

Colloquium on Education: Philosophy, Policy & Practice

Centre for Civil Society



INTRODUCTION TO COLLOQUIUM

CCS Colloquium is a two-day residential program and forum for in-depth discussion centred on a chosen theme. The Colloquium provides participants an opportunity to disentangle themselves from the distractions of everyday life to reflect on issues of fundamental and enduring importance. Our hope is that participants will go on to share their advanced understandings and to develop innovative ideas and approaches for the advancement of liberalism in their sphere of work.

Unlike a traditional conference in which some lecture and others listen, participants at the Colloquium explore a specified theme together by discussing texts they have read in advance. Their shared inquiry is guided by a discussion leader who offers probing questions and helps to keep things moving, but who does not lecture or advocate for any specific interpretation of the texts. The purpose of the discussions is not to convey doctrine or to drive home certain pre-conceived conclusions, but to challenge participants to examine, refine, and develop their own ideas by engaging with others interested in the same issues.

The discussions at the Colloquium are relaxed but maintain an air of formality. Participants are encouraged to listen attentively to one another's thoughts and concerns and to ask questions related to the text as a way of deepening their understanding of the issue and of each other.

Participants also follow certain guidelines for conversation –they speak one at a time, have the text in their minds and on the table in front of them, and are expected to support their assertions with reasoned argument and evidence from the text. During the formal discussions, participants are also required to keep their references to things that have been read in common or that are common knowledge. No technical jargon or specialised background knowledge is admitted. The purpose of these restrictions is to ensure that "reason is the only authority" and that everyone can think for themselves and judge what is being discussed. Social time and breaks, besides providing opportunities to network and have fun, also allow participants to continue to debate and discuss the issues raised in the formal conversations.

COLLOQUIUM ON EDUCATION

This year, the theme of the Colloquium was 'Education: Philosophy, Policy & Practice' keeping in line with the organisation's focus on the two key areas of education and livelihood going forward.

It is rarely questioned whether education is a legitimate role of the state. Yet there are good reasons to be critical of government involvement in education. In recent decades, it has become clear that state central planning lacks the knowledge and flexibility required to achieve its objectives. Decentralised, evolutionary systems that enable diversity, trial and error, feedback, and competition have been shown to lead to more dynamic improvement both in theory and in practice. So why are people so uncritical about the idea of a one-size-fits-all, top down, bureaucratic system of schooling?

Furthermore, liberals have long fought for the rights of conscience. Freedoms of thought, of speech, of press, of assembly, and of religion are all fundamental to the rights of man and they have argued for a strict separation of state from each of these arenas of life. Can this freedom of conscience be reconciled with the idea of a compulsory, standardised, and state-controlled system of education? Can a free society long be maintained when those in control can decide what children will be taught to think? Participants at Colloquium explored the following key questions:

- What are the rights of children? Who has a right and obligation to choose for the child? Parents, the state, or the child himself?
- What is role of education in society? And what kind of educational system is appropriate for a *free* society?
- Should governments have a role in socializing and indoctrinating their citizens? Does compulsory education violate the rights of children or of their parents?
- What institutions are most likely to lead to dynamic improvement and learning in the classroom and in society?

In deliberating on these issues, the thoughts of liberal social theorists were applied to the problems of the classroom and of liberal educators to the problems of society.

READER DESIGN

The colloquium reader was designed according to the theme of the colloquium 'Education: Philosophy, Policy and Practice'. The readings chosen were reflective of the three components of the theme, as well as drawing linkages between the same. Writings of renowned authors were selected and compiled under six sub-sections as outlined below. The same sections served as the six sessions of the colloquium.

1. The Hidden Lessons of Traditional Schooling
2. Children's Rights and Adults' Duties Regarding Children
3. The Use of Knowledge in Society and the Classroom
4. History and Liberal Perspectives on Governments' Role in Schooling
5. Government and the Status of Education in India
6. The Rebirth of Education

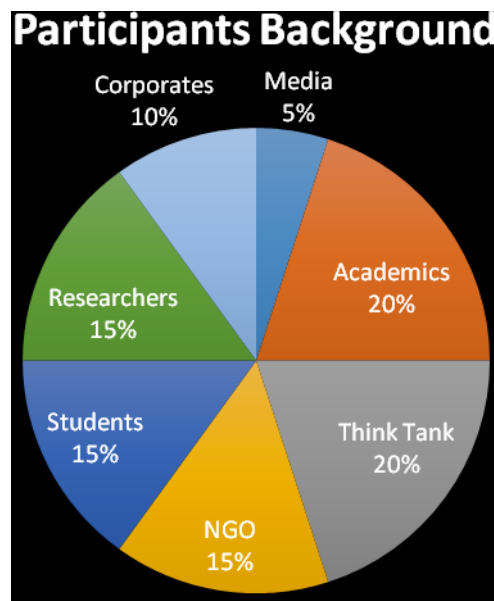
(The list of readings is attached as appendix 1)

The reader was shared with confirmed participants a month prior to the event in order to give them time to peruse the contents and reflect on them before engaging in shared inquiry of the texts. This was especially important since participants lead the discussions at colloquium, therefore, the quality of the program is determined by the quality of their preparation. The participants were supposed to:

1. Go through the reader carefully
2. Mark sections of the text which caused confusion or raised further questions
3. Bring their questions for each session to the table for debate

PROGRAMME DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION

The colloquium is designed for around 20 participants. CCS received 26 applications for the programme and selected 18 participants from diverse backgrounds such as think tanks, academia, media, corporate, NGOs and students. Two representatives from CCS participated in the event. Participants were selected through an online open registration system. The graph below depicts the break-up of sectors that were represented at the event:



(The list of participants is attached as appendix 2)

Session Leaders:

In our effort to make the colloquium participatory, we chose individuals from within the participants to facilitate the session as discussion leader. Seven session leaders were selected from the participants to lead the six thematic sessions and one open session. The role of session leader was to:

1. Give brief synopsis of the readings at the beginning of the session
2. Proposing two to three questions from the readings for discussion
3. Taking two to three questions from participants
4. Finalising the list of questions and opening the floor for discussion

5. Moderating the session as participants deliberate on the questions
6. Summarising the session at the end
7. Preparing a brief of the session including:
 - a. Discussion points and key questions raised
 - b. Comments and views shared
 - c. Unresolved discussions
 - d. What went well and what could have been improved upon

In order to be effective facilitators, the discussion leaders were given the following suggestions:

- **Think** about the ideas and values expressed in the dialogue
- **Question** the participants in order to nurture increased understanding
- **Listen** actively to each participant and form follow-up questions
- **Limit** and distribute participant talk turns and talk time

The suggestions were well-incorporated. Participants also expressed appreciation of the process of choosing session leaders from the group itself and enjoyed taking up the additional role. Following is a list of sessions along with the facilitator who led the discussion:

Session	Leader	Position /Organisation
Session 1 <i>The Hidden Lessons of Traditional Schooling</i>	Dr Baela Jamil	Director - Programs Idara E Taleem O Aagahi (ITA)
Session 2 <i>Children's Rights and Adults' Duties Regarding Children</i>	Fr Manipadam Joseph Anthony	National Secretary for Education & Culture, Catholic Bishops' Conference of India
Session 3 <i>The Use of Knowledge in Society and the Classroom</i>	Ms Naghma Mulla	COO, EdelGive Foundation
Session 4 <i>History and Liberal Perspectives on Governments' Role in Schooling</i>	Dr Maya Dodd	Director FLAME Centre for South Asia
Session 5 <i>Government and the Status of Education in India</i>	Mr Shantanu Gupta	YUVA Foundation, Founder & Director

Session 6 <i>The Rebirth of Education</i>	Mr Vijay Kulkarni	Director, Center for Education Innovations (CEI)
Session 7 Open Session	Dr Parth J Shah	President, Centre for Civil Society



SEATING AT COLLOQUIUM IS IN A ROUNDTABLE FORMAT, TO ENABLE COLLABORATIVE DISCUSSION

SESSION BRIEFS

Colloquium was designed into six sessions of two hours each, along with one open session. The open session was introduced this year to accommodate questions which were not raised during the structured sessions.

❖ **Session 1: The Hidden Lessons of Traditional Schooling:**

This session was led by Dr Baela Jamil, Director, Programs at Idara E Taleem O Aagahi (ITA), an organisation working in the field of education in Pakistan. The following readings were discussed in the session:

- a. "The Comprachicos," Return of the Primitive: The Anti-Industrial Revolution, Ayn Rand (45 pgs)
- b. "The Seven-Lesson School Teacher," Dumbing Us Down: The Hidden Curriculum of Compulsory Schooling, 10th Anniversary Edition, John Taylor Gatto (21 pgs)

❖ **Session 2: Children's Rights and Adults' Duties Regarding Children:**

This session was led by Fr Manipadam Joseph Anthony, National Secretary for Education & Culture, Catholic Bishops' Conference of India. The following readings were discussed in the session:

- a. "Children's Rights in Political Philosophy," Atheism, Ayn Rand, and Other Heresies, George Smith (20 pgs)
- b. "The Forgotten Fellow Citizen," Basic Ideas of Montessori's Educational Theory, Maria Montessori (9 pgs)
- c. "On the Application of Science to the School," pgs 10-20 The Discovery of the Child, Maria Montessori (10 pgs)
- d. "Levels of Obedience," The Absorbent Mind, Maria Montessori (10 pgs)
- e. "Education of the Individual," Education and Peace, Maria Montessori (12 pgs)
- f. "Discipline and the Teacher," The Absorbent Mind, Maria Montessori (12 pgs)

❖ **Session 3: The Use of Knowledge in Society and the Classroom:**

This session was led by Ms Naghma Mulla, COO, EdelGive Foundation that helps donors invest money in organisations working in the education space. The third session included the following two readings:

- a. "Creative Powers of a Free Civilization," Essays on Individuality, ed. Felix Morley, F. A. Hayek (29 pgs)
- b. "Hayek and Liberal Pedagogy," The Review of Austrian Economics, Robert Garnett (14 pgs)

❖ **Session 4: History and Liberal Perspectives on Governments' Role in Schooling:**

This session was led by Dr Maya Dodd, Director of FLAME Centre for South Asia based in Pune. The following readings were discussed during the discussion:

- a. "Compulsory Education in Europe," Education: Free & Compulsory, Murray Rothbard (17 pgs)
- b. "The Men Who Uprooted the Beautiful Tree," The Beautiful Tree, James Tooley (22 pgs)
- c. "The Role of Government in Education," Capitalism and Freedom, Milton Friedman (23 pgs)
- d. "Opponents of Public Schools," and "The Reformers," Separating School & State, Sheldon Richman (22 pgs)

❖ **Session 5: Government and the Status of Education in India:**

This session was led by Mr Vijay Kulkarni, Director of Center for Education Innovations (CEI) based in Bangalore. Following readings were discussed during the discussion:

- a. "Poor Ignoramuses," The Beautiful Tree, James Tooley (21 pgs)
- b. "An Inspector Calls," The Beautiful Tree, James Tooley (18 pgs)
- c. Annual Status of Education Report 2013, PRATHAM (20 pgs)
- d. "From Universal Schooling to Universal Learning," The Rebirth of Education: Schooling Ain't Learning, Lant Pritchett (14 pgs)

❖ **Session 6: The Rebirth of Education:**

This session was led by Mr Shantanu Gupta, founder of YUVA Foundation, an organisation working with youth based in Delhi. This session was based on the following reading:

- a. "The Rebirth of Education as Starfish Ecosystem of Educators," The Rebirth of Education: Schooling Ain't Learning, Lant Pritchett (51 pgs)

❖ **Session 7: Open Session:**

This session was introduced for the first time to the CCS colloquium format. The objective of the session was to give participants a space to share ideas, questions, and concerns that they may not have been able to share during the other structured sessions, which were focused on a particular theme. This session was led by Dr Parth Shah, Founder and President of Centre for Civil Society. The session was appreciated by most of the participants and many previously unshared views came out during the discussion.

Below are some pictures of lively and engaging discussions happening during the colloquium:



TESTIMONIALS FROM PARTICIPANTS

The colloquium was liked and appreciated by all the participants and we received very good feedback. Here are some of the testimonials from the participants which talks about success and impact of the program:

It has made me think seriously on the issues of education. It has enlightened me a lot and enhanced my experience as knowledge of the subject. I am thinking of conceptualizing an educational centre which caters to the disadvantaged class.

–L. K. Kandpal

The colloquium has introduced me to diverse set of people and to see their contribution and impact in education sector in India. It has made me deliberate to work in development sector. The colloquium made me cognizant of all the excellent work being done by the non-profit in India.

–Nakul Santpurkar

It was enriching to discuss issues at core and policy level with such varied people with rich backgrounds in education. We are a funding organisation. I am actually now going to engage with EdleGive grantees on some aspects that colloquium has brought to light for me. This awareness will definitely be used while understanding the programs being executed by various NGOs in the field.

–Naghma Mulla

I had pro-government education argument that it is totally state's responsibility to provide this public good. Here, I have travelled a thought - journey and I have a different, more balanced, view. My article will have more balanced views now.

–Urmila Rao

It makes me rethink some of my belief system. It has thrown light on situations and challenges. It will affect the way I look at things. It will cause some attitudinal changes and enhance my outlook at things concerning education.

–Joseph Manipadam

I have started considering many other aspects of education that I didn't earlier. In fact for the first time I was introduced to the question 'if we need schools at all'.

–Samina Bano

Colloquium has affected me by challenging the conventional form of theoretical perspective and figuring out a framework of analysis on a topic. It has inspired me to think of new research ideas. It has helped me in developing new way of looking into educational problems.

ORGANISERS

Centre for Civil Society



CENTRE FOR CIVIL SOCIETY
Social Change Through Public Policy

Launched on 15 August 1997, Centre for Civil Society (CCS), one of India's leading think tanks, advances social change through public policy. Our work in education, livelihood, and policy training promotes choice and accountability across private and public sectors. To translate policy into practice, we engage with policy and opinion leaders through research, pilot projects and advocacy. Our vision is that each individual leads a life of choice in personal, economic and political spheres and every institution is accountable. For more information, visit www.ccs.in

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The Friedrich Naumann Foundation (FNF) is a non-profit organisation that promotes liberal democracy, rule of law, economic freedom and respect for human rights. Working hand-in-hand with its local partner organisations, the Foundation provides policy consultation as well as educational programmes for interested members of the general public, NGOs and governmental agencies worldwide. In so doing, it aims to contribute towards a freer, more peaceful and more open world society where people live freely and in peace. For more information, visit www.southasia.fnst.org