

ISS Adhoc Research Committee - 03

Pedagogy, Teaching and Learning

Introduction:

The Adhoc Research Committee (ARC) on Pedagogy, Teaching and Learning - 03 aims to engage with the process and politics of knowledge building, by mapping the intersections of disciplinary formations and theorization of pedagogy. It seeks to provide a platform to examine the practices of teaching and learning, by placing the classroom at its core. The ARC builds on the argument that as knowledge is emancipatory in its aim, any analysis of the practices of knowledge is a political intervention and has epistemological significance. Therefore, as practitioners of the discipline of sociology, one needs to seriously engage with the challenges associated with pedagogy, teaching and learning within the academic institutions. Further it builds on the recognition that unless we engage with the classroom as a site of learning, the understanding that we have of our discipline of sociology will be fragmented.

Chaudhuri (2016) has argued that the reflexive critical identity of sociology as a discipline gets lost in the everyday doing of sociology. While it is recognised that teaching and research are core within any discipline; the practitioners focus on building quality research, and teaching is more often than not perceived in terms of whether conducting routine class and completion of syllabus. To retrieve teaching as a serious engaged practice would necessitate rigorous engagement with pedagogy as a practice. As Chaudhuri and Thakur (2018:8) argue, that it is the classroom, which is the significant site for ‘dissemination and appropriation of theory, then the focus needs to be on, not only the text books, syllabi, question papers, assignments, lectures, etc but also on how is theory taught in the classroom, and what are the specific challenges we as teachers face?’ Buroway (2004:265) states that, ‘as sociologists our students are our first and captive minds’. Thus, classroom as a site requires serious engagement with the teaching and learning practices.

With few exceptions we as practitioners of the discipline have not rigorously engaged with how we teach sociology. Further in the present political changes, students should have an ability to develop a critical understanding of social phenomenon and also there is a need to make informed choices especially today when there is an abundance of information due to AI and internet. The challenge facing us is to teach in the face of AI and to assess at the time of ChatGPT. This

ARC will provide the space for sociologists to reflect collectively on our pedagogical practices that would not only nurture critical minds but also by learning from each other help us to become better teachers. It seeks to build a collaborative space where pedagogical strategies and techniques could be shared, documented and reworked upon. This platform would provide a space to rethink, reflect and get inspired from one another.

Pedagogy, Teaching and Learning ARC, seeks to emphasize pedagogy of sociology as a serious area of inquiry among sociologists in India. Reflection on the teaching practices also raises the questions such as, ‘what are the outcomes of teaching and learning? Who defines the outcomes? What is the students’ definition of learning? How do they understand the teaching and learning process? Why do we consider students as a homogeneous group? To what extent does the vision of the discipline or specialized subjects relate to the vision and stated goal of education, institutions of higher learning as organised by the state? It is important to address these questions because it sensitizes us to the complex terrains of power, privilege and inequality in which a classroom is organized and the need for pedagogical practices to have the sensitivity and conceptual frameworks to address it. As Chadha and Joseph (2018: 12) argue, that engagement with questions of pedagogy not only involves focus on macro pedagogic processes, thus addressing issues of ‘knowledge-making concerns of institutional limitations and practices in higher education, syllabi and hierarchy of disciplines but also need of addressing the micro and everyday levels of teaching and learning’. The focus areas of ARC include:

- Working with critical pedagogy – engaged pedagogy/ feminist pedagogy
- Collaborative and peer learning
- Innovation in pedagogy
- Digital and technological intervention in pedagogy
- Emotional and care labour in pedagogy
- Teaching inclusively
- Regional/ Vernacular Pedagogy
- Classroom ethnography
- Teacher student relationship in classroom
- Autoethnography as pedagogy
- Engaging with power, privilege and authority in classroom
- Building and nurturing safe classrooms
- Trauma informed pedagogies
- Teaching in anxious times and with anxiety
- Decolonial Pedagogy

- Ethics and Pedagogy
- Intersectionality, Practice and Pedagogy

The above-mentioned areas are the initial ones that have been identified. As members join and engage, the list would be enlarged/reworked to address themes, areas and issues emerging from one's pedagogical engagement.

Students, doctoral scholars, young teachers and established professors, who are interested in engaging with pedagogy are requested to join the ARC, where they would not only learn newer ways, but also how to re-engage and strengthen conventional pedagogical practices. We believe that the higher education spaces are increasingly becoming diversified. The UGC Saksham, GOI document (2013) states that there is an uneven and diverse representation of students within educational institutions making the campus spaces highly contested. Thus, academic spaces do not always seem to be welcoming spaces for students, especially for those whose socio-economic background, caste, ethnic, gender, religious and/or linguistic worlds differ significantly from what they are used to. In such a context the role of a teacher and the pedagogic style used becomes crucial. As Connell (2009:9) argues, 'teaching as a form of work which is difficult to pin down as it involves an unspecifiable object of labour, a limitless labour process, and is, in a sense, unteachable. Teaching is always transformative labour, bringing new social realities into existence; and is fundamentally interactive, and not individual. Teacher's work is not social reproduction, but is creative and therefore a site of struggle'. The above arguments raise issues of how challenging it is to teach, calculate what is 'effective teaching' and to reach out to students who feel excluded within these hierarchical and uneven academic spaces. It is to these concerns and invisible markers within the higher education spaces that this ARC wishes to address.

By focusing on the everyday teaching and learning practices of the discipline, one can also address the concerns of the society, relating to issues of marginalization, exclusion and social justice. The ARC is built on the principle that along with theory and research; teaching is an integral part of what shapes the discipline of sociology. This ARC through dialogue and collaboration would address: one, teaching as a scientific practice, two, pedagogy as a critical tool of knowledge creation and dissemination, and three, classroom as a significant site of doing sociology.

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