
National Curriculum Framework 2005, Constructivism and Inclusion in the Face of Indian Film

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Abstract:

In a changing world scenario, where there is conscious shift towards approaches that lead to constructivist learning recognizing the use of information technologies, creating in the minds of the masses, especially children, a love for false values and vulgarity by the influence of film might be perceived a downfall. The present paper attempts to provide a broad overview of impacts of film in day to day life of people in the context of National Curriculum Framework-2005, constructivism and inclusion. The paper attempts to address the complexities involved in our system and how it creates problem in peoples' day to day life and explores possibilities for its reworking. This paper analyses the film Tare Zameen Par and shows how it matches with all the five principles of National Curriculum Framework – 2005.

Key words: National Curriculum Framework 2005, Constructivist learning, Inclusion, Teacher, Parents.

Introduction

The truth that learning has become a source of burden and stress on children and their parents is an evidence of a deep distortion in educational aims and quality. A major effort to

rejuvenate school education towards contextualization and professionalization has been made in 2005 through the National Curriculum Framework 2005. The central concern of NCF 2005 is to see how children can learn without burden. As a follow-up of NCF 2005, several initiatives have been taken by NCERT, NCTE, CBSE and State Education Boards in the form of developing syllabi and textbooks, preparing teacher education curriculum framework, developing state curriculum frameworks on the basis of NCF 2005 and implementing continuous and comprehensive evaluation at secondary level.

Film has perhaps the greatest potential to be the most effective mass media instrument. Besides proving cheap entertainment for masses, it can easily become a means of mass instruction and mass education. It combines primarily, both audio and video and is thus very appealing to the eyes and the ears. The moral values conveyed through the medium of film have a lasting effect on the audience. In a changing world scenario, where the exposure to internet is growing at an alarming rate, creating in the minds of the masses, especially children, a love for false values and vulgarity, one should admit that influence of film might see a downfall. Nevertheless, its influence on society cannot be altogether ruled out. There have been a fair amount of positive influences too. The present paper attempts to provide a broad overview of impacts of film in day to day life of people in the context of National Curriculum Framework-2005. The paper attempts to address the complexities involved in our system and how it creates problem in peoples' day to day life and explores possibilities for its reworking. This paper analyses the film *Tare Zameen Par* and shows how it matches with all the five principles of National Curriculum Framework – 2005.

National Curriculum Frameworks

Curriculum Framework is a plan that interprets educational aims vis-à-vis both individual and society, to arrive at an understanding of the kinds of learning experiences schools must provide to children (NCERT 2006). A Curriculum Framework indicates the directions in which the educational system of a country has to proceed in order to implement its educational policy.

During British rule, the Britishers made an attempt to construct curriculum that was intended to achieve colonial ideal of preparing 'colonial citizen'. Therefore, the first attempt of making curriculum on 'national scale' in modern India resulted in an estranged Curriculum completely divorced from the then social context. A constructive and comprehensive indigenous effort in making curriculum came from the great Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhi while rejecting completely British curriculum put forth craft-centered curriculum that was rooted into indigenous knowledge, skills and culture.

After independence, the concerns of education articulated during the freedom struggle were revisited by the National Commissions- Secondary Education Commission (1952-53) and the Education Commission (1964-66) in the light of Indian Constitution. To translate politico-economic and socio-cultural agenda of education set forth by Indian Education Commission and there by 1968 policy, The Curriculum Framework for the Ten-Year School 1975 was designed. After 1986 policy, National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education 1988 was designed. Again in the year 2000 National Curriculum Framework for School Education was formulated. In the year 2004 Human Resource Development Ministry asked NCERT to review 2000 Framework in the light of 'Learning without Burden'. Consequently National Curriculum Framework 2005 document has been prepared.

Constructivism and National Curriculum Framework 2005

National Curriculum Framework 2005 has been prepared with a mandate to devise ways and means for the children to learn without burden in a social context that is characterized by hierarchical caste system, combined with globalised market relations and having an unequal schooling practice as part of hard reality. Keeping the mandate and context in view curriculum framers lay down following guiding principles for the construction of NCF 2005. They are:

- Connecting knowledge to life outside the school,
- Ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote methods,
- Ensuring curriculum to provide for overall development of children rather than remain textbook centric,
- Making examinations more flexible and integrated into classroom life,
- Nurturing an over-riding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country.

NCF 2005 adjudicates that the behaviorist approach to child's learning and objectivist approach to knowledge are responsible for undesirable schooling practices. The behaviorist psychology perceives the child as 'passive recipient' of knowledge and objectivist epistemology treats knowledge as finished product. The alternative pedagogy proposed by NCF 2005 is Constructivism.

Constructivism is the basic epistemological premise of NCF 2005. According to NCF 2005 "Knowledge can be conceived as experience organized through language into patterns of thought (or structures of concepts) thus creating meaning, which in turn helps us understand the world we live in"(P-25). This basic understanding of NCF 2005 runs across the document and it acts as an underlying thread that connects

organically each and every proposal the NCF proposed. This framework (NCF 2005) has given guiding principles of constructivism; such as

- Knowledge is dynamic and not static (Every individual can create new knowledge).
- Local environment and circumstances play a major role in constructing student's knowledge.
- Learning is a process of the construction of knowledge.
- Constructing meaning is learning.
- Child is the constructor of knowledge.
- Child constructs knowledge from experiencing the world, as knowledge is to connect with the world.
- Contextualize learning for construction of knowledge. Because, it is in interaction with the environment that the child constructs knowledge and derives meaning.
- Education should be meaning making process but not information transmitting process.

At its simplest constructivism hypothesizes that knowledge is constructed; in other words, individuals make sense of their world by constructing their own representations or models of their experiences (Jonassen, Peck & Wilson, 1999). Constructivism is founded on the work of individuals such as Piaget, Dewey, Vygotsky, Ernst von Glaserfeld, Kant and Kuhn (Phillips, 1995; Twomey Fosnot, 1996). There are a number of constructivist positions which differ particularly in terms of the relative emphasis placed on the role of the individual versus the 'social' (Bickhard, 1998; Phillips, 1995). Particular 'schools' of constructivism include cognitive constructivism, radical constructivism, situated constructivism and co-constructivism. Kanuka and Anderson (1999) note that each of the 'schools' of constructivism have four central beliefs in common:

- that new knowledge is built on the foundations of previous learning;
- that learning is an active rather than passive process;

- that language is an important aspect of the learning process; and
- that learning environments should be learner-centred.

Constructivism, as a theory of learning, has major ramifications for the goals teachers set, the strategies they adopt and the methods of assessment they use (Twomey Fosnot, 1996). Constructivist approaches emphasize teaching, not about imparting knowledge but about facilitating learning; assisting learners in their own construction of knowledge.

Constructivism suggests that students learn and do not simply memorize or take on others conceptions of reality, instead their own meaning and understanding. In Constructivism learning is interactive building on what the students already know. Students are not blank slates (Tabula Rasa) upon which knowledge is constructed. They come with certain knowledge, ideas and understanding on what student already knows. According to constructivism, learning is not a treasure hunting game where students are trying to guess what is in teachers head but a process that creates meaning and knowledge. So the main focus is “HOW THEY LEARN” rather than “WHAT TO LEARN”.

Constructivist teachers pose questions and problems, and then guide students to help them find their own answers. They use many techniques in the teaching process such as:

- Prompt students to formulate their own questions(enquiry)
- Allow multiple interpretations and expressions of learning(multiple intelligences)
- Encourage group-work and the use of peers as resources(collaborative learning)

Children enjoy and learn more when they are actively involved rather than passively listening. Education works best when it concentrates on thinking and understanding rather than on

rote memorization. Constructivist learning is transferable. Students create organizing principles that they can take to other learning settings. Constructivism gives students ownership of what they learn and often the students have a hand in designing the assessment as well. Engaging the creative instincts develops students' abilities to express knowledge through a variety of ways. Students are more likely to retain and transfer the new knowledge to real life. Students learn to question things and apply their natural curiosity to the world. Constructivism promotes social and communication skills by creating an environment that emphasizes collaboration and exchange of ideas.

Analysis of the Film Content in the Context of NCF 2005

From last ten years Hindi film industry has been producing good amount of movies like *Munna Bhai MBBS*, *Lage Raho Munna Bhai*, *Rang De Basanti* and *Dharm*. Movies like *Rang de Basanti* encouraged people to take up things in their own hands. *Taare Zameen Par* and *Three Idiots* helped us to accept what we are as we are. It showed you a way to believe in yourself. The old Karan Johar movies like *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* to the recent one *My Name is Khan* are not just family dramas. They showed true emotions and showcased simple regular things like loving your parents, friends etc. Through these movies a strong message is being conveyed to our society. In this context the film *Taare Zameen Par* is an extension from that league of greats. One reason is that the story is about a child, an eight-year old boy. Ishan Awasthi (Darsheel Safary) the boy, who flies all over the world, his imagination being his wings but he lacks the wind beneath his wings. He is curious about everything and has an extremely keen mind. But that is not good enough for him to be valued. The school books bore him and he just can't help chasing his dreams, living in his own world of colours. Ishan, the boy, has a learning problem. The

story is about a dyslexic child who discovers himself. Suffering from a disease few understand, the child has serious academic problems. He is repeating his year in class three and he gets red marks everywhere in all his notebooks, answer scripts and report cards. His teachers in his first school, St Xavier's, find it impossible to teach him anything. The principal of that school even goes to the extent of implying that the child is mentally retarded. With a demanding father who wants of sculpt the child into the mould of his 'achiever' elder brother, a mother who though loves him is overwhelmed by whatever he does. Ishan's father decides to change the school mid-session and to put the boy in a hostel. He thinks that the boy is just recalcitrant and hence needs a little severe upbringing. New Era High School takes him and the teachers are no different there either. That is, until the art teacher goes on leave and a new teacher Ram Shankar Nikumbh (Aamir Khan) enters as the temporary substitute. The new art teacher entered in class with a song 'Bum Bum Bole' the whole song give the message that child should actively engage with the world around them, exploring, responding, inventing and working things out, and making meaning. One stanza of this song said that 'rat rat ke kiu tanker full ankhe band to daba gul way band darwaze khole re ho ja baidas bole re' that hidden meaning of this stanza is child should shift away from rote method. This is the second principle of National Curriculum Framework-2005. But then almost Godsend, Ram Shankar Nikumbh comes as a temporary arts teacher who believes in free thinking. The new temporary art teacher infects the students with joy and optimism. He breaks all the rules of 'how things are done' by asking them to think, dream and imagine, and all the children respond with enthusiasm, all except Ishaan. In this context the first principle of National Curriculum Framework-2005 say that connecting knowledge to life outside the school. In this movie when new art teacher enters the school he breaks all the rules of school and he has taken away all his student out of school and instruct his

students as a art class whatever you think you take and we will make something different. Here the first and third principle of National Curriculum Framework-2005 is nicely fitted.

Then Nikumbh soon realizes that Ishaan is very unhappy and he sets out to discover why. With time, patience and care, he ultimately helps Ishaan find himself. The teacher recognizes the symptoms of the disease & sensitizes his parents towards the same. Truly one of the best part in the whole movie when teacher (Aamir) explains to the father what's wrong with the child? The teacher then starts rebuilding the child's confidence by citing examples of extra-ordinary men like Albert Einstein, Agatha Christie, Leonardo da Vinci or even Abhishek Bachchan who were ridiculed by their contemporaries/peers. All these names are mentioned in the movie because they were all persons with learning problems when they were children but have overcome the problem and have excelled in their professions.

At the second part of movie when art teacher meet the principal of New Era High School and discussing about the Ishan and principal is saying that he (ishan) cannot continue in this school due to his class performance and art teacher informing the principal about the dyslexic and principal saying to him that ooh I see, you did my work easy because I was thinking what should I tell to the Ishan's father as the boy has taken admission through trustees. Good so special school is the right place for the boy. Art teacher respond the principal no sir, the child is above average and he has right to read in normal school and he just need little help. Sorry sir, I am not saying this thing. This is written in constitution of India. Through Sarve Sikshya Abhiyan every child, whatever their problem may be but they have right to take admission in normal school. The thing is that very rare numbers of schools are following this rule. And after that principal asked him so many questions and lastly disagree about this mater. After all, this episode art teacher convincing the principal with the quotation of Oscar

Wilde says “Who wants a cynic who knows the price of everything and the value of nothing”. The art teacher requests the principal to give him (Ishan) one chance in order to build up his confidence. Principal agrees to help the art teacher in every possible way. Art teacher suggested to principal that for some stipulated time he will observe Ishan’s writing and spelling and sought his permission to take Ishan’s test (examination) orally and not in written form. The art teacher coordinates with other teachers in the school to concentrate on the content being expressed by the child in his work while ignoring the symptomatic errors; as he himself works on the disease, reeducating the child. In this paragraph nicely describes about the fourth and fifth principles of National Curriculum Framework-2005 and at the same time it inform us about the inclusive education system.

At the end part he reintroduces the child to his first love by organizing an ‘open’ painting competition & gifts him his confidence in front of those who had dismissed the little kid. Ishan’s transformation has a magical effect on his father as well as the other teachers in the school. The ending where the child acknowledges his art teacher is heart rendering. The subtitle of the movie is: ‘Every child is special’. That is the major theme of the movie. The title and the subtitle together throw light on the technique employed in the movie: it’s part art and part documentary. Rather, there’s quite a bit of lecturing by art teacher, which is not really admissible in good art. Art persuades us through subtle suggestions. That magical effect suffuses the last part of the movie and overflows to the audience. The effect is palpable, in fact. While Ishan’s father breaks down into weeping, realizing his guilt in not providing the needed attention to his son.

At length a question arises “is the producer, actor and director (Aamir Khan) gone through the document (NCF-2005) before the beginning this movie?” Really this movie not only follows the five guiding principles of NCF-2005, but also it

informs the society regarding inclusive education system, how should be schools environment? What should be teacher's role in the class? What should be the parents' role towards their children? This is one movie that makes us peep into a child's mind and how some parents, in their pursuit to make them 'stronger' academically, forget that there's hitherto untapped talent that needs to be nourished and encouraged.

Conclusion

Concluding, *Taare Zameen Par* is not one of those films that merely entertains, but also enlightens. The five guiding principles of NCF are nicely fitted in this movie. This type of movie was definitely required in the present scenario in our country. The academic scene is extremely competitive and parents and teachers alike pressurize children to do better than their best. Parents expect superlative performances in all fields-studies, sports, music, dance and other activities which are supposedly hobbies like art, craft, drawing, chess etc. Even hobbies are chosen with a view to enhance academic performance. In this kind of stressful situation a child who is unable to perform feels like a fish out of water.

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