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Edited by Paul Beedle and Bob Burkill

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# Reflections on Teaching Today and Tomorrow

*Edited by* PAUL BEEDLE

*and* BOB BURKILL



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## *Contributors*

**SUNITHA SARA ALEX** is a science graduate with a teaching degree. Sunitha has spent years teaching science in primary and secondary schools in various parts of India, and she has also mentored teachers in a College of Education. She holds a Distinction in the Cambridge International Diploma for Teachers and Trainers (CIDTT) and is presently heading a primary school in Chennai.

**PAUL BEEDLE** is the Manager of Professional Development Qualifications at University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE). An anthropologist by training, Paul has over 25 years of experience of designing and managing international qualifications in teacher education, skills assessment and environmental management.

**BOB BURKILL** is the Principal Examiner for the Cambridge International Certificate and Diploma for Teachers and Trainers, and the 'lead architect' of both qualifications. A geographer, Bob's own teaching career has also involved responsibilities in school management and inspection. Bob has many years' experience in curriculum and assessment work, especially in geography, skills development and teacher education.

**MITHU DEB ROY** teaches in an urban government-aided school in Guwahati, Assam. Although the infrastructure of the school is limited, she is recognised as a dedicated and resourceful teacher, who encourages her students by taking them out of the classroom to enjoy learning about the scientific basis of nature, for example by visiting the zoo, fishery farm, forests or botanical gardens.

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**CHANDIKAPROSAD GHOSAL** teaches English language and literature at The Oriental Seminary, a long-established higher secondary school in Kolkata. He has taught in the school for 22 years, specialising in life skills education. He has been an active member of state and district-level workshops on developing basic life skills among schoolchildren.

**PULAK KUMAR GOSWAMI** holds an MA in English literature from Jadavpur University in West Bengal. He has over 30 years of secondary-level teaching experience. At present he is the Assistant Headmaster of Jadavpur Vidyapith, a higher secondary school in South Kolkata in West Bengal. Under the aegis of the Boards of Primary and Secondary Education, West Bengal, he has conducted orientation courses for English teachers, and served on several syllabus and textbook review committees.

**MEERA JONEJA** is a primary teacher with the Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan in Delhi. She has 18 years' experience of teaching in various parts of India. She has always been extensively involved with children and is always trying to find more effective ways of helping children to learn.

**PRIYA J. KRISHNAN** holds a masters degree in English and a masters in Education. Presently she is head of a higher secondary school in Chennai. As a Fulbright scholar on the International Educator Programme, she attended postgraduate courses in education at Drexel University, Philadelphia and also underwent a three-month internship in a secondary school in Philadelphia. She holds a Distinction in the CIDT<sup>T</sup>. Priya has led many teacher workshops, including those in early reading, reading across the curriculum, and classroom dynamics.

**RIJULA MITRA** has been teaching English for the past 10 years, and is currently with a school under the West Bengal State Board, where she is responsible for secondary and higher secondary students. She holds a Masters and a Distinction in the CIDT<sup>T</sup>. She is also an examiner of both class X and XII examinations for the West Bengal State Board.

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**GEETHA NARAYANAN** has dedicated her life to finding and establishing new models of educational institutions that are creative, synergistic and original in their approach to learning. As a teacher, a teacher educator, a researcher and an instructional designer, she has pioneered many courses and projects that address a wide variety of social and educational needs. She is the Founder and Director of Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology, and the Mallya Aditi International School in Bangalore. Geetha works actively in empowering teachers in India through the setting up of action research initiatives.

**K. MALA PALANI** is a Teacher Educator in the Galaxy Education System in Rajkot, Gujarat, working with teachers on programmes such as the Intensive English Programme and the CIDTT. She is responsible for mentoring teachers, especially helping colleagues to develop new and more effective teaching strategies. Mala has eight years of teaching experience, in various parts of India, teaching at all levels from primary school to college, and writing resources for the teaching of English.

**AMIT WILLIAM RATHOD** is a graduate of St Xavier's College, Ahmedabad and a teacher in the Galaxy Education System, Rajkot, Gujarat. He believes in freedom with responsibility, and seeks to be not only his students' teacher but also their guide and friend.

**SHUBHANGI WADEKAR** has been teaching science and mathematics at IBYP and CIPP level in Podar World School, Mumbai, Maharashtra, for the past five years. She has been responsible for developing new teaching approaches and resources and has mentored and guided inductees in learner-based education. Shubhangi's motto is to make learning reachable and enjoyable.

# Introduction

PAUL BEEDLE and BOB BURKILL

## Purpose

EDUCATION in India has a golden past, present and future. The member Boards of the Council of Boards of Schools Education in India (COBSE) are working together on many initiatives in developing teaching and learning, combining the strengths of Indian thinking and practice with the most effective ideas and experience from elsewhere. University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) is proud to be helping COBSE and individual Boards, thus continuing Cambridge's long history of supporting education in India.

This book symbolises and celebrates this cooperation. An impressive range of Indian educators here give voice to their reflections on current and future practice. The editors are responsible for the development and management of CIE professional development qualifications such as the Cambridge International Certificate for Teachers and Trainers. The Certificate is designed as a practical means by which teachers and trainers around the world can engage with the global agenda of innovation in teaching to facilitate active learning, and of reflective and continuous professional development.

This book is thus also intended to be an eminently useful resource for the Certificate itself, and is endorsed for use on Certificate programmes around the world. This is a collection of relevant individual reflections by practitioners. We wanted to provide this opportunity for practising teachers to share their ideas and experience. In doing so the contributors demonstrate how an effective teacher is a reflective teacher, always looking to improve the quality

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of teaching and learning, with the needs of the learner at heart. This is the spirit of the Certificate. More and more, teachers and trainers need not only to put fine ideas into first-class teaching in their own context, but also to be aware of and contribute to the wider context – of the community of worldwide professional practice.

We therefore endorse this collection of personal and professional reflections on teaching today and tomorrow. The views expressed are of course those of our contributors (and not necessarily the official view or policy of CIE). You may or may not agree with them, but you will surely be stimulated and we hope encouraged to reflect on your own practice and context.

### **Principle**

The chapters in this book develop a diversity of approaches and viewpoints. The contributors are from different regions of India and deal with different working contexts. As editors we are comfortable with this diversity for it mirrors the variety of culture, society and educational context not only within India itself but also around the world. India has always flourished in diversity and from its many strands of learning has nourished great thinkers, artists and educators. These scholars have often provided us with a magical blend of reflection and innovation and these are two recurrent themes in this book.

One of the key principles in the development of CIE Professional Development Qualifications, such as the Cambridge International Certificate and Diploma for Teachers and Trainers, has been the concept of ‘the reflective practitioner’. All too often, time pressures overwhelm practising teachers and trainers, and evaluation and regular reflection can be forever postponed. Our qualifications seek to re-establish the importance of reflection and evaluation. A simple step such as keeping a regular professional journal can record the successes and difficulties, ideas and possible developments which spring from teaching and learning sessions. This can provide vital evidence for future lesson and programme planning. It is good practice also to gain feedback from learners and use



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it to shape future learning experiences. Evaluation is often much more thorough if carried out with colleagues and many of our candidates speak of their enjoyment in sharing ideas with other teachers.

Innovation is another key principle in our qualifications and is a continuing theme in this book. Here we have teachers making their own way in a world of rapid educational change. There is widespread demand for such change from teachers, parents, governments, local authorities and, not least, from the learners themselves. As a result, the old authoritarian regime of learning by rote is fading in favour of new approaches largely based around the concept of 'active learning'. Our qualifications put active learning at the centre of the stage. For example, the Certificate sets three challenges to candidates to develop approaches which are new to them – opportunities to experiment which at first may seem daunting but prove to be professionally enriching experiences.

The focus for us all, however, is the learner. It can be easy to be distracted by the ever-widening range of developments in teaching techniques and technology. But innovation should not be 'just for its own sake', but always directed to improving the quality of learning. It is the learners who do the learning, and our work as teachers is for the learners. So it is essential and natural that we should devote a considerable proportion of this book to issues surrounding the learners themselves. The 'voice of the learner' is being heard increasingly and teachers as well as parents realise that it speaks of needs and aspirations which can be identified and used as instruments for the improvement of individual, group and whole school learning. India is perhaps the world's most youthful country – no surprise, then, that children and young adults are at the very heart of this book's concerns.

## People

We are, of course, most grateful to all the contributors to this book who have responded to our invitation so positively and with such sincerity. Geetha Narayanan has kindly contributed a stimulating introductory essay to set the scene. Annie Hazarika at Cambridge

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University Press India Private Limited and William Bickerdike, CIE's Regional Manager for South Asia, have coordinated everything superbly. We very much appreciate the guidance and advice we have received from Dr Ashok Ganguly and Dr D. V. Sharma, President and Secretary respectively of the Council of Boards of School Education in India (COBSE).

We hope you enjoy and are encouraged by this book. Realise, however, that these chapters and your responses to them are but steps in the journey towards excellence in education which, both as teachers and as learners, is the shared goal for us all.