From the Editorial Desk

Education is no longer confined to learning maths, language and social sciences. It is now also about social interactions, forging relationships, and building a social persona. Multilinguality, bilingualism and cultural diversity are occupying centrestage in the transaction of languages. To this bubbling cauldron, a new dimension was added with the onslaught of the Covid-19 pandemic. The urgent need to digitize education as a priority exacerbated pre-existing disparities, compromised educational standards and left low-income group students behind in the learning process. The key takeaway from the pandemic is how to build a more robust, student-centric learning system that can respond to learning crises responsibly and effectively. We hope that the New Education Policy 2020 which visualizes change in structure and content at all stages of education will be able to address these needs. The moot point is the role of English language and literature teaching in these dynamic times.

In this issue of Fortell, we have tried to bring together reflections and deliberations of teachers and educators across India and abroad. Anita Charles from the USA analyses the effect of Covid-19 on education and suggests “creative approaches” to fill the gaps in access and related practices for primary and secondary education in India, while Abhishek Verma and Sanjay Arora explore the challenges of online teaching and learning during the pandemic. Minakshi Lahkar attempts to address students’ needs by using traditional methods creatively in an online set up. Harshitha H reflects upon the various forms of digital interactive fiction and recommends ways to use them effectively in the English language classroom. Toolika Wadhwa provides a reflective account of the experience of teaching in Indian higher educational institutions and the impact of digitization on communication.

An examination of the New Education Policy 2020 and the challenges of linking theory to practice especially in the undergraduate classroom forms the subject of Anjana Neira Dev’s essay. On the other hand, Ratna Raman places the NEP 2020 under close scrutiny and finds it wanting where English studies in a multilingual context are concerned. Mousumi Biswas sees the failure of previous education policies as responsible for the dismal condition of English language learners in India.

Assessment is part of the teaching learning process. When it takes the unfamiliar mode (online), it induces stress and anxiety among learners or
test takers. Bushra Ahmad and M. Rizwan Khan probe into this area and even offer ways to relieve test anxiety among students. Paren Barman, Sayeedur Rahman and Touhida Easmin Humaira conduct an interesting study into the effectiveness of online assessment in Bangladesh. Arti Minocha’s article raises some questions about the professional and ideological challenges which are the result of a new knowledge economy occasioned by the digitization in higher education.

We have one interesting case study from Kolkata where Kanak Kanti Bera examines the impact of audio-lingual materials on English communication skills of college students in Kolkata. Lest we forget, Venugopal and Senthil Kumar remind us of the necessity of using the tool of “inclusive classroom” in English language teaching for the benefit of disabled learners too. Shree Deepa’s article studies the merits of inclusion of anthroogy as a perspective in higher education classrooms in the online mode. With so much debate about online teaching, Naimuddin Ansary offers a detailed study of the advantages and limitations of traditional and digital resources in the teaching learning process.

Other than these articles, we have included an interview with a radical English language teacher who is a Chomskyan linguist turned ELT practitioner, K.N. Anandan, whose theory of “discourse pedagogy” has revolutionized primary education in Kerala and other states. This issue also contains our usual fare of language activities and book reviews. We hope you enjoy reading it.

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