# UNDERSTANDING EXCESSIVE TEACHER AND FACULTY ENTITLEMENT

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# UNDERSTANDING EXCESSIVE TEACHER AND FACULTY ENTITLEMENT: DIGGING AT THE ROOTS

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### **FOREWORD**

All learning is autobiographical and, as Dewey asserts, comes from purposeful reflection on personal experience. The experience that initiated this process of deep reflection about teachers and their learning stemmed from my involvement in a curriculum renewal process in India back in the 1980s. This was a time when ideas of empowering teachers by giving them more active participatory roles in the higher echelons of decision-making such as syllabus and material production were gaining ground in educational literature. I was part of a small group of teachers who carefully put together a set of materials and an evaluation scheme based on progressive ideas current in ESL teaching. Brimming with the enthusiasm of torch bearers we took the innovation to our teacher colleagues only to see that it failed to evoke the same spirit of commitment we had expected of them.

Time after time, in the curricular reform studies I have undertaken since then, I have heard the same refrain, "Teachers are not willing to change." This left me puzzling over my paradoxical experience with teachers: the expression of a desire to improve and change, on one hand, and their seeming disinclination to take charge of their learning and to reconsider their practice, on the other. The latter seemed to entitle one to blame students for a failure not of their making. It is while trying to characterize teachers' seeming reluctance to change that I stumbled upon the idea of "excessive teacher entitlement" as a counterpart to the popular characterization of some students as overly privileged in academic settings. What started as a quest to understand the cultural embrace of 'intellectual arrogance' among teachers/faculty led me to question the limits of my own knowing.

As a child, I listened to stories about *rishis* in the Himalayas, who had matted locks and long beards, and who supposedly engaged in *tapas* (deep meditation) for eons to gain  $\bar{A}tmaj\tilde{n}\bar{a}na$  (self-realization). The idea of self-realization, which sounded very esoteric and remote from my reality at that time, started making sense years later as I engaged in this humbling process to combat excessive entitlement present in myself and others through  $\bar{A}tmaj\tilde{n}\bar{a}na$  and the attendant empathetic understanding of the other.

My desire to create a symposium on the topic of excessive teacher/faculty entitlement for the ISATT conference 2019 in Sibiu, Romania, immediately resonated with international scholars. Cheryl Craig was the first to respond. She was excited at the prospect of moving the concept from uncharted territory into the field of teaching and teacher education. I sensed the germination of an additional layer of meaning in the idea of "generous scholarship" (Craig, 2020) which she introduced in her keynote speech at that very conference. This connection is finding more explicit expression in our dialogues today.

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Two symposia were organised at Sibiu to accommodate more voices bringing diverse perspectives into our deliberations. They created a legitimate professional platform to talk about the sources of oppression in the workplace, giving words and meaning to knowledge and emotions that had been simmering a long time. This cathartic release was a liberating experience according to the symposium participants.

It was Cheryl Craig who suggested that a book would bring fruition to our productive symposia. We used this opportunity to invite more international contributors to advance our thinking and to build a knowledge base on the crucial issue of "excessive teacher/faculty entitlement", a phenomenon that seized my attention decades ago and has ruminated in my mind ever since.

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#### REFERENCE

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