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Redefining teacher professionalism: Contestations and possibilities

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Abstract

Teachers' growth and development has garnered much attention in recent years. In this context we may note that the concept of being a teacher has been ever evolving considering it entails dimensions such as knowledge, ethics, and professional experience. In contrast, more recently terms such as competence, skills, attributes, accountability and commitment has come to override the earlier mentioned antecedents. Beginning with the processes within which teacher preparation operates and moving towards the practices in which the teachers continue to engage in their daily work settings, there is a need to examine underlying phenomena shaping this extensive canopy pronouncing *teacher professionalism*.

This paper tries to understand the processes and practices that have come up to shape, (re)define and (re)conceptualize the roles, practices, and modes of professionalism with respect to teachers in higher educational institutions and settings. It elucidates the involved descriptions of the changing discursive domains within which the larger realities of higher educational teaching are being conceptualized lately. It aims to illustrate the various determinants of the shifting ecosystem of Indian universities that has overthrown its conventional dependencies on centralized, state owned, and welfarist affinities. Thus, it highlights the interventions arising out of ever penetrating adoption of economically rational practices in university teaching but also the circumstantial integration of 'means' contributing towards teachers' construction of a pre-ordained 'professional self'.

Keywords: Teacher Professionalism, performativity, economic rationality, Indian higher education.

Introduction

In India, the recent promulgation of policy related inputs (and related ensemble of documents) has seen a discursive shift towards embracing the economic and utilitarian purpose of education. There is a perceived urgency in the contemporary landscape of education, from schools to university, to (re)define and (re)organize its processes for achieving the utilitarian aims. These aims signified by a performative agenda of measurable outcomes rest on fundamental economic assumptions of institutional competition and efficiency. (Ball, 2003) While the manifestation of these initiatives is visible at all the levels of education, in this article, we will focus on its vivid expressions displayed in Indian higher education; in so far as they can possibly help us to reveal and understand the performativity agenda in relation to the recently emerging idea of teacher professionalism in public universities of India.

The scenario in Indian higher education is progressively legitimizing the practices guided by the economic rationality. It has exhibited a specific direction of change that represents systematic penetration of market based strategies to redesign the governance, funding, and operational aspects of universities and higher educational institutions. Precisely, locating the shift, it seeks to re-discover and re-assign a new place and role to the university as "a big, complex, demanding, competitive business" (Skilbeck, 2001, p. 6). This includes an increasingly used framework of new managerialism which highlights accountability, commitment, and efficiency (Ball, 2003; Sachs, 2000) as its core characteristics in relation to the various participants, practices, and processes of higher education. The foregrounding of such ideals that promote a discourse of performativity in education encompasses a shifting conceptualization away from the traditionally valued ideals such as, 'love of knowledge'. The most perspicuous idea of the modern University given by Wilhelm von Humboldt in 19th Century emphasizes that 'universities exist for the sake of knowledge (Wissenschaft)'; where

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he also emphasized that in the university, “the teacher is not ... for the students’ sake... they are all there for scholarship and knowledge’s sake.” (Menand, Reitter, & Wellmon, 2017, p.3)

In the recently shifting framework the teachers and learners in a university engage, with their traditional role of teaching, learning, and research, through an altered conception of knowledge ‘assuming a form of value similar to the relationship between commodity...(its) producer and (its) consumer’ (Lyotard, 1984, p.4). Thereby, instilling the performativity agenda for the various participants engaged within the universities, privileging measurable outcomes and revising the earlier notions of knowledge, teaching, and learning. This article will first conceptualize the emergence of performativity in higher education and then discuss the ways it has redefined professionalism for teachers. Then it will outline how this performative discourse has increasingly resulted in confronts of teachers’ understanding of professionalism. It also looks at the ways in which the teachers are performing their roles within and responding to the identified performative discourse as opposed to traditional notions of professionalism focused at humane aspects. It may be noted, that some sporadic responses of the teachers represented in this article have been collected through open-ended interviews, the representations are however, not final and this compilation of the article has sought a tentative formulation based on these (cited) responses. The article also engages with a succinct framework by engaging with Foucault’s works on discourse and constitution of ethical self to understand how ‘anti-performative selves’ can be constituted within the ambit of alternative and counter discourses.

Shifting Discourse in Higher Education

Revisiting the vicissitudes and changes in Indian higher in the last two decades, specifically post 1991, may allow us to consolidate the emerging patterns in public universities surfacing as performative systems. The recent transformations in Indian higher education can be best described in terms of the ‘higher education/ economic’ complex emphasizing an interrelationship between the two within which the mission and roles of the universities and higher education institutions are being re-negotiated- in theory as well as in practice. The higher education system is no longer conceived as isolated, either from society or from the economy. It is rather perceived now through its elongated and intervening connexions with the both, but prioritizing the economic segment among the two. It has given rise to the renewed interests of policymakers, governments, international agencies, and transnational groups to rethink and reform higher educational territories across the countries. (Knight, 2009; Kwiek, 2013) This phenomenon has re-produced, re-shaped and re-designed the forms, arrangements, and engagements of higher education sector in almost all the countries (especially Asian, Sub-Saharan, Latin American, Post-communist Russian, and European countries) in the recent times. (Johnstone & Marcucci, 2007) The major descriptors, of this transformation in higher education, are: stirred notions of permanence of dirigisme; complicated intersectoral dynamics between public/private; centrality of knowledge in changing economies; financial austerity; and situating demographic premium as a contingent parameter for national growth. (Bruce, 2006; Duczmal & Joengbloed,

2007; Kwiek, 2009; Peirson, 2001). These characteristic features emphasize the sentiments of subordination of education systems to economic utility which can ensure the future social, political and economic viability of nation states. (Brown et.al., 1997)

The major transformations are also seen in the traditional conceptions of higher education and universities. The higher educational systems and processes, underscored for systematic implementation of re-forms, find imposition of changes pertaining to renewal of their purposes, functions, and their sources of sustainability. The traditional idea of the universities, existing for the sake of knowledge and learning by combining teaching and research, are now being transformed to recast their nature and purpose of existence. The role of universities in achieving higher economic prosperity of nations determines the justification of their existence in recent times. In this context, Gibbons (1998, p. 1) who discusses the relevance of higher education in 21st Century argues, that the critical function of universities has been displaced in favour of more pragmatic role in terms of the provision of qualified manpower and the production of knowledge. Thus, the notions of the new paradigm highlighting ‘utility’ as the most critical parameter of assessing university’s role describes the vital shift in perspectives, values, and attitudes. It is expected that universities must produce those knowledge goods which contribute in enhancing the productivity and incomes of individuals, industry, and nations at large. Such as, higher education is now considered as a vehicle of economic growth and development of countries. As suggested by recent documents¹ the expectations from higher education are pointed for not only to enhance India’s future economic growth by producing the graduates with needed skills who can contribute to economic prosperity but also in fostering internationalization of Indian higher education to stand in comparative advantage vis-à-vis other countries engaged in similar endeavors. The enunciations in this regard, based on the human capital theories (Schultz, 1961 and Becker, 1962) have integrated the functions of universities to that of capital formation, physical as well as human. Also, they have promulgated the utilitarian aims for which universities must engage in continual re-envisioning of their curriculum, programs and courses, and academic activities for being ‘relevant’ and having a ‘utility’.

Within the above discussed framework of the shifting discursive surface, one can describe the performativity in the various practices occurring in Indian higher education. The various determinants of the shifting ecosystem of Indian universities has overthrown its conventional dependencies on centralized, state-owned, and welfarist affinities, that is, to move away from being a ‘public’ good. The counter-arguments to public education systems have purported the idea of ‘government-failure’. They argue that due to the “bureaucratic inefficiencies and lack of market-styled incentives” (Palley, 2005, p. 27) the government’s failure (in education) may be worse than the failure of private systems. Therefore, it has resulted in shift towards promulgation and acceptance of initiatives, processes, and practices which draw its purposes from the *market mechanisms*. The most rational and purposeful practices in

¹ Refer to recent reports, such as, National Knowledge Commission, 1997; Inputs to New Education Policy, 2016. Yashpal Committee Report, 2009 and others.

universities are considered to be those which embark on the ideals of performance as well as efficiency.

According to Wilkins (2011), the performative systems are describable by three key policy and practice strands namely, measurable targets, interventionist regulatory mechanisms, and a market environment. We can use these accesses to understand the manifestations of performativity in Indian universities by engaging with a few specific examples. To make the universities and higher education institutions operate and function within market levers has brought ahead performative practices within the institutions, for teachers, and also for the students/families. The presence of 'market' environment in Indian higher education proliferates the subjectivities reinforcing competition, efficiency, pressures to perform, economic rationality in decision making and placing motives of profit in place of knowledge at the center of academic activities for individuals and for HEIs. It foregrounds the performance criteria as the field of judgment (Burnard and White, 2008) within which accountability and efficiency is deciphered within economic framework. In this light, the formulation that institutional efficiency and consumer choices can be the basis not only for ensuring a competitive edge in market but also for resource generation and a concise method for scarce resource allocation, can be deliberated. The recommendation that the pattern of public funding must be changed from block public grants and input-based and deficit financing models to the performance oriented basis of grants (Varghese, 2016) reflects the performative privileges to performing institutions getting legitimate space in government policies. The idea of these performance oriented institutions and universities encapsulates the measure of worth, value, quality and excellence. A most recent example of allocating the tag of *excellence*, to a non-existing university in India purely on the basis of its resource related claims, by Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD), highlights the vagaries of this unequivocal performative agenda.

It is noteworthy that in the market environment the estimation of this 'worth and value' is guided by peculiar indicators (when seen in higher educational field). Its accesses can be found in systemic portrayal of a continuity from 'managerial accountabilities' to the softer and diffused notions of 'quality' in Indian higher education. In the way that it situates academic and non-academic indicators of quality as a measure of performance, which emphasize the continuation of managerial governance (funds and resource management) and market (consumer) based accountabilities in universities and higher educational institutions. The ratings given by NAAC and more recently the framework developed by QCI, MHRD for ranking higher educational institutions in the country can be apportioned here. The educational institutions are thus, presented with a new economic mission (Blackmore & Sachs, 2005) to counter their performative targets of achieving value and worth and simultaneously balancing their academic role within the confines of the erstwhile framework. Essential to this objective is the engagement with renewed practices within the economic and performative framework.

The ideals of 'market', in the strict economic sense, designates a place for exchange of goods and services at an agreeable price between the interested parties. In this context, the universities and HEIs in India are rearranging and repositioning themselves in such a *marketplace* where

they 'compete' for students, faculty, funds, resources, and each of them also compete among each other (locally as well as globally). In order to achieve this, they venture into into the other two related domains of achieving efficiency, as per Wilkins above, initiation of measurable targets and regulatory mechanisms. The institutions increasingly embarking on the performative agenda encapsulate and use them to renew the meanings of the concepts such as quality, excellence, worth, value, efficiency, in teaching and learning. Their meanings are now institutionalized as performance-oriented entities. The processes of teaching and learning now, therefore, operate within the "symptomatic...contemporary desire to measure higher education performance by means of systematic criteria and standardized practice" (Little et al., 2007, p. 3).

Redefining Teacher Professionalism

These performative practices promoted through universities are reshaping the teacher as a professional and concurrently redefining 'professionalism' to serve political and economic aims. (Beck, 2008; Bourke, Lidstone & Ryan, 2013) Teacher professionalism is now a maneuverable construct which is led by the relentless creeping of performative practices into education signified specifically by 'measurable outcomes'. The classical idea of professionalism, as described by Goodson and Hargreaves (1996), lays emphases on self-reflection, autonomy, shared commitment to continually develop knowledge and practice. Many scholars construe teacher professionalism as a social construct (Etzioni, 1969; Helsby, 1995; Ozga and Lawn, 1981) and a contested concept which involves teaching as a human endeavor (Day & Smethem, 2009). In contrast, the techno-bureaucratic logic (Apple, 2000) has initiated a restrictive and imposing apparatus of rewards and sanctions through the penetrating inculcation of market mechanisms in the work of teachers. Attained through the formulations of multiplicity of targets measured quantitatively (Wilkins, 2011) it aims to redesign the attention and efforts of teachers towards highly workable and achievable targets.

The overemphasis on corporate modes over academic in teaching is repositioning teachers as 'non-experts', having no claim and authority over their work. The decisions in universities are now seeing a hegemonic flow of working conditions, curriculum reforms, and outcome-oriented pedagogies in line with world of work (Sachs, 2003), imposed in a top-down manner and coming from outside educational world. Teachers are now supposedly required to follow and work in a standardized and accountable environment (Bourke, Lidstone & Ryan, 2013) in universities leading them to limit their aims to visible and measurable goals captured by performance criteria (Chua, 2009) such as API scores.

Thus, the traditional and conventional construct of professionalism guided by humane, emotional and autonomous pursuits has been challenged and compromised by the emerging performativity. The competitiveness is now overriding commitment and measurability has substituted judgment and autonomy. Teachers find themselves straddling between the demands of new managerialism and notions of professional autonomy (Bottery & Wright, 2000; Wilkins 2011). Alongside, they also pendulate between the binary of compliance and resistance, to which Ball (2003) refers to as 'struggles over teachers' souls'.

Another stand of the discursive re-articulations of teacher professionalism have recently found a space in literature borrowing from Foucault's tools. The intensified framework of 'performance management' of teachers has been studied by scholars as, Ball (1994, 2003), Dwyer (1995), Gale (1999), and Scheurich (1994) amongst many. The new performative agenda operates on teachers as 'self-fashioning' individuals who can maximize their individualistic interests on the lines of economic rationality. This pertains to a conceptualization of teachers as 'docile' (Foucault, 1995) but 'productive' beings at the same time individualizes them within the confines of the modern archetype 'homo-economicus'². Thus, teachers in universities are re-positioning themselves to the available subject-positions either prioritizing the performance agenda or resisting to find spaces for more moral and humane forms of professionalism. The changing discursive landscape has also projected a scenario of circumstantial integration of means contributing towards teachers' construction of self as a discursively ordained professional entity. On the contrary, it has also given rise to challenging and resisting approaches of teachers against the panoptic surveillance and assumed gaze (ibid) and induction of self-monitoring regimes of truth. Teachers are dwindling between being the 'passive' and 'active' agents of discourse depending on their practical beliefs and the way they mediate their subjective and objective goals as teachers.

To explore this contested area, where teacher professionalism is finding new functionalities and their roles are getting (re)designed leaving behind the traditional constructs, we will engage with some descriptions of teachers' responses ahead. It has been seen that some of the teachers are accepting these performative practices, being imposed externally, due to perceived benefits and advancements to careers in universities yet many are responding with diverse resistance approaches. We need to excavate further how teachers are responding to these redefined conceptions of performative professionalism. It is a hunch that the differing interpretations of teacher professionalism would imply difference in how teachers perform their roles. More so, because it is an unequivocal belief that teachers sense of professionalism is internally ascribed and they gain their satisfaction from their interaction with students (Galton and Mac Beath, 2008) and their motivation to work in their interest. Hence, how the teachers in universities accept, react, and respond to this performative professionalism defining their value may not be complacently negotiated rather it might be a dialectic exchange.

Methodology

In this paper, we have tried to explore the possible negotiations that the teachers of public universities are engaged with in relation to the recent imposition of mandates of government to redefine their professional growth and development. The acceptance of Academic Performance Indicators (APIs) in the public universities which aim to redesign the career advancement processes for

university teachers is the most tangible measure of the adopted performative reform in Indian higher education. Besides, many parallel guidelines by University Grants Commission (UGC) and MHRD concerning higher education in the country in the recent decade are equally pronounced impositions in the same direction. This paper draws its insights from some open-ended discussions conducted with the teachers of two premier universities in Delhi. It may be noted that for the purpose of this article only a brief discussion on methodology and findings is being presented, for the study is still in progress and insights are provisional. The author has received no financial grant for the conduct of this study from any institution.

The study has selected its participants using snowball technique from the selected universities and the participants were contacted for face-to face discussions on the diverse themes concerning teacher professionalism. The interviews are conducted personally where the participants were encouraged to speak on their practices, the recent changes they have been experiencing in curriculum, teaching expectations, student interactions, and policy related interventions in their profession, occurring within the ambit of their institutions. The participants were encouraged to think, reflect and speak on how they consider their roles and responsibilities are being performed in the recent university ecosystem. They were asked to respond to the needs, and expectations of the university towards their perceived practices of being a teacher. The statements made by the teacher are analyzed based on Foucault's description of them as 'atoms of discourse' (1972) and the subject-positions underlined by them have been identified to mark the homogeneity, continuity, and discontinuity in their responses. The responses are compared and the similarities and contradictions are highlighted. To emphasize what Foucault (1972) writes, the statement should be weighed for their 'value' as they are rare. The value should characterize their place, capacity for circulation, and possible transformations. Hence, the statements of teachers are accordingly noted and deciphered to present the discursive penetration of the performative professionalism.

The framework for analysis is also based on Foucault's description of constitution of *ethical self* elicited from his compiled works on *Genealogy of Ethics* edited by Paul Rabinow, 2000. Briefly, it looks at the 'means' through which one can become an ethical subject or the 'ways' in which one must work on ethical substance in order to become an ethical subject (Foucault, 1986) is what can be referred to as *technologies of self*. One can understand them to be somewhat similar to diet, meditation or exercise regimes. As 'means to an end', these are the ways to be followed to become an ethical subject of one's behavior (Foucault, 1992). The means in the above context are precisely the means of 'managing' self in relation to changing discursive meaning of professionalism. These methods are not directed to realize moral progress; rather, they are directed to achieve economic enterprise. The ways that constitute technologies of self, to become an ethical subject, can be precised as labor, which takes atypical forms, in order that individuals are encouraged to manage themselves.

Provisional Insights from the Teachers: A Discussion

The foremost binary exemplified by the teacher responses is the compliance/resistance complex portrayed in

² This *homo-economicus* is a man or woman who is a rational choice maker in view of maximizing his/her interest. Thus, it is emphasized that the individuals must be free to choose i.e. make rational choices and they should be entrepreneurial (Baez, 2007).

differentiated variability in performing the roles as teachers in the university. There are teachers in the university who seem to have accepted the new performative agenda with hopes to benefits such as promotional advancements and professional rewards. The most tangible practices reported by the teachers which have delineated the outcome based goals for university teachers was API scores and specifically the “publish or perish” performativity. Some teachers mentioned that they found the practice of publications as ‘rewarding’ considering they were directly contributing to the promotional opportunities. The compliance was also observed in relation to obtaining scores related to participation in conferences and workshops. The observations of teachers regarding how they perceive these measures as amounting to professionalism, varied from statements such as “*it helps in improving my contribution to the field and it is also counted for my promotions. It is a way I can continually progress in my career*”. While statements such as these raise hope and faith in the academic work in which the teachers engage yet they also pinpoint the perceptible formation of a calculative self being evolving in this process. Another statement signifying that “*university teachers should write papers in order to qualify as knowledge producers*” underscores the process in which teachers are seen as individuals with differentiated identities in relation to different aspects of life, which resonates Bauman (2004) conception of ‘fractured/contested selves’. While it also substantiates the Lyotard’s (1984) narrative of “teacher as producer” in relation to education having value as a commodity of exchange. These responses indicate that teachers in university are increasingly becoming deliverers of governmental initiatives and compliant in justifying the pressures of accountability. It corresponds to the relationships inherent in performative framework which is upheld by the compliance showcased by the teachers that whatever works is what is more important for them to do (Ball, 2003) The use of words such as ‘progress’ and ‘contribution’ appearing in the responses attain circumscribed focus on outcomes, efficiency and accountability thus ratifying the performance based orientation towards teachers roles. Some teachers also responded for distributed focus of API on teaching, research and publication however, they reported that this “*... contributed to a mechanical understanding of our roles as university teachers. We have to be extra-careful for achieving points in all the categories in the API ... this has added to a pressure to perform on administrative as well academic aspects...*”. But the continuity encompassed in the statement is reflective of circumstantial acceptance (by the teachers) of the performative criteria in defining their roles and behaviors. It demonstrates what Foucault (1995) calls ‘conduct of conduct’ in becoming self-regulated individuals (read teachers) through API as a technology of self. Hence, the unresisting acceptance mediates an uncontested definition of performative ‘professionalism’ in teaching. The value of such statements is enhanced due to their circulatory momentum among the teachers who find their subject-positions aligned in favor of the practices duly normalized and legitimized within the threshold of the discursive canopy of negotiated practices of teaching, publications and pressures to perform competitively in institutions. The example of generating resources through industry specific researches was clearly mentioned by teachers from the Faculty of Science citing “*...doing socially*

relevant research work” without facing much difficulty in contrast the teachers of humanities and social sciences who spoke of lack of funds for research and the opportunities to do meaningful industry based research being limited in scope. While the compliance oriented and outcome-oriented teachers see these as integral part of their “academic role”, it gets further accentuated as part of their job unquestioningly. The other axis on which statements of the teachers can be categorized with identifiable (dis)continuity is the articulations of active and subtle resistance towards the induced performativity in the system. Some teacher participants displayed a discontinuity in their statements, thus, promoting their own discursive truths. Their statements exemplify resistance to the performative agenda which includes their subtle understanding of panoptic mechanisms of self-regulation and implicit gaze through instruments like API. Teachers responded through statements pronouncing allegiance to alternate discourse(s) based on the traditional notions of professionalism surmounting the ideas of performance and outcomes. They specified that teachers’ engagements in class with the students and the content has suffered unduly due to the pressures induced through measurable and regulatory mechanisms. The teachers highlighted not only API requirements but also features like increase in the number of lectures in a week, pressure to form compatible networks and out of academia relations (read businesses and industry), participating in administrative work, spending money on publications and attending programmes from their own expenses to garner points. Teachers’ statements, reportedly, emphasized struggles to maintain individual freedom and personal beliefs instead of the redefined professionalism. Certain statements such as, “*how I teach my students is equally important for me irrespective of the scores I have on API...*” reinstates the dominant faith of teacher in subverting the hegemonic performance-oriented roles. The field of stabilization for such statements is hallowed by other statements which reposition the practices emphasizing autonomy, care and emotionality towards the professional roles and responsibilities. Teacher statements in definitive terms such as, “*...we know that our performance is being checked regularly through plagiarism software, point system and research grants...*” is indicative of alternative interpretations finding space in teacher community. Similarly, teacher statements about institutional competencies highlighted the intrinsic cacophony of competition as a repulsive mechanism to distort university and its philosophical aims of existence. To signify, the statement says, “*...I know that through these pressures of publications, raising funds through research, pressure to open self-finance colleges, measuring teachers outcome through students feedback...they are surely trying to pitch us in a competitive race along with rest of the private universities coming up around us...*” This is worthwhile to authenticate the struggle in a marketized and corporatized educational environment in which teachers are struggling to play truth games. While participant teachers definitely aroused the rhetorical perspective of student care, consensual construction of knowledge in their classes, teaching being an overtly humane process involving subjective and objective tangents of teachers’ and learners’ aspirations it can be said that the resistance is a decisive counter-balancing regime for teachers in universities. Even

when the statements of overt resistance (espousing corresponding behavioral plans) have not been received in this study, nevertheless, the elements of subtle resistance were identifiable. Statements of teachers professing shared commitment and participatory decision-making highlighted exclusive domain of resistance. *“The way in which curriculum changes are brought into our departments...remember the great rush to semesterize the curriculum...and the most recent being elimination of readings of a particular author/ strand of ideology is highly exclusionary for teachers”*, imply the discomfort with ‘alienating practices’ which keeps teachers at bay regarding the integral decisions of curriculum and teaching autonomy. Thus, signifying the essentialities of traditionally valued ideas of teaching being a human endeavor and presses it against the expectations of ‘coercive compliance’ (Graham, 1999). Whereas we can identify subtle resistance, the reactions received from teachers analyzed as response statements are also indicative of fledgling forms of resistance simmering in latent ways of behaving. Some of the significant ways being, alluding to collective sharing of experiences and negotiating spaces of contestations in staff meetings and trade union spaces vis-à-vis the concerned institutional leadership. It definitely partisans its assurances with the discourse of traditional autonomy and shared commitments in teaching as compared to the corporatized and standardized agenda of performance oriented professionalism.

Finally, the possibilities of renewal and restitution are also interlaced within the emerging context of change and confronts. Teachers in the universities faced with the subjective dilemmas and countering the pressures of changing politico-economic reconstruction of teaching-learning, student-teacher relations, pedagogic innovations, scholarly endeavors happen to explore the possibilities of transformation. This involves their consensual beliefs in the unambiguous formulations of teachers’ contribution in advancing ‘real’ learning in the universities. Teachers are also engaged in the formation of anti-performative ‘self(s)’ by mapping their professional development through active repositioning of their subjective interests in the alternative discourses. They involve their interactions with emotionality and intellectuality in deciding what they accept and what they decide to resist (Helsby, 1995). Teachers mentioned that, *“...idea of their professionalism can not be mediated without co-construction...”* and they further resonated their commitment to safeguard the conventional values of autonomy of the teacher in class in order to uphold the ‘public good’ utility of higher education for students and society at large. They despised the tendencies of performative framework of teacher performance becoming a measure of quantity, which according to many such respondents belittles and deforms their identities as teachers. But the teacher’s articulations to constitute an effective and ethical anti-performative self are still incongruent with the values of humane and emotional conceptions of teacher professionalism because conflicts in most cases are highly personalized and individualizing.

Reflections

We have discussed a changing landscape of higher education in India shaped through shifting discursive realities and simultaneous redefinition of processes and practices. In this context we identified the emerging

performative agenda that has contributed to a noteworthy shift in the way teacher professionalism has become a measurable and designerly construct. Professionalism was considered opposed to economic rationality, conventionally, and taken up as positive concept. But the traditional image has come under attack by the adoption of shifting discourses that privilege individual freedom, private capital and dominance of market levers as against the welfare oriented political rationality. Teachers display a variegated response to this redefined modelling of professional ethics and conduct for them. The teachers’ professional self(s) struggle in the process of reinterpreting their own sensibilities and their traditionally ascribed identities within the new framework. As Avis (2005) puts it, the practices outside performance criteria are silenced and not legitimized. This contributes further in restricting teachers’ already dwindling positions in the institutions of higher learning. It has contributed to lowering their aims to visible and measurable goals on one hand and to widen the trust gap between various involved participants within the universities. But the traditional values and modes of professionalism defined in terms of care, emotional connect with students, autonomy and shared commitments to teaching still continue to be at the core of how teachers perceive their most satisfying aspect of job. The anti-performative constitution of self not only derives from active and subtle resistance of new agendas but also through subverting the formulations using reflexive and transformational discourses. A renewal of a shared technical culture, and a strong service ethic, consolidation of fraternal in teacher community can prove transformative and anti-performative. A more concise ecosystem can emerge in our universities, with our teachers and will get enshrined within the future generations of our students through the mitigation of advancements of technocratic and economic rationality by permitting the sustainable and humane core values to form the crux and heart of these possibilities. The professional who will be truly transformative will be those who will assert their true professionalism in classrooms hanging over the personalized beliefs of morality and humanity.

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