noam Chomsky talks about in his article where he argues that academic spaces should be kept separate from political spheres to Bill Reading's critique of the current narrowed down notions of excellence to Andre Beteille's identity crisis in Indian universities. The fourth context of her presentation is focused on understanding the multiple meanings of universities such as a means for social mobility or a global discourse of measurable output. She asserts that one must move towards a critical pedagogy that takes note of the diversity and focuses on multicultural education. It needs to be forged with the idea of justice that privileges experience, reflection and action. She indeed understands that it is very difficult to do this within the classroom context and hence maybe they are not the spaces one should limit oneself to. Finally she states that although there has been a lot of focus on revolutionary or resistant pedagogy if one is to understand the three terms "Voice, dialogue and democracy" one can help the pedagogy in an Indian context.

The discussion that followed this dealt with the dichotomy of dealing with treating different people in the context of equality to which Shivali pointed out that it would be wonderful if we could treat everyone equally but since we cannot do so one needs to take notice of these differences but make sure that there is no hierarchy in these differences. Hence one needs to make sure that in a space of classroom anyone is free to speak devoid of their accents or language restriction. It also looked into Digitisation as a moment of crisis in contrast to the popular understanding of it being forward. Shivali replied to this by claiming that although the process is definitely a promising aspect it should not be looked upon as the only way

The first panel called "**Technologies of Pedagogy**"_was chaired by Partha Chatterjee and comprised papers - "Addressing Cognitive and Cultural Challenges through Tech Enabled Blended Learning: Some Lessons for E-QUAL" by Deepananda Ray, Piyali Chakraborty, Somak Mukherjee, Arunashish Acharya from Jadavpur University, and, "An Insight into Practice, Outcomes and Challenges of a Shift from Pedagogy to Paragogy: A BITS Pilani Case Study" by Suman Luhach and Pushp Lata from BITS Pilani. Digitisation has taken the world by storm and

changed the face of pedagogics that had persisted before the ubiquity of technology became pronounced. Innovation in technology has enhanced the quality of education, providing greater access to more students, transcending boundaries. The first paper presented by the Education Technology Team of Jadavpur University comprising Deepananda Ray, Piyali Chakraborty, Somak Mukherjee and Arunashish Acharya gave insights into tech enabled blended learning, covering aspects of diversity and multiplicity. The paper mainly aimed at trying to come up with a suitable method that could mete out the needs of all types of learners with the same teaching method – be it explicit learners, visual learners, auditory learners or kinaesthetic learners. Spanning across culture, location, habitat and perceptions, technology can disseminate content and incorporate a blended mode of learning. This perfectly captures the concept of paralogy or peer learning, which can be enhanced through the usage of social network as a means to propagate and promulgate information. The BITS Pilani Case Study presented by Suman Luhach and Pushp Lata traces the shift from pedagogy to paralogy. It analyses in detail the effects of a technological model of education within BITS Pilani. The findings suggest that online forums facilitate learning at a higher level, banishing vulnerabilities and providing an equal platform for all to express freely their notions and ideas.

The discussion that followed on this panel was quite scintillating with the variety of questions asked ranging from the key challenges faced in designing such technology enabled courses to the success rate of these ventures. Partha Chatterjee of the Department of Economics, Shiv Nadar University, who was the Chair for the panel added a valid point about how virtual discussions can also help to efface the negative effects of peer pressure on the student. Personal experiences provided by the speakers on the elaboration of this point made by the Chair added more congruity to the statements made by their thesis work. Although the picture painted by paralogical modes of learning is not replete with rosy paradigms of success, it could certainly be concluded from the discussions that interactivity in the blended learning realm could be utilised to ensure maximum leveraging of learnability for the individual.

The second panel, “**Digital Learning**”, chaired by Samuel Berthet (Shiv Nadar University), had two papers – “The Other Side of Digitization” by Sunandita Ghosh and Sammya Mukhopadhyay (Jadavpur University), and, “From Passive Acceptance to Active Engagement: Digital Disruptions in the Classroom” by Usha Raman (University of Hyderabad). The first set of speakers Sunandita and Sammya look into how rapid digitization has resulted in homogenisation of multiple narratives into one single narrative thereby making it impossible for different interpretations to survive. They claim that digital humanities as a form of education remains cultural biased. They give the example of an online source which summarises a feminist

reading along with unrelated advertisements. They claim that in a situation like this the distance between the reader and the object of understanding grows. They ended their paper by claiming that the aim for this form of education should be to initiate a dialogue between different narratives rather than providing a biased explanation of everything. Usha Raman's paper in contrast to the previous presentation is not much about the digital as in influencing the digital in the class room. In her presentation, she looks into four different stories wherein there seems to be a possible movement between technology and pedagogy. The first of her stories is titled engaged learning which happened in her writing class that involved the students to answer the question "What makes me?" in a Google drive. The second story walls and open books look into how literally getting over the walls of a class can change the dynamics and encourage students to learn more. The next story or the selfie mug showed her how there is space in her classroom for people to say no and the final story showed her how it is important for a teacher to respect the basic aims of a student such as social mobility while trying to inculcate a feeling of learning in them. She ends her paper by looking at the three methods that is text, tools and talk that need to be embedded with technology if it hopes to achieve the promises it makes.

The discussion that followed the talk mainly focused on the topic of whether the role of teacher becomes redundant in the process of digitalisation. Although most of the participants agreed that a good teacher is indeed someone who makes herself redundant, they did claim that a complete absence should not happen. It also looked into how the internet is similar to a property market and hence one should be vary of the facts being provided because it can be manipulated.

The third panel of the day was called "**Pedagogies that Travel**" and had Gita Chadha from University of Mumbai and Maya Rao from Shiv Nadar University. This panel was chaired by Shrimoy Chaudhary (Shiv Nadar University). Interdisciplinary approach in teaching helps the learning process to gain not just linear momentum, but fulfil multi – dimensional aspects of any subject. Giving equal importance to all subjects, without considerably weighing one over the other is an objective that needs to be achieved in education. The speaker for this panel, Gita Chadha from University of Mumbai, aimed to drive home this very point through her presentation on the topic of "Crafting an Interdisciplinary Classroom : Teaching Across the Two Cultures". Integrating science and sociology can provide an alternate perspective to the education that is received which usually does not connect the two. She strongly recommends that Sociology be taught as a subject for the sake of intellectual stimulation rather than just because it can aid Science in achieving wholeness. But, it is to be admitted that Sociology does act as a third dimensional critique as far as the sciences are concerned. Analogous to this is the view that educational reformists have when it comes to drama. Seen as an aid in helping subjects

taught in a drab fashion to gain pep and chirp, it enhances the enthusiasm of the process of learning. As Maya Rao presented her thesis on “Worlds in the Classroom”, one was able to visualise the scope for pedagogy in a fashion never thought of before. Enacting a grade 5 chapter, she managed to engrain all important concepts and notions in the minds of the viewers within a limited time span, engaging them completely in the lesson taught. Thus, integrating subjects across disciplines etches theory into the brain much more efficiently than rote learning.

The chair, Shrimoy Chaudhary, of the Department of History at Shiv Nadar University agrees to this pedagogy and is of the opinion that teachers must analyse the thinking that lies behind the practice, and devise methods to keep the intellectual level of students engaged. The panel discussion that followed did raise questions about the exact method in which this subtle integration of courses could be carried out. But, the ultimate conclusion remains that with creativity and innovation, all doubts can be conquered and a new dawn awaits the methods of pedagogy.

The two days’ conference ended with a panel discussion called **“The Future of Undergraduate Education in India”** with Amber Habib (Shiv Nadar University) as the moderator. The first speaker of this panel Sudipta De (Jadavpur University) claimed that there are different categories of students and if we don't deal with each group in accordance with their pedagogy, it will become very difficult to implement them. Most of the population is studying in the hopes to secure their future and it is only a few of them who are pursuing education because they have some sort of interest in it. Hence pedagogy matters the most for the large number of group who aim for social mobility through education. He argues the pedagogy should be infused within the teacher and it is only then that teaching can flourish. Furthermore there should be an element of ethics that should exist in the undergraduate teaching process. It is not a one way path for him, rather it is a joint venture. Tulika Chandra (Shiv Nadar University) continued the conversation on assessment in her presentation by drawing attention to two issues: The frame of question papers at undergraduate level and the evaluation system adopted in the Indian education system. The problem with the system, she felt, was that it has not been able to fully draw the best work of students which were the four C’s: Creativity, Critical Thinking, Collaboration, and Communication. She added that questions framed in the question paper must be learner centric and not teacher centric and that a question, when posed well, makes all the difference between an interested learner and a student who studies merely for the sake of grades. She also drew attention to instances where questions framed had not been accounted for the cultural

background of the students taking the examinations. “Words like development, formulate, imagine, label, and carve needs to be self-explanatory” she elaborated.

The discussion that followed this looked into the assessment techniques that should be used in an attempt to enable a critical pedagogy. While Dr. Chandra stated that there needs to be a change in the examination system, Dr. De argued that there should not be a uniform system because that will again create problems. This question is further discussed as a problem that exists in Delhi or other state universities that have a fixed idea of the assessment. In most cases, it is unfair to students who are not used with it. This leads to a discussion on evaluation that should have been technically be less and less important with time but has in fact become more important because of the system of continuous evaluation. The discussion along with the conference ends with the question of whether digitalisation can replace the need of teachers.