

**Mainstreaming of Craft Education in Kashmir: A Review of the
Position Paper-National Focus Group on ‘Heritage Crafts’ (NCF
2005) in Kashmir Context-Challenges and Relevance**

Maria Akhtar Wani*

Prof. Nighat Basu**

ABSTRACT

Handicrafts are an integral part of Kashmir’s culture and economy, being one of the major activities of earning livelihood. The mainstreaming of craft education in the educational curriculum is a subject of concern for all the stakeholders, since any course or subject related to craft studies can’t be taught without relevant teacher training, resource individuals and institutions. In Kashmir, while the subject of ‘Heritage Crafts’ is taught only by the educational institutions affiliated to CBSE, the educational institutions affiliated with JKBOSE don’t teach the subject, though being an important aspect of NCF-2005 recommendations. In view of the increasing unemployment and under-employment, one of the major issues our educational system faces, is the production of a workforce that lacks the skills in the vocational fields which are intrinsic to this geographic region e.g., Pashmina, papier-mâché, namda, gabba, willow-work etc. The major reasons for this emerging scenario are the disconnect of educational theory with the educational practices. The educational theory and practices which may be applicable to the various Indian States with different geography, may not be applicable to this specific geographic region, thus being a major impediment to address the grassroots educational issues including the issues of teaching pedagogy and assessment aspects of our curriculum framework related to vocational subjects. The paper reviews the position paper of National Focus group on Heritage crafts –NCF- 2005, its challenges and relevance in the context of Kashmir.

Key Words: *Heritage Craft; Kashmir; Craft Education*

* Research Scholar, School of Education, Central University of Kashmir, Ganderbal-J&K, India

** Sr. Professor, School of Education, Central University of Kashmir, Ganderbal-J&K, India

INTRODUCTION

Kashmir is home to the most luxurious handicrafts and hand-loom in the world, e.g., Kanni-pashmina, wall-nut wood carving, copper-work, khatamband, pinjrakari, papier-mâché, carpet weaving, namda, gabba; embroideries-sozani-work, aari-work, crewel-chain stitch, hand-tilla work etc. The highly specialized skill-based artists/artisans are famously referred as ‘The Golden Hands of Kashmir’ (Saraf, 1987). Presently J&K has the highest unemployment rate in India. Though being the second major source of employment in the State, the handicraft sector is deteriorating fast due to the following reasons (Dar & Parrey 2013):

- a) Lack of concrete handicraft Policy.
- b) Lack of knowledge/awareness about the regional culture.
- c) Lack of emphasis on craft studies in educational curriculum.
- d) Decline of critical skill required for the handicrafts.
- e) Lack of education in craft management / branding/craft entrepreneurship training.
- f) Lack of awareness about the importance of handicrafts.
- g) Lack of community mobilization to practice handicrafts & celebrate the practitioners.
- h) Social stigmas.
- i) Large scale corruption.
- j) Low-wages for artisans.

k) Lack of marketing avenues for artisans.

In the Indian context, Wardha Scheme of Education/Basic education in its first report submitted in December 1937, under the aegis of Dr Zakir Hussian and Mahatma Gandhi, emphasizing the introduction of craft in the educational curriculum to attain self-sufficiency, was a unique concept for the sustenance and promotion of vocational education in accordance with the diverse Indian culture (Singla, 2013). Mudaliar- Secondary education commission (1952-53) contributed to the curriculum development by recommending principle of variety, elasticity and co-relation with community, in the curriculum, recommending crafts to be included in the middle school curriculum. Kothari Education Commission (1964-66) recommended craft to be taught at higher secondary level, as a part of curriculum to improve vocationalisation and increase productivity. National policy on education 1968 reaffirmed the recommendations of Kothari Education Commission.

While NPE 1989, POA-1992 emphasized on starting craft training programmes for educationally backward minorities through Craft Training Institutes, and artisan's children being given preference in admission in ITIs. National Knowledge Commission -2005 while elaborating on vocational education pronounced that craftsmen form the backbone of the country's economy; thus, a broader and dynamic system of vocational education is required for the prosperity of the nation. The role of NCF-2005 in mainstreaming craft education across the country at higher secondary level has been a major step towards preserving craft diversity of India. NCTE -2009 in its manual for the

teacher education institutions and teacher educators on organizing teaching learning resources in teacher education institutions provides the necessary guidelines to establish ACRC in every teacher education institute to facilitate their teachers with adequate knowledge and skills to perform their role efficiently. NCFTE –2009/10 report lays emphasis on the development of professional skills in teachers in craft and inclusion of craft in educational practice. Working group report on secondary and vocational education 12th five-year plan 2012-2017 draws the roadmap for the strengthening art and craft education in kendriya vidyalas by conducting workshops to engage master-craftsmen with students, and adequate teacher training of master craftsmen to attain efficiency.

NCF-2005 and Craft Education

Keeping in view the fact that handicraft practices are being abandoned at a fast pace in a country where one out of every 200 citizen is an artisan and 10 per cent of craftspeople are lost every ten years, the Position Paper of National Focus Group-2005 on 'Heritage Crafts', paved the way for mainstreaming craft education. The idea that craft needs to be taught both in theory and in practice so that it emerges as a powerful tool of emotional, economic and intellectual development for children at every stage of life, the focus group highlights the need to celebrate the artisans and craft practitioners as the eco-friendly entrepreneurs.

NCF-2005 reiterates the aims of craft education:

- Social, cultural, physical and mental development.

- Enhancement of creative, enquiry, reasoning, social and information processing skills.
- Community empowerment.
- Promotion of entrepreneurship.
- Improvement of vocational and productive efficiency.
- Promotion of eco-friendly sustainable development.
- Celebration of the richness in our culture and value of identity.
- Promotion of cultural heritage.

Craft Education in Kashmir and the Position Paper – National Focus Group on ‘Heritage Crafts’ (NCF-2005) – The disconnect and Challenges:

While NCF-2005 (Position paper –National Focus Group on ‘Heritage Crafts’) clearly states that in areas where craft is the primary activity, craft should be offered as a specialized stream, enabling a child to understand his/her relationship between the environment and learn various vocational skills, particularly in harmony with the nature[15],there has been no educational policy to include the subject in the curriculum in a way that it provides sustainable entrepreneurship and source of employment in Kashmir.

Historically, in 14th century, when Kashmir was facing severe economic crisis, it was Ameer Kabir Mir Syed Ali Hamadani (RA) whose visits changed the demography of the Kashmir by bringing in approximately 700 followers – specialists in various arts and crafts, from central Asia,

who taught the Kashmir's various crafts for a sustainable economy (Dar & Basu, 2016). The vision of Ameer kabeer Mir Syed Ali Hamadani (RA) to imbibe a culture of craft entrepreneurship in Kashmiris, keeping in view, the susceptibility of Kashmir to foreign invasions and harsh weather conditions, has been instrumental in securing the local population economically in harsh times of conflict, floods, earthquakes, and winters. Handicrafts have also been responsible for making Kashmir famous throughout the world through the brand 'Cashmere' (Gopalan & Sivakumar, 2007). Practiced by every gender, irrespective of caste, creed and class, it is also an important hobby in rural areas for females, which got transferred from one generation to another. Presently, Kashmiri practitioners practicing handicrafts like wall-nut wood carving, kanni-pashmina, khatamband, pinjrakari, willow-wicker, namda, gabba etc.; embroideries like sozani work, aari work, tilla work, crewel-chain stitch etc. crave for recognition in the mainstream industry sector, to be considered as skilled entrepreneurs and economic partners rather than being seen as an abandoned minority with social stigmas like 'rafugar', 'kanyul', 'kaal-baaf' etc. attached to their trade. In the absence of a concrete government policy towards saving the dying handicrafts like namda, kanni- pashmina, willow-wicker etc. there have been only handful attempts by stakeholders be it teacher-student fraternity, policy makers, civil society groups to recognize the fault-lines and work to bridge the divide. The policy deficit in terms of devising an educational curriculum, which prioritizes the subjects with an established cultural, geographical and economic base,

can be termed as the major reason for producing a workforce which lacks the critical skills to sustain in a harsh terrain like Kashmir. The contradiction between the educational theory and educational practice is the result of the lack of coordination between the student-teacher relationship, teacher-teacher training institutions, teacher-training institutions and social, political, economic environment, thus resulting in structural anomalies in our education system.

In view of growing unemployment and under employment, the quality assessment and curriculum revision of the existing institutions like ITI's, CDI, IICT, and School of Designs is the need of the hour. The CBSE schools across J&K provide 'Heritage Crafts' as a subject option in higher XI and XII. There is no option for 'Heritage Crafts' as a subject for the students studying in the schools affiliated to JK BOSE. While NIFT, Budgam and SSMD offers undergraduate courses in fashion design & Fashion communication, there hasn't been any Undergraduate course specialized in craft studies. ITI's in Kashmir provide short term certificate courses in handicrafts like pashmina, walnut-wood carving etc. Govt. Polytechnic College, Bemina, announced one year heritage craft course under SCVT scheme commencing from September. While EDI has been financially aiding entrepreneurs but there is a big question mark on the market sustainability of the areas chosen for entrepreneurship, in Kashmir context. While Central University of Kashmir, established DIC in the year 2018 under the National Initiative of Design Innovation of MHRD, GOI, following Hub & Spoke model with Spoke

Centre's offering One year Diploma Courses in khatamband and wood work, paper machie and crewel, Kashmiri craft designing, kanni shawls and pashmina, etc across the Kashmir valley. Therefore, it is evident that attempts are being made by the educational institutions to preserve crafts through various short-term courses. A collaborated curriculum framing exercise among the major stakeholders from school level to university level would pave the way for a formalized craft education in Kashmir. The introduction of craft studies at college and university level is the need of the hour in the light of the above discussion.

Pedagogical and Assessment Issues in Craft Subjects

Since the subject of heritage crafts is not included in the educational curriculum, there is scarcity of teachers having the subject knowledge. The absence of research and development in Kashmir handicrafts, the various processes and the mechanisms involved, leads to the lesser representation of craft related chapters in text books, thereby devoiding the learner to get knowledge about it. The teacher training colleges need to be equipped with the infrastructure to train the teachers with adequate craft subjects for enhancing the craft skills. While the artisans and practitioners are ready to come forward and teach the Kashmir craft related skills, the requisite recognition by the society and lack of teaching skills, emerge as barriers for transmission of craft skills to future generations. There needs to be a concrete policy to enhance the coordination among the artisans, teachers and teacher-trainers in educational institutions, teacher training institutions and the society in general towards the

mainstreaming of craft education. The scarcity of the resource persons, the lack of teaching content, the lack of knowledge about the methodology of teaching crafts hampers the teaching of regional heritage crafts. There is a need to incorporate the subject of heritage crafts in the list of subjects in which teacher-training and practice is provided, for reviving the spirit of craft entrepreneurship and vocationalization.

Relevance of the Position Paper–National Focus Group on ‘Heritage Crafts’-NCF-2005, in Kashmir Context

The Position Paper-National Focus Group on ‘Heritage Crafts’ –NCF-2005 a visionary document in the context of Kashmir, which needs implementation at the grass root level. Mainstreaming of craft education in education curriculum. The position paper is an important document to help strengthen the education system in the following manner:

- To view the handicrafts as a professional skill, leading to employment opportunities.
- Addition of handicraft in the educational curriculum content e.g., storytelling, history, architecture, geography, environmental sciences, fashion studies etc.
- Promotion of craft tourism through Craft mapping of Kashmir.
- Recognition of the master-artisans.
- Discarding the social stigma associated with the crafts.

- Research and development in craft management and entrepreneurship.
- Acceptance of importance of craft technology, in design intervention of the craft products and processes as per the changing needs of the consumers (Kapur & Mittar, 2014).

CONCLUSION

The mainstreaming of craft education at the national level has been possible due to the efforts of the national focus group which represented 20 million practitioners with diverse geographic, cultural, ethnic and technical craft backgrounds. The NCERT heritage craft text books celebrate the Kashmir handicrafts and the students throughout the country get the opportunity to read about the production processes, aesthetics, uniqueness and rich cultural heritage. Unfortunately, majority of the learners belonging to Kashmir get little opportunity to do so, due to the absence of ‘heritage crafts’ subject in the educational curriculum at higher secondary level. There is a need towards the sensitization of the community to take forward the rich legacy of crafts through mainstreaming craft education.

REFERENCES

- Dar, M. A., & Parrey, A. H. (2013). Socio-Economic Potential of Handicraft Industry in Jammu and Kashmir: Opportunities and Challenges. *International Monthly Refereed Journal of Research In Management & Technology*, 2, 20-28.

- Dar, M., & Basu, N. (2016). Influence of Mir Saiyid Ali Hamadani on Vocational Education in Kashmir. *IOSR Journal of Humanities and Social Science*, 3(21), 38-46.
- Gopalan, R., & Sivakumar, S. (2007). Keeping cashmere in Kashmir-The Interface between GI & TK.
- India. Education Commission. (1966). *Report of the Education Commission, 1964-66: education & national development* (Vol. 2). Ministry of Education, Government of India.
- India. Secondary Education Commission, & Mudaliar, A. L. (1953). *Report of the Secondary Education Commission*. Ministry of Education.
- Kapur, H., & Mittar, S. (2014). Design intervention & craft revival. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, 4(10), 1-5
- National Policy on Education 1986 (1998): Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, India.
- NCERT (2005) National Curriculum Framework-2005 Position paper: National Focus Group on Heritage Crafts (2006). New Delhi, NCERT.
- Planning Commission. (2012). Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) Social Sectors Volume III.
- Saraf, D. N. (1987). *Arts and crafts, Jammu and Kashmir: land, people, culture*. Abhinav Publications.
- Singla, M., (2013). Study of Wardha Scheme of Education by Gandhi Ji. *JRPS International Journal for Research Publication & Seminar 2(04)*.
- Teacher, H. National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education.
- http://eprints.rclis.org/7462/1/National_Knowledge_Commission_Overview.pdf

http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/NPE-1968.pdf

http://ncte-india.org/ncte_new/?page_id=1272

<http://ssmd.in/courses.html>

[http://www.cukashmir.ac.in/Get-Started/Design-And-Innovation-Centre-\(DIC\),-Central-University-of-Kashmir.aspx](http://www.cukashmir.ac.in/Get-Started/Design-And-Innovation-Centre-(DIC),-Central-University-of-Kashmir.aspx)

<http://www.dpssrinagar.com/download-type/syllabus/>

http://www.jkbose.jk.gov.in/syllabus/JKB2018JULY11_01.pdf

<http://www.nift.ac.in/srinagar/ug-programmes>

<http://www.risingkashmir.com/news/effects-of-unemployment-330732.html>

<http://www.womenpolytechnic.in/new-important-sbote-notice/>

https://d2zyf8ayvg1369.cloudfront.net/sites/default/files/youth_entrepreneurship_in_kashmir.pdf

<https://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/business/kashmiri-artisans-fight-for-survival/216371.html>

<https://www.greaterkashmir.com/news/kashmir/j-k-has-highest-unemployment-rate-at-12-13-in-india-report/269805.html>

ncert.nic.in>ncerts>lehc108