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## **Reportage**

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# **Some Observations on Educational Research**

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The education we receive from our universities takes it for granted that it is for filling the arid land, and that not only the mental outlook and the knowledge, but also the whole language must bodily imported from across the sea. And this makes our education so nebulous, distant and unreal, so detached from all association of life, so terribly costly to us in time, health and means, and yet so meagre in results.

*(Rabindranath Tagore)*

A research writing workshop was held at a prestigious university in Vadodara. All participants were young lecturers or Ph.D. students of education. As one of them presented a hypothetical research proposal, someone asked the resource person, "Sir, Is this proposal an example of qualitative research?" The resource person, a perceptive Professor, contemplated for a moment as if trying to remember something. Then his face beamed with confidence, 'No. Objective knowledge is OVTR, which are Observable, Verifiable, Testable and Replicable. In qualitative research none of these attributes remains.'

It was one of the numerous occasions that compelled to think and compare. Compare with erstwhile Soviet academics, especially in Social Sciences

and Humanities. Russians have not been dumb people at all. In Physics, Nuclear Science, Mathematics, Aeronautics, etc. they were comparable to any country. How it happened that for seven whole decades they failed to produce even a single Educationist, Historian, Philosopher, Political Scientist or a Literary critique worth mentioning? The answer was all too obvious. In these disciplines they were obliged to *believe*, internalise and repeat certain basic principles, the dogmas of Marxism-Leninism. It was to be upheld at all costs. Therefore, all social or academic facts and phenomena must conform to those basics or else they did not matter or even exist. The result was the dismal situation of Social Science and Humanities during the entire Soviet era. In fact, a large part of West Asia and other

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faith-following countries are still under a comparable spell. The conformist regimes there do not brook contradiction to their own basics, resulting in a void in Social Science and Humanities.

To some extent the educational research in India is a reminder of the Soviet tragedy. Otherwise it would be difficult to explain why a familiar word 'qualitative' loses its normal meaning and acquire an artificial one when it comes to educational research? The perceptive Professor was by all indicators an intelligent fellow. But he has learnt, and internalised over the decades, a whole set of jargons and models firmly believing that they are *the* scholarly standard. These terminology and models are almost wholly borrowed from American Psychological Association. In educational research they are considered as the supreme authority to follow. Without much considering how 'Education' and 'Psychology' becomes one for research purposes? It is an unnecessary and complete dependence of a discipline over the other, for which there is little explanation. Secondly, how the terms and concepts arising in a quite different society are just fit to understand historically, culturally and qualitatively? In any case, the jargons used incessantly are not always understood by the readers or listeners and many a times even by the users themselves.<sup>1</sup> But the reverence is that it repeated all the same with full confidence. As if except those limited terms no expression can be used in educational research. This explains some queer or incomprehensible research titles. For instance, "Impact of

Soy. Based Intervention Programme on Knowledge of Rural Woman".<sup>2</sup> Or "Effect of Concept Mapping Strategy in Physics on Achievement and Attitude of Students."

This also explains why in a five-day workshop on Education all scholarly references made were those of Western names. Never once any one uttered the names like Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Vivekanand, Tolstoy, Radhakrishnan etc., who have distinct contribution on education. Even Dayanand, Gandhi or Gijubhai were not mentioned anywhere. These three great men belonged to the very region (where the workshop was on) and earned fame reaching beyond the country. But nowadays at a really good Indian university, a workshop with ten sessions, twenty five learned resource persons and more than sixty research scholars discussing the whole range of educational issues for research failed to mention even a single Indian educational thinker in any context. Nor reminding this lapse would discomfit them. They take as a normal, genuinely believing educational research which activity connected nowhere to a Tagore or a Gijubhai. This was not a happenstance. The usual bibliographies at the end of thesis, research projects or articles on education also hardly ever include the missing names mentioned above.

It is an indicator of the dreary situation of educational discourse. It is a result of an ideational fixation of an entire discipline. In which repeating a set of terms, imitating a very limited, silly kind

of data collection and surveys with the use of slapdash, pitiable questionnaire/opinionnaire/interviews etc., some pointless numerical charts and pet jargons little understood even by its users (obvious by going through the whole paper or project report)—and duplicating this activity again and again in universities and institutes—have come to acquire the name of educational research.<sup>3</sup> All this without much contribution for any reader.

Therefore, it is not so much educational research in normal sense of the word, but more a name given to a particular kind of academic activities. Certainly, there are exceptions. In the sense that employing the same procedure of survey/questionnaire etc., some scholars do present a meaningful study. But they seem to be extremely rare. Any issue of an educational journal or a random look on the Ph.D thesis submitted and awarded in a university would testify it.

After going through countless research proposals, published research papers, research reports and Ph.D abstracts on education and listening to in related seminars and meetings in recent years an ordinary observer comes to the following conclusions. The conclusions are tentative. Some of them might be misplaced; some of them could be a result of exaggerated concern and neglected aspects of education in the country. Yet these observations may help understand the situation of educational research as it exists.

(A) The method of research in medical institutions is taught how to use of thermometers on patients or non-

patients as the one and only activity of medical research. And the use different kind of thermometers in different ways, on different people, in different circumstances, weather, locale, institutions etc., were also part of the research. But the use and read thermometers should be prevalent as thy only work in medical research—such would seem a rough parallel if one comparatively observes the situation in educational research in India. Can always interviewing some patients, asking pet questions to doctors or nurses, counting beds in a hospital, studying patient behaviour in different circumstances, patients self-perception, their achievement etc. be taken as *the* 'medical research'? If that is the main activity in medical research then it would be ridiculous. Medical research is done on diseases, remedies, symptoms, medicines, equipments etc. Sampling ward-boys and nurses for asking hackneyed questions and analysing their answers would hardly constitute medical research.

Similarly, would it be called 'political science research' if more than 95 per cent studies just do a survey of political activists, office bearers of political parties, members of legislatures etc., taking their views on a set of questions regarding 'achievement', 'self-perception', 'job satisfaction' etc. and just analyse it to give research findings? This activity is a part of

political studies, but never the beginning and end of it.

Then why in education it is just the opposite? It is almost always restricted to preparing a questionnaire, survey or interview schedule for students, teachers or managers in a school. Get their answers and presenting them in chart as findings complete a research project. This activity is not less than 90 per cent of all educational research being done for years in the country. The problems of education in all its aspects – like philosophy of education; history of education; systems of education; changes in education; life, work and experiences of great thinkers on education; worth of a particular curriculum; problems of Madarsa education; evaluation of textbooks from diverse perspectives; physical punishment to children in schools; role of teachers associations; role of Scouting and NCC in schools; burgeoning tuitions centres and coaching institutes; selection procedure and criteria for teachers and educational officials; the phenomena of ‘absentee teachers’<sup>4</sup> in many schools in India; aspirations of different occupational strata in our society regarding the education of their children; Eastern and Western educational traditions; Religious and denominational schools and their role; comparative education in different countries; student politics; and several other exciting issues—are almost never taken up for study and research. If

we seriously consider all the missing issues mentioned above, it would seem the whole land for research and study in education is lying fallow. Why?

A sustained perusal by this observer of more than 400 research abstracts mainly of Ph.D. thesis, new research proposals, research project reports, published papers and articles in various educational journals has revealed an absence of such themes. Almost all the research in education is pathetically oriented in doing a rut activity repeated hundreds times over in a similar manner. Perceptive professors are aware that so many institutions and researchers have made it a routine to do the same thing over and over again<sup>5</sup>. What is worth noting is that it is not limited to some scholars and institutions but a reflection of the general scenario in educational research.

(B) To take another simile, what would be the worth of a food exhibition in which every stall presents just a *khichdi*? That is, not different food items but a single one on every counter would hardly befit a food exhibition worth its name. The situation would seem more ludicrous if every participating stall in the exhibition at the same time believed that he is offering something new and others must be showing rather else. The educational research scenario is very much like it. Individual researchers are almost innocent of their situation as they do not care

(despite a claim of 'review of existing studies' on the topic by many of them) about the fact that other researchers are presenting a similar feat, undertaking a research already done umpteenth times by countless others in numerous institutions. With slightly different titles with practically no difference in meaning or intent. Such a corpus of studies-already completed, undergoing and being proposed-make the figurative 'exhibition' of educational research, having mostly just one item in true sense.

- (C) In their projects the researchers generally first put forward a number of disparate, understandable or non-understandable, possible or impossible goals, even a goal to formulate policies for government or educational bodies as the OBJECTIVES of one's proposed research. Almost in 95 per cent of research projects the researchers start with taking a SAMPLE of students, teachers or schools for some treatment. Then TOOLS are used to collect some data. Not necessarily useful or even understandable data, but a data as it is a required material. The use of the tools e.g., a questionnaire or interview schedule sometimes also double up as the METHOD of research. Interview, questionnaire or survey is mentioned as the method in at least 80 per cent of the educational research projects or papers published. So, using such methods and tools they collect some information from schools or teachers

or parents or a combination of them. The information in most cases are such as already well-known to everyone. For instance, 'girls face more problems than boys in going to school' or 'teachers in private schools feel less secure than in government schools', etc.. Then, as the final act, any length of reproducing the received information or/and an explaining of the same, some sermonising on this or that lack in school or social conditions, a list of suggestions to all and sundry with repetitions of common grievances people talk about. This part is called FINDINGS in most research projects and papers.

Thus, writing under the headings of 'objectives', 'method' and 'findings' almost all the research studies are presented. Many researchers are not concerned with being careful about a cogent, sensible and connected presentation of the three in their final document. In many cases sentences and paragraphs are written and chapters are filled as if independently. Just to feed the paper, it would appear. Else, there cannot be any sensible explanation in many cases as to the utter disconnectedness of the 'objectives' and 'findings'. Not infrequently, some objectives mentioned in the beginning of a project are totally forgotten in the findings at the end. Unfathomable sentences or paragraphs spread over the study are beside the point. The most

liberal use of jargons and pet phrases in sentence after sentence and pages after pages are taken self-sufficient as to conveying a meaning or serve a purpose. Since such final research reports are not questioned by evaluating authorities, it seems the unfathomable sentences do serve a purpose. Perhaps they are taken as a token of passable research.

But such produce in the name of educational research are, by and large, a kind of food which contains only one particular ingredient, if at all, needed for our sustenance, and even that not fresh but stale, dried and packed in tins. That is not at all a balanced meal. For that we must have co-ordination of different ingredients – and most of these, not as laboratory products, or in a dehydrated condition, but as organic things, similar to our own living tissues.

- (D) A researcher's folly is self-certified in his own writing when he includes under the 'Objectives' of his research proposal so many huge, incongruous and even absurd goals which is impossible to achieve in a single research project. For example, the first objective in a research paper is, "To study the inputs provided by teacher training institution before and during school experience programme to help prospective teachers in developing positive attitude towards teaching." There are many other objectives given in the beginning of the paper. Just by reading the list of such

goals make it obvious that the researcher is innocent of the import of the goals he wrote in the 'Objectives'. His innocence is further proved by his 'Findings' at the end of his completed research report where many of the objectives are simply not recalled, as if they never existed. That is, he has quite forgotten some goals he had set in the beginning of the report. Thus, the objectives propounded in the start and findings mentioned at the end have no sensible correlation in many cases. And such 'research' studies are frequently done, reported and filed. To be forgotten, almost always unread by anyone.

Sometimes 'objectives' and 'findings' are neither objectives nor findings but various high goals all at once as objectives, and later bland statements, good wishes, sermons or moralising, all disconnected as the findings. In between, dozens of typewritten pages, unreadable for various reasons, such as lack of coherence, repetition of statements and insertion of quite irrelevant materials at length. Such a poor show in the name of research is a frequent occurrence not only in Ph.D. dissertations but also in published papers and research projects undertaken by faculty members here and there in the country.

- (E) Incessant parroting is a most visible ailment in educational research. In an elaborate workshop on Research Methodology in education, for

example, some professors confidently speak in detail about various elements and modes of research. They repeat words, phrases and techniques related to it without ever relating them with actual concerns, thoughts and realities of education in society at large. It is natural, then, that they hardly dwell upon the worth of the outcomes of the prevalent research in terms of its connection, if any, with the society. They resemble the young pupil at an Anglo-Vernacular school in Allahabad who was asked to define a river. The clever little fellow gave a correct definition. But when he was asked what river he had seen, this boy, living in a confluence of the Ganga and Jamuna, replied that he had not seen any. Such examples of sophisticated stupidity abound in educational research fraternity in India.

(F) The tedious situation is also a sign of a mental conditioning in educational thinking. They have accepted certain given as to what makes an education research, without ever discussing it critically. Why a singular pattern of Objectives-Sample-Tools-Findings description model should be considered as the way of educational research; and not, for instance, a contemplative exposition on the thoughts of a great thinker such as Sri Aurobindo, Lev Tolstoy or Maria Montessori - is a non-question to them. Therefore, such a question is not even raised in educational research, much less discussed threadbare in the context

of social circumstances. It is an indication of mental conditioning that most of the research projects in education are difficult to differentiate clearly for the purpose of classification. They all look very same, going by mere titles. Even an original research title is difficult to find, they are so alike in appearance and content. It is the other side of the same coin that it is almost impossible to see a research proposal in our midst for a long time (years or decades) intending to do a comparative study of two educational thinkers, or to do a critical study of the thoughts of an educational thinker with reference to the present day social realities. Why such obvious themes for study never come to mind of an educational researcher? Because he has a fixed, mechanical meaning of 'educational research' beyond which he sees nothing.

It is the inevitable result of the artificial arrangement by which a foreign induced and mindlessly copied meaning of educational research tends to occupy all the space of our mind. It necessarily kills, or hampers, the opportunity for the creation of new thought by a combination of truths lying before us in abundance.

(G) A part of the mental conditioning, the research themes or titles essentially carry a materialist outlook. Even though the researchers, in their own lives represent various outlooks. But when it comes to educational research, they all as a rule become

unalloyed materialist in formulating a proposal. They only use materialist categories and indices. As if, non-materialist elements, needs and aspirations can never be a part of education realm. This fetish for materialist concerns while talking education is also a reason behind the monotonous all-alikeness of the researches in education. A mechanical production of so-called research papers and articles with all its defects and uselessness is also a result of this fetish.

Research undertakings are largely unconcerned to non-materialist problems people feel and face in education. As if the researchers have their own world of academic homo- sapiens, needing not worry for the multiple concerns of non-academic people. As a senior professor said in a meeting on educational research, "Everybody is thinking about self, not about the nation. That is a reason of deterioration in every aspect of education."<sup>6</sup> This observation partly explains why the educational research community addresses each other only. They do so by means of using set phrases, 'accepted' theories, terminology and names in their writings. Thus, they support each other in the same rut practice again and again. Their research seldom show any wish to be of any practical value<sup>7</sup> or connected to the society at large. The researchers are satisfied themselves that what they are doing is proper educational research,

useful and fit for financial backing from different quarters. As a matter of fact most of the work is rather useless<sup>8</sup>.

- (H) A good example is that educational research has so far have not taken any notice of the burgeoning tuition centres and coaching industry all over the country. The phenomenon is at least three decades old. Yet it would be rare to find a study on this, although each and every education hand is fully aware of it. What this lack of study on coaching centres show? It is this: while deciding a research topic a researcher does not really look out for existing, real issues. Instead he goes by the ritual, the set pattern of repeat work being done thousands times over. Invariably he begins from the wrong end. The decision to do some research comes first, irrespective of his ability or academic grounding, and then he cast about for a topic. In the imagery of Tagore, "We seat our guests at the table, and afterwards discover that the cooking has not been started."

But educational research fraternity in our country is unmindful of such misery. It is programmed to see the road ahead not without blinkers. Despite having otherwise good sense, the academics are bound to see in a narrow 'educational research' way. Hence, the loss of sight about a number of issues, not only the coaching centres. Under the mental conditioning and the materialist educational outlook the researchers



do not even recognise the real meaning of research per se. For them research is a preset ritual, not what it really is : “a careful study of a subject, especially in order to discover new facts or information about it”.

Hundreds of researchers missed out on coaching institutions for any study also because proliferation of coaching institutes even in small towns does not point to the lack of *material* facilities, a fetish badly engulfing the entire educational thinking, academics and policy makers alike. They tend to conclude all educational problems are necessarily related to lack of money and infrastructure etc. But no, the coaching institutes are a big indicator to expose this fetish. They exist in *spite* of and in addition to the rich public schools and well cared government schools. The fast growth of coaching centres point not to any lack of blackboards, drinking water, toilets, books or school buildings—the main theme of materialist outlook overpowering educationists and policy makers. It forcefully indicates the missing *non-material* elements in even well-known schools. These are: poor quality of teaching, lack of respect to the teaching work, careless selection of teachers, non-sincerity of school administrations and teachers, and such factors. These have nothing to do with lack of funds and infrastructure. It is this gap which in part the coaching centres are filling by hard work and

commitment. Since the educational research is saddled with a mental conditioning and materialist blinkers, always busy with counting school rooms and blackboards, the size of books and school bags, resource crunch etc., it fails to take notice of coaching centres as a challenging issue for study and research. Because, in doing so the fixed model of educational research would hardly help.

- (I) It is not any lack of funding that the educational research is suffering. Despite the repeated offer of liberal funding a good researcher, even for doing a routine objective-tools-sample-questionnaire-findings kind is hard to come by. At official meetings to approve new research proposals for funding, less than 20per cent proposals are found suitable. This is the situation despite taking a very lenient view to the drawbacks of the proposals. Most of the proposals are sent by university and college faculty members. In such meetings senior Professors and experts express concern<sup>9</sup> and could not find the reason for such a dearth of even tolerable researchers.
- (J) Whatever is produced under educational research; there is no credible mechanism to evaluate them. Usually the faculties of university education departments do all the work among themselves. Proposing, recommending, supporting, appraising, publishing and listening to each other. In itself, this is normal for any academic

discipline. The problem arises because the content, quality and even numbers are dwindling with time in this particular field. Perhaps a credible, strict evaluation of all the research would have helped to find out what is missing in the enterprise. As Prof Krishna Kumar, Director, NCERT has repeatedly noted, “a great number of education related studies have come out from ‘non-educational’ institutions and individuals.”<sup>10</sup> He also lamented that the social ethos today is not conducive for research. People want quick result whereas a sincere research requires sustained contemplation. He was apparently referring to the impatience of bad researchers.

- (K) English as a medium, rather *the* medium, of research and academic activities in this country work as a great stumbling block as well as a ruse to conceal poor work. “Language of research is not the language of teachers. This is a handicap of the education discipline”.<sup>11</sup> It is a major constraint. Even intelligent, perceptive farmers or teachers cannot interact and dialogue with academics because of the language barrier. Thus, all the research work, articles, various Commissions’ reports on education etc., are not meant to be read by teachers or common people. As a matter of fact, most of them hardly appear a product of Indian mind.

The use of English inevitably tends

to turn our mind for its source of inspiration towards the West, with which we can never be in intimate contact. Therefore, our educational writings remain largely sterile, and produce incongruities. The implications of English being the language of educational research are much wider. First, it is secured from a broad public scrutiny. It also serves to conceal, at least on the first sight for many observers, the inanities written and deposited under the name of research. Young scholars even from prestigious central universities do not properly understand the words they use in their writing. Even ordinary words such as ‘sociological’, ‘ethnographic’, ‘historical’, ‘process’ or ‘data’. One cannot help recalling what Rabindranath Tagore said on our plight about a century ago :

.... I repeat that when we are compelled to learn through the medium of English, the knocking at the gate and the turning of the key take away the best part of our life. The feast may be waiting for us inside the room, but the difficulty and delay of admission spoils our appetite and the long privation permanently injures our stomach. The ideas come late and the tedious grinding over grammar, and a system of spelling which is devoid of all rationale, take away our relish for the food when it come at last.<sup>12</sup>

This is not a case of poor ability of ordinary research aspirants, but the whole academic class in general. Which is why even the Ph.D. scholars, selected among hundreds of such applicants for

a fellowship award, show only limited comprehension of the terminology or the language they use. In a review meeting of ongoing research works many scholars failed to give a reply to simple questions regarding the use of terms in their own small presentations. It is not their individual follies, since all of them are doing such research under the guidance of one or another full-time Professor in a university. This should be kept in mind in evaluating the situation<sup>13</sup>. Had they pursued their work in their own languages many follies could have been avoided.

Language English also make the horror less apparent because of a considerable loss of communication between a writer and a reader of a research paper/proposal/report. It happens in multiple ways. For instance, a material written in English by a scholar has much better chance to get a quick approval without a close scrutiny. Meaning and intent of the material is inferred by a cursory glance here and there. It gets a nod without noticing the lacunae, disconnect, flab or other shortcomings which can be detected only by a close reading. The same material, if written in Hindi, may not pass the barrier so easily. As the loss of communication is minimal, meaning or a lack of it in a document is more apparent and on the whole the scrutinising authority is more circumspect. Thus, and in other respects too a presumption or prejudice works in favour of an English text, even though poor in content.

(L) In such a review meeting of continuing Ph.D. scholars, a JNU researcher came to present his

progress about his doctoral work. He started his presentation, before a committee of experts at a national level educational institution, saying nonchalantly that he has changed the topic of his research for which he was also awarded a fellowship. It took several experts and not less than ten minutes to make him understand that he is not free to do so mid-way on his own sweet will, once a topic is approved. It remained unknown whether his guide in the most affluent university was aware of his act. It is a technical example, but all the more illustrative of the abilities of the researchers. It alludes to the quality of personnel involved in educational research, undertaking and guiding the work in the area.

(M) The situation of faculty members working in education departments in universities and colleges are not vastly different. After all, they come from the same lot of Ph.D. scholars glimpsed above. A glance of numerous research proposals sent by several faculties, young and old working at different places, confirms it. In many cases such faculties, presenting a five or six page detail of their intended or completed work, fail to give a coherent synopsis or summary of what they intend or have already done. If present in person, for instance in a formal seminar, many researchers fell back to repeat the written sentences if asked to clarify or explain a point he made. In other words, they have little ability to

explain or paraphrase their own sentences or paragraph. More than linguistic inability it smacks of a mechanical reproduction of something, not a well-thought or meaningful work.

- (N) Therefore, it is not unjust to call the prevalent research in education as a ritual devoid of seriousness. Ritual also in not knowing what a research basically entails, whence a problem asking for research occur, how to formulate its nature and scope, what a completed research might add to the already available body of knowledge, what use it could be, who might be benefitted from such a research, etc. Ask even a seasoned researcher such discriminating questions about his work. Chances are that, he will be faltering frequently. Expressing inanities and incoherent phrases many would be at a loss for an answer. It is because they have not taken up research in right earnest, but as a necessary rite in order to bolster a bio-data or for other benefits. Such activities, if done in abundance by so many scholars placed in academic institutions as the case seems to be, can be rightly called futile rituals.

The reason for this sad situation is that the Euro-centric educational terms and pedagogy made us mere copycats. As a result, the education itself has become for us mere school learning and not culture. As Tagore said, "Like a box of matches good for various uses, but not the morning light in which utility and

grace and the subtle mystery of life have blended in one".

- (O) The jargons of educational research, that is a set terms more to the Western psychology than education per se in the normal sense of the word, are repeated ad nauseam. In many cases it is done without conveying a cogent meaning. For example, a research is titled thus: "Emotional Intelligence and Locus of Control of Mainstream and Special School Female Teachers." Sometimes it is done for the form's sake, like repeating esoteric mantras, not necessarily to mean anything for an earnest reader. In this way, the jargons serve as a ruse, both to the researcher himself and a reader of such research, to conceal the emptiness of dozens of type written pages well bound as the final dissertation or report. Read it carefully on and on and no meaning would be forthcoming. It would seem they are not meant for anything. They appear more part of a custom everyone in the discipline seems to respect: professors, supervisors, experts, committees, institutions—all! No one particularly cares to get a proper meaning, much less a new analysis or a new finding or even a new data pertaining to some aspect of education. In the event the combination of the same set of, say, two dozen terms appear again and again in the endless number of research projects undertaken and completed. There is an amazing lack of novelty in the ritualistic repetition of such terms in the research

dissertations, papers and projects alike.

- (P) Like the Soviet style social science scholarship, our educational researchers also seem to fulfill a quota in order to write work reports. Preparing a good work-report, as Solzhenitsyn showed in his *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, is much more important than the actual work. The work itself seems not of individual or collective concern as the work report. Because, perhaps, the grandeur of the work-report, its said importance for the society etc., would bring reward for a researcher or the institution. The work itself may be shoddy or even a total fake. Therefore, in formal discussions on educational research one often comes to hear or read the assessment reports in terms of only the number of research proposed, accepted, sanctioned, funded and completed. The same numerical reports are indiscriminately forwarded and taken as the indicator of the good or not so good state of affairs. As Prof Krishna Kumar noted, most educationists are confused about education as a *concept* and as a *system*.

That may well be a reason why the quality of research works are seldom seriously examined, case by case basis. That who is actually going to benefit from a research seems to be nobody's concern. For reasons unknown, such points are hardly discussed seriously in competent bodies. Still the process

goes on. It is but only a notch below the standard Soviet practice in social science studies. Something like a part of lifeless duty new research projects are invited, sanctioned and undertaken. In the same way, with largely the same or similar themes, even titles. Uniformity of the research work all over the country is truly amazing. Taking a macro look of the situation, it seems that generally no one actually reads the completed research projects. They are duly received in designated offices, filed properly, only to be forgotten for ever. Except for the mention of the titles in various reports and journals meant to inform about them. It is another matter, however, that even if someone takes up a newly received research report to study it, he would rarely find anything worth reading. Thus, the whole exercise and its product, like wastepaper bundles, become a burden for us and not nourishment for acquiring knowledge and wisdom.

- (Q) In a strict appraisal the ongoing activities under educational research may be considered as a monumental waste of energy and resources, although unintentional. The researchers are simply engaged in ordinary data gathering. Without realising that, "research is not data gathering but contemplation on the data gathered"<sup>14</sup>. Something which most of the researchers in education are

shy or unable to do. They are like travellers not knowing where they are to go. But they are preoccupied in great details about how to arrange the journey, transport, luggage, type of help they would require, food, halt, etc. These things, too, they discuss not as a result of their own open thinking, but as a part of entrusted inert duty. Similar is the situation of educational researchers who spent big time in discussing research, research questions, methodology, research design, time frame, etc. without figuring out what is it all for? Perhaps a part of job doing.

Most faculty members in departments of education involved in research activities believe such a job doing a customary thing as it should be. The researchers are not primarily at fault if they do not fully comprehend their situation as to the worth of their work. In this respect, too, they are like the erstwhile average Soviet scholars: decent, intelligent and perceptible. Still they manufacture, publish, repeat, transmit and multiply platitudes, untruths and largely a meaningless literature devoid of any value. It happens because they have *ab initio* internalised a meaning of educational research in a peculiar sense. A genuine meaning of education in all its facets eludes them. Hence the self-delusion of most educational researchers. As if the meaning of education, as long understood by our great civilisation

and fully endorsed by all the great Indian thinkers even in the present age, is a misnomer for them. They fail to comprehend what they are indulged in are pro forma activities, falsely yet authoritatively called educational research. They cannot comprehend it because they lack a standard to check whether some presentation in all its detail is actually a research in education or not. In practice, therefore, educational research is more a name given to a very limited kind of activities undertaken by faculties of education departments of universities and academic institutions. It is doubtful if such activities can stand a hard test of assessment.

(R) Usually in any given subject area a researcher is one who has basic qualification in the subject plus a proven attitude and ability to undertake research. In educational research in our country, as also in the social sciences research, the situation is different. Here it has been a practice to assume anyone competent by holding a formal degree. In itself it may not seem wrong, but given the well-known reality of how degrees are obtained and conferred, especially in social science subjects in various parts of our country, such assumption becomes highly flawed. Therefore, organising research methodology courses for all and sundry is not going to serve any purpose. First, one should find out the genuine,

able and interested scholars, young or old. Only then could a funding or a workshop for them could help. Exactly as a person who has no interest or inclination for warfare has little use of arsenal or training, a person having little interest in educational thoughts and classical literature etc., cannot be a sensible educational researcher. At best he can only be a paper feeder, a part of the malady discussed above.

- (S) Educational research has been ritualised also because there is serious lack of proper guidance. There are Research Methodology professors who teach how to do research, but they have never undertaken a research themselves, nor written a readable piece. They only “speak the language of research. Such professors cannot prepare anyone for research.”<sup>15</sup> A genuine guide should himself be a good scholar. Otherwise a young researcher under him would not be able to differentiate between valuable from banal. It brings to fore an unattended, yet a central problem: finding right person for a particular work. A serious

attention to this issue would help for the betterment of education scenario in general.

At the same time, we must break free from all kind of mental conditioning. We must stop habitually following the deeds and advices of foreign authorities and institutions as to what we should do or not do as regards education in our country. The models, jargons, phrases, goals and means, everything needs an open and critical examination. What the American Psychology Association or an UN agency is propagating as important may or may not suit the reality, needs and temperament of our country. We must ponder what our own contemporary great thinkers observed after acquiring great knowledge, experience and wisdom. “Whether for good or bad, providence has fashioned each race on a different pattern, and to put one into the coat of another results in a misfit.”

Therefore, the time has come for us also to break open the treasure-trove of our ancestors and use for our commerce of life. With its help, let’s make our future secure, and cease to live as the eternal rag-picker at other peoples’ dustbins.