

The University School connect  
**Workshop: Geography in our Life**

Date: June 14, 2023

Venue: Geography Lab, Azim Premji University

Facilitator: Saswati Paik,  
Faculty Member School of Education Azim Premji University, Bengaluru

No of participants:18

No of registration: 18

**Background of the Workshop:**

In India, Geography as a school subject is offered as a part of social studies curriculum to children since 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This subject has one unique feature which is its close connection with both natural science and social science. A teacher teaching geography in class must deal with both the concepts of natural and social science in geography class. It is not an issue if the teacher is aware of it and trained in this subject. But it becomes a challenge when the teacher has an academic training in a different discipline.

A research study on geography teaching learning process being conducted in Azim Premji University has revealed that many such teachers teaching geography face challenge in terms of explaining various concepts of geography, and they feel helpless because of appropriate teaching learning materials. The other challenge faced by them is connecting two sub-disciplines of geography, physical geography and human geography in a meaningful manner. To help a few teachers who teach geography in secondary and/or senior secondary schools (grade 6 to 12), and are willing to learn geography, its concepts discussed in school textbooks, possible pedagogical approaches to make their classes interesting and engaging with a richer content knowledge, a series of workshops are being conducted in Azim Premji University for geography teachers. This was one workshop in that series.

**Background of Participants:**

The teachers teaching Geography in 6 different schools in Bengaluru participated in the workshop. All of them have experience of teaching for 5 to 24 years. They are largely from Social Science background, however some of them teach science subjects also in the school.

**Brief description of settings:**

The geography lab was the venue of the workshop. The lab at our university is designed to enhance the learning and joy of learning in geography. It offers a unique setting for experiential learning, enabling teachers to actively explore geographical concepts and observe natural materials. The materials available in the lab created an appropriate ambience of learning geography.

## Workshop Objectives:

1. To explore the importance of geography as a discipline and its relevance in our everyday lives.
2. To discuss the challenges faced by teachers while teaching geography and brainstorm innovative teaching strategies.
3. To understand the integration of geography with other subjects and its multidisciplinary nature.
4. To promote collaboration and sharing of best practices among geography teachers.
5. To provide practical activities and resources that can enhance geographical learning experiences.



Photo 1: The teachers in the workshop

## Workshop Session Details:

1. Introduction:
  - Participants shared their backgrounds, experiences, and interest in geography.
  - The facilitator introduced the research project of the geography lab and emphasized the need for sharing best practices.
2. Importance of Geography:
  - Discussion on how geography is perceived by students and its presentation in the school curriculum.
  - Highlighted the use of low-cost models made from waste materials to reduce environmental damage.
  - Explained the difference between 2D and 3D models and their use in classrooms.



Photo 2: The facilitator in the workshop

3. Why Geography Matters:

- Facilitator presented the session objectives and emphasized the importance of geography as a discipline.
- Participants shared their perspectives on the significance of geography, including sustainability, scientific inquiry, valuing other species, and interdisciplinary connections.
- Explored the role of geography in understanding our local context, appreciating landform diversity in India, and its impact on our everyday activities.
- Discussed how geography explains culture, addresses contemporary issues, and connects with other subjects.

4. Challenges in Teaching Geography:

- Identified challenges faced by teachers, such as latitude and longitude explanations, contour lines, teaching the solar system, understanding physical geography, limited time, and dealing with parental and student perceptions.
- Discussed the multidisciplinary nature of geography and the need for specialized geography teachers.

5. Strategies and Suggestions:

- Participants suggested innovative teaching ideas, including out-of-the-box approaches, understanding government policies, organizing excursions for hands-on learning, improving terminology, and fostering creativity in the classroom.

6. Exploring Physical and Human Geography:

- Explored the concepts of physical and human geography, their integration in the curriculum, and challenges faced by geography teachers.
- Videos were shown to illustrate population growth, uneven distribution, and the largest cities by population.

7. Group Activities:

- Teachers engaged in group activities to identify concepts related to physical and human geography.

- Discussed and classified various topics, aiming to connect human experiences with geographical concepts.
- Encouraged teachers to make connections between physical and human geography and understand the complexities of the subject.



Photo 3 and 4: Conversation and activities during the workshop

8. Approaches in Teaching Geography:

- Shared different approaches used by participant teachers, such as storytelling, newspaper articles, and prompt questions.
- Explored three teaching approaches: didactic (information-driven), reflective (encouraging critical thinking), and affecting (emotional engagement).

9. Activity: Drawing Ourselves:

- Participants engaged in an activity of drawing themselves, focusing on scale, direction, legend, and grid in mental mapping.
- Highlighted the importance of these elements in understanding maps.

**Workshop Outcomes:**

The workshop was organised in such a manner that there was enough space for conversation with the teachers. Most of the activities were designed to engage teachers in some reflective process in very organic manner. The outcomes of the workshop include the following:

- Enhanced understanding of the importance and relevance of geography in our everyday lives;
- Identification and exploration of innovative teaching strategies to address challenges in teaching geography;
- Recognition of geography's multidisciplinary nature and its potential for integrated learning;
- Promotion of collaboration and sharing of best practices among geography teachers;
- Provision of practical activities and resources to enhance geographical learning experiences.

The workshop provided valuable insights into the challenges faced by geography teachers and explored innovative teaching strategies. It emphasized the interdisciplinary nature of geography and fostered collaboration among teachers to enhance geographical learning experiences.

**Feedback:**

Most of the teachers have expressed that the workshop was useful with new insights about geography, its nature as a discipline and its importance as a discipline in the school curriculum. They were benefitted by different ideas on pedagogical practices. They want more workshops like this on various themes of geography taught in school curriculum such as natural resources, climatic factors, ocean currents, etc. A few of them have felt the need of further discussion on different approaches of learning such as project-based learning approach, and different expectations of learning such as critical and analytical thinking in geography.



