

The unspoken in the classroom

If we teach children to understand that power comes with privilege and duty, we will give them something no exam can measure: the wisdom to hold power with empathy

Ponmythili Muralidharan

Every corridor in a college or school echoes with one familiar question: “What marks did you get?” One that begins in school, morphs into CGPA in college, and later turns into performance ratings at work.

Unseen exams

Grades matter; they show discipline and effort. But do they truly prepare our students for life beyond exams? Life’s toughest tests never come on paper. They arrive as people, choices, and consequences; the unseen exams that shape who we become. Yet, these are the lessons our classrooms often leave unspoken. We teach students how to solve problems, but not how to face people. We prepare them for questions with one right answer, not for those with many uncertain ones.

As a teacher, I ask myself what I truly want my students to learn. I want them to understand something we rarely speak

about: power and politics.

The problem is not that power exists, but that neither students nor adults are taught to understand it. Then, power gets misused or people begin to feel powerless under those who misuse it. Both hurt deeply.

Power isn’t abstract. It rests on dependence and resources; on who needs whom, and for what. The more we hold of what others value – knowledge, skill, access, reliability, kindness – the more powerful we appear. Awareness begins when we see this clearly: when we know the power we hold and the power we give away. Without that awareness, even bright minds shrink. When people start believing their voice doesn’t matter, they slowly stop using it.

Marks and CGPAs are also power; of expertise. But when everyone brings grades to the table, all stand equal. What sets one apart is what else they bring; reliability, creativity, empathy and courage. These qualities are the roots of true influence and

make others depend on us.

When students start asking, “What do I bring that others value?”, their learning deepens. They stop chasing grades for approval; they begin to see how their talents, ideas, effort and integrity create value for others. That is the beginning of real power that builds, not breaks.

Responsible power

Awareness alone is not enough. Once we recognise the power we hold, the next question is: What will we do with it? Do we use it only for ourselves, or to lift others too? True leadership begins when power walks hand in hand with concern for others: for people, community, and the collective good. In every space – from classrooms to workplaces – power is always at play. Ignoring it leaves the field to those who may not act with conscience. We don’t need to shun power; we need to shape it with integrity: to know how to win without wounding, and to stay humble in victory.



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Across fields, a few examples remind us what responsible power looks like. Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam used science to help India move from borrowing technology to building it. His power lay not in his position but in his purpose of turning knowledge into self-belief and make others powerful.

Jemimah Rodrigues, one of India’s brightest cricket talents, showed the world what it means to know your power and stand tall. During the recent World Cup, she faced harsh trolling for a few failures. Yet she stayed calm

and joyful, focusing on the game instead of the noise. She knew her worth. She never doubted her power. Because of that confidence, people now turn to her; they depend on her strength and spirit. That is real power. It is not loud or defensive. It quietly draws people in.

Power with grace

Earlier this year, at a chess tournament, Hikaru Nakamura defeated D. Gukesh and tossed the latter’s king into the crowd. It was a loud display of arrogance. Though shocked, Gukesh stayed calm, reset

the pieces and walked away with quiet dignity. Weeks later, when Gukesh won against the same opponent, he re-arranged the pieces and ended the game. No celebration. No reaction. Just grace. He knew his strength and didn’t need to prove it. That is the maturity we must teach our students. Power without responsibility can humiliate. Power with self-awareness and grace commands respect.

As Children’s Day approaches, perhaps it is time to reflect not only on schooling but on education as a whole and how it

shapes young adults into thoughtful, responsible human beings.

Power comes with privilege, but also with duty. If we teach children to understand that, we give them something no exam can measure: the strength to stay kind, confident, and fair, even when they hold power.

Exams will pass. Certificates will fade. But the wisdom to hold power with empathy will define who our students become.

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Navigate your career

Uncertain about your career options? Low on self-confidence? This column may help



OFF THE EDGE
Nandini Raman

I finished B.Com and am preparing for the banking exams, which I don’t like. I am curious about History, Economics and Political Science. I’ve heard that doing an MBA can get one a good job but my family cannot afford the fees. I also want to speak fluent English. I don’t have any skills to get a job, and my family won’t let me do night shifts. I want to be independent and stand on my own feet. Shreya

Dear Shreya,

Do not take the exam if your heart is not in it. It’s okay to change your path and direction. Start developing skills that are in demand, practical, and affordable and also align with your B.Com degree. To improve your English, read newspapers, business magazines, and books on the subjects you are interested in. You can watch movies or listen to podcasts in English. Find a speaking partner with whom you can have focussed conversations every day. Record yourself talking about your day or describing things around you and listen to it to identify areas that need improvement.

Look for day-shift, entry-level jobs that offer growth even if the pay is modest. As you gain experience and skills, you can move to better paying jobs. Consider options such as project coordinator, data processing assistant, junior accountant or analyst and so on. Explore options of taking government exams such as the Staff Selection Commission - Combined Graduate Level Exam or State Public Service Commission Exams for roles of an Accountant, Auditor or Assistant Section Officer. Develop skills in data

analysis and research through online courses in Advanced Excel, Basic Statistics, Data Visualisation Tools, and Research Methodology. Improve your communication and writing skills and brush up on digital marketing and look for openings in social media marketing.

Once you start working, save money and consider doing a Master’s. Look for scholarships to fund your higher education. Before you sign up for the actual course, work on a detailed pros and cons list to identify why you are choosing it.

I am in Class 10 CBSE. I’m uncertain about which stream to choose after my board exams. I enjoy learning and reading, and usually do well in academics. However, I haven’t explored opportunities beyond my current syllabus. How can I better understand my potential and make a more informed decision? Diya

Dear Diya,

Explore and assess what you enjoy in your free time and beyond your textbooks. What topics do you seek information on? What kind of articles, books, or videos are you drawn to? Journal this for a week or two. Speak to a competent career counsellor who will help you navigate your findings. Take a career aptitude and personality test that will offer insights about your natural strengths, preferred working environments, weaknesses, skills, traits, interests, aptitude and overall personality. Virtual internships in different fields will give you some practical exposure in the domain. Also attend free webinars or

workshops on career exploration. Meet as many professionals across industries and talk to them about their daily work, challenges and what they love about their job/domain. Try introductory courses on different subjects online. All this will give you an idea of what your interests are and you can then make a decision.

I have been preparing for the UPSC for the last three years and am doing M.Sc. Psychology from Ambedkar University. What are my career options? Anurag

Dear Anurag,

Your options include being a counselling psychologist in educational institutions, hospitals, community mental health centres, and so on in the development sector, government social welfare departments or international development organisations. You can also consider working on talent acquisition, training and development, performance management, employee wellbeing in the corporate sector. If you are interested in research or academics, take the NET-JRF and qualify as a lecturer at a college.

Another option is to consider being a policy analyst or research associate in think tanks, international organisations or government ministries that have specific recruitment for research wings. Have you considered other government exams such as the state PSC exams or SSC-CGL?

I completed Master’s in Biological Sciences in 2023 and have been focussing on the UPSC. I didn’t clear

the first attempt, so I’m trying again. If I do not clear it this year also, what are my opportunities? Amrutha

Dear Amrutha,

You can consider entry-level roles such as research assistant or junior research fellow for specific projects. These may be temporary but will offer hands-on experience and lead to long-term roles of Ph.D. opportunities. However, JRF positions may be linked to national competitive exams such as CSIR NET, ICMR JRF, DBT JRF, and GATE Life Sciences. You can also consider positions in quality control/assurance, clinical research/data management, scientific writing, bioinformatics analysis and so on. Focus on developing technical skills such as lab techniques, data analysis, bioinformatics tools and relevant software. Gain practical experience through internships at diagnostic labs, hospitals, or an NGO working in health and environmental issues. Use this to build your network. Work on a personal project and blog about your research to showcase your passion and communication skills. Also consider doing short-term certifications on bioinformatics, pharmacovigilance, clinical research and so on to build your resume.

Disclaimer: This column is merely a guiding voice and provides advice and suggestions on education and careers.

The writer is a practising counsellor and a trainer. Send your questions to eduplus.thehindu@gmail.com with the subject line Off the Edge.



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When less is more

Students require curated learning to get the right material, at the right time, and in the right manner.

Prashant Sharma

In today’s digital classrooms, students are inundated with an overwhelming amount of content – from endless YouTube tutorials and ed-tech courses to bite-sized lessons on social media. The challenge no longer lies in gaining access but in capturing and sustaining attention. Educators now find themselves competing against a ceaseless stream of videos, “comprehensive” online modules, and algorithm-driven recommendations that are often misaligned with real learning objectives. While having a wealth of resources may appear empowering, it frequently results in the exact opposite: cognitive overload and stagnant learning outcomes.

Faced with too many choices, learners experience decision paralysis that hampers effective learning. Studies consistently show that overwhelming learners with excessive content reduces retention and understanding compared to when they have access to a smaller, well-curated set of resources. This is especially true for today’s students, whose average attention spans have shortened drastically in the digital age. In this en-

vironment, curation is no longer just an additional teaching skill; it has become a core competency for educators.

Effective curation means cutting through the noise by avoiding multiple overlapping resources that confuse rather than clarify. It involves aligning every piece of content directly with the curriculum to ensure it supports intended learning outcomes and managing cognitive load by delivering information in digestible segments rather than floods. Before integrating any new platform or digital tool, educators should evaluate it based on curriculum alignment, sound pedagogy, ease of navigation, and its impact on mental load. Instead of juggling multiple ed-tech subscriptions, focusing on two or three high-quality, complementary platforms and weaving them thoughtfully into lesson plans can significantly improve student outcomes. A smart strategy is unifying academic and competitive exam preparation into one streamlined learning path.

Since both curricula are based on the same foundational syllabus, combining them reduces duplication and confusion for students, allowing them to focus on mastery rather than

merely completing tasks.

Role of educators

Teacher mentorship remains essential in this model. Technology, when combined with guided support, enhances student engagement better than self-directed study alone. For example, in language learning, curated content paired with teacher-led practice sessions has demonstrated higher speaking proficiency and confidence among students compared to unguided app use. Similarly, in Mathematics, curated digital modules that progress in a scaffolded manner building from basic concepts to more complex problems alongside timely classroom feedback, lead to stronger conceptual understanding and improved problem-solving skills.

Across other subjects too, curation improves outcomes. In science education, for example, tailored multimedia content that combines animations, simulations, and real-world applications helps students visualise complex phenomena, making them easier to grasp than traditional textbook explanations. When teachers guide students to focus on these carefully selected resources, students develop better

critical thinking and analytical skills.

Numerous education initiatives following structured curation models report significant improvements. They note higher student retention, improved conceptual grasp, and superior performance in both exams and practical assessments.

Measuring success must extend beyond pass percentages. Leveraging technology to track understanding at the concept level enables educators to personalise instruction to individual needs, fostering adaptive learning environments. This targeted approach boosts both confidence and competence across diverse learner profiles. Personalised dashboards and analytics give teachers real-time information on each student’s progress, enabling timely interventions that prevent gaps from widening.

Institutions implementing curated learning also enhance students’ motivation and reduce burnout. When students feel guided and supported, rather than overwhelmed by unfiltered information, their engagement increases, and they develop stronger study habits and self-regulation.

In education, more content does not necessarily mean better learning. The role of educators has evolved from content providers to curators ensuring students receive the right material, at the right time, and in the right manner. This nuanced approach helps students learn deeply and meaningfully, preparing them for lifelong success. The future belongs to institutions and teachers who can translate content abundance into clarity and effective learning. In this context, curation is not a luxury but a necessity that will define the quality of education in the future.

The writer is the founder of Innovartan.

