**Ms. Padma de Silva**

**Date of interview: 27 August 2021**

00:53

Hello I'm Poonam Sharma I will be conducting the interview with you.

01:04

So I just want to inform you that this interview will be recorded for the purpose of data analysis and confidentiality of your data will be maintained. Okay. So, can we begin by understanding your designation, your organization and the number of years of experience that you have?

01:45

I am Padma, I am a coordinator of the pre school education ATUT .

02:02

So, are you teaching also?

02:06

Now I am retired.

02:09

Oh, okay. Okay. How long have you taught man?

02:15

I am 16 years as a teacher. I am officer, National Institute for Education 21 years.

02:29

okay. So, right now you are the union staff.

02:36

I am the union staff ATUT. I am a coordinator of preschool education.

02:43

Okay, okay. Okay. So, you must be having some responsibility as a union staff.

02:51

 Yes. Can you elaborate a little on that? What are your responsibilities as a union staff?

03:02

I am a deputy school teacher. I conduct their experiences. .

03:23

So before you're retired, what are you teaching?

03:28

 I am teaching 16 years then I am officer. .

03:37

In the Education Department?

03:44

In the education departmnet . It is a teacher training , curriculum.

04:01

Okay, ma'am. Ma'am. Can you tell me a little about , were the school was working in the during the pandemic time?

04:21

I teach primary schools.

04:41

during the pandemic time where the school closed in your area

04:51

 All country schools closed.

04:55

Okay. When did the schools close?

05:09

About two years. Okay. Okay.

05:17

Was there any transition in the teaching mode Around the pandemic?

05:33

Okay, okay. All right. No problem. So I will, but my madam needs some translation, or will you be answering on her behalf? or will she be?

06:22

You've been to ask the questions, then I'll be the translator. So I'll get the

06:26

 And I'll tell you, yeah, I'm so grateful to you for intervening. Thank you so much. So I asked my questions now. Yeah. Thank you. Yeah. So I want to know, what was the mood of teaching adopted by the schools during the pandemic?

06:54

 Nowadays, almost teachers are practicing, like, doing their teaching through online, as well as there are some throught radios, there are some educational channels, of course, on the TV on so they can, here they're conducting their lessons. t.

07:14

So, this transition, how was this transition made? from like, they were teaching in the face to face mode, then this transition was made. So there must be some process, some people must have been involved in that decision making.

07:51

okay. It was the like, joint decision by the government and the school unions like teachers and the principal.

08:01

So, I'm assuming that there are government schools as well as their private schools?

08:06

Ah, yes, yes. Okay.

08:09

 So the decisions that have been made about the transition, are they applicable only to government schools? Or are they also applicable to private schools?

08:21

Yeah. It's applicable for both the institution like government and the private schools.

08:26

Okay. And do the teachers union deal with private schools?

08:39

Sometimes, yes, but not all the time .

08:44

So the teachers union that Padma madam is part of that. And that teachers union works with government school teachers or private school teachers.

08:57

They are working with both of them. Okay, okay.

09:01

And is it only teachers union of school teachers, or is it also including university and college teachers?

09:12

Only school teachers.

09:17

Now, I have two questions about the experience of teachers in in transitioning to the online mode. What is the like what what is Padma madam's general observation of teachers experience in this transition to online mode?

09:48

Can I think she'll be able to answer to that line looking forward to her because then she will, because she has written some notes about it. Okay. Sure. Sure. Yeah. Okay.

09:58

Teachers promote a new way to build their connections with the children at home online, the teachers connect with elders, parents and students. They promote their concepts, creative workd.

10:27

I got the answer partially. But what I want to know is, for example, do you think that there has been a difference in the way male and female teachers have responded to the situation?

11:00

 No, no, it's not like that, both the male and female teachers like they are working together and they don't have any, you know, any restrictions on.

11:14

Okay. And have there been any differences in the way private school teachers and government to school teachers have responded to the situation?

11:32

She's not quite sure about that. Because normally, she mostly collaborated with government schools, teachers, and she having that idea about the government school teachers.

12:09

Nice. Yeah. In what ways do you think the pandemic has impacted teachers work and their working conditions?

12:51

 Okay, the impact in the sense normally people's like teachers used to work face to face with the children with the given situation, they are not able to, like have face to face discussions or teaching with us. But of course with the like online education, they can not only the children, but of course they can, like talk with their parents and have individual give individual attention to each student's So likewise.

13:23

Okay. Okay. And working conditions of teachers, has there been any impact on that?

13:29

working conditions, of course, nowadays, they used to work eight to one o'clock now they are like, they don't have any time limitations from the morning to the evening. They have to work till like stretch working hours. So that's the change of their working conditions. Okay. Okay.

13:49

What goes in your location already using digital technology before the pandemic?

13:58

No, no, actually, we in our area schools, they didn't have any, like proper digital technologies. I think nowadays they're using because of this online situation. Okay, okay.

14:13

So, there must have been then purchase of a lot of laptops or digital devices, was that done by schools or did the government provide that

14:24

actually government provided those digital equipments

14:29

or during the as soon as the pandemic started or later,

14:34

later, actually, it was happened later. Okay.

14:38

 Okay, what are the new digital technologies that have been introduced in your school during the pandemic?

15:02

 school systems actually, through zoom and WhatsApp they are sharing their lessons was through WhatsApp and zoom they are conducting their lessons other than that. from school there's nothing but from the government and the private TV channel. So they are conducting the lessons through TVs and radio channels. That's okay.

15:25

Okay. Is it possible for you to forward me some links or websites which have these resources that you're mentioning? Like the government? That is government is broadcasting something or private schools or broadcasting something?

15:41

Private schools? Of course, they are not broadcasting anything? Like in? How can they like private channels and government? Okay. We will try our level best to find some links to you being tender.

15:56

Yeah, that would be nice. In general, do you think teachers has access to personal device or a gadget and internet connectivity during the pandemic for the work device.

16:25

personal devices, of course, I think some of the teachers have laptops, nowadays, like through smartphones, also we can access No, of course, like Internet connectivity they had. They had, yeah, okay. Okay. But not like it's private connections not provided .

16:45

Okay, they have to purchase a private connection and spend on it. Yes. Okay. So for those teachers who did not have a personal gadget how, , which were these teachers if they did not have a personal gadget?

17:02

Actually, if I'm not mistaken, I remember the from I actually I've seen from the news, the government has distributed some laptops, and given some laptops and phones to the teachers.

17:14

So that's how Okay, okay. So, if we can just get any document regarding this also was given by the government that will be very useful with this will be an evidence for our research.

17:29

 we will try our level best.

17:37

What challenges are teachers faced in accessing and using devices or internet for the work

18:07

 the thing is, nowadays, all the people are accessing the education and teaching system through it, internet, so connectivity issues, likewise.

18:30

Yeah. Yeah. So no, I'm asking like, you know, at least in India, it is happening. Some teachers face You know, there is they don't have the device.if They have the device, they don't have the particular software that they need. They don't know how where to go for getting that particular software downloaded or because laptop itself doesn't work or even mobile also need some support software support support is also needed. So I was wondering if there are any such observations that Padma Madam has from Sri Lanka

20:41

 So as you told he also like most of the people like teachers got like their sons and daughters are very capable of handling all these technology things so I think they haven't find any any found any difficulties to like downloading software they're not normally all that people are are using Zoom so it's like easy to download and it's I think there's no any problem with that Okay,

21:08

okay. Okay

21:12

what are the ways in which teachers work has changed as compared to the pre pandemic period?

21:31

actually as she mentioned earlier, normally teachers used to work like face to face the same as I had to give and nowadays they don't have that touch and they tend to miss little little details about children because only like for a small period of time they are meeting their children, I means students and the time durations are normally when they are in a school they are in the school, they are like collaborating with people and dealing with students like more than five hours nowadays only know only one hour or 30 minutes likewise. So change they have .

22:18

What are the current major concerns of teachers with regards to their work

22:42

 actually they are not happy with the way they have to teach through online and nowadays in you have you must have seen in the tv is also . So, they are having some strikes going on here because they are asking for increment and money for these online connections and all so that is their concern. Okay. Okay,

23:10

actually, I don't have much idea of what exactly is happening in Sri Lanka. And it would be really nice if you can you know, give me any leads on where I can found find information about these strikes that teachers are making and you know, the way they are advocating for their rights. So, where I find some of these

23:33

Okay, I will try actually because newspapers nowadays we are not buying newspapers during this pandemic situations, they are not printing papers also. So, we could go through. nowadays, this is the huge like the problem in Sri Lanka. These teachers strike and they are like most of them when they were on road.

24:04

What are the what are the major newspapers? Like? What are the prominent newspapers in your country?

24:11

I'm in Sinhala, we have silumina and Divina in English , the observer, Sunday Times.

24:25

Yeah. Yeah. So if you could help me with these, it will be really useful. Sure. Sure. Sure. Are there any specific factors that have caused stress amongst teachers?

24:40

I think only the salary factor.

24:42

 Okay, was their salary deducted during the pandemic?

24:46

No, no. But they're asking for some, some increments what they were promised earlier, like, two or three years back, they have not added to their service. That's what myUnder my understanding, actually fighting for their salaries.

25:03

Okay. And in terms of working from home Have there been any particular issues that is that are creating stress?

25:16

 normally how, I think not only for teachers or for all like for us also like working from home is a really big headache and a stress thing because we have to handle like dealing with, like household and children around us. And, yeah, so that's the thing,

25:41

So when you mentioned that many of the teachers have educated children who can help them with, you know, technology support, etc. Are there any other people that teachers reach out for support?

26:15

Actually, for that thing. If I say talk about my aunt, of course, she's like coming to us. So likewise, any designated person, there's no any designated person to assist them do things other than their family members? Okay, okay. Okay.

26:37

Have they approached the teachers union for any specific purpose?

27:20

 actually they haven't. They haven't done anything like that.

27:29

Okay, um, during the pandemic and the transition to remote or online mode, how have teachers benefited by being a union member?

28:21

They are willing to pay for them for these internet connections. I know but they are willing not accepting. They are like without charging anything they are working.

28:31

Sorry, I didn't get the union met union is willing to pay for the teachers ?

28:39

she's talking about from her perspective. She's a union staff, nevery union staff members. All the staff union staff members are working voluntary. They are not like paying any money from union regard with regards to any connections money.

28:59

Okay, okay. union members are not receiving any salary as being part of the Union. So that's, that's one thing. So my question is, has the teacher gained, any advantage by being a union member? Maybe there are teachers who are not a union member? And there are teachers who are union members. So those who are union members, did they have any advantage during the pandemic?

29:32

advantage in the sense what do you mean by that

29:34

advantage? Let's say I get any kind of you know, technical support or I get professional support or I get, let's say mental well being support or counseling or you know, the sense of being together in a community has this kind of support. being available to teachers,

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actually, they are providing whenever they required teachers required professional support they are providing and of course training also they are providing.

30:30

Okay. What kind of training has been given things?

30:45

s they have given training show most of the like primary school teachers and preschool teachers

30:55

on what topic on one topic or what topic?

31:12

actually they have covered everything not like subject because primary school, they don't have any subject by So, so they have given like general training to everyone. Okay.

31:22

Are there any reports about these trainings that have been conducted?

31:45

Hi, yeah. Normally, she's not having any records, but of course, their union like the president. She's telling the president is like, maintaining all the training records.

31:56

Okay. Okay. President from her union itself.

32:00

I think Miss Angela. think she's maintaining all training records. Okay.

32:10

Has your union advocated for any policy changes for teachers during the pandemic?

32:16

No, they haven't done it. Yeah. Okay. So how have these issues of salaries being raised? who is doing the strike then? government school teachers

32:28

they are jointly doing without the union's inclusion in it.

32:34

A union in the sense like they are these union that ,what my aunt is working that the other unions are like two different unions, I think. So they are having two different

33:16

actually , those teachers have not consulted these union. So it's a separate institution. So they don't have any connection with that. Okay, okay.

33:36

Has your union provided any form of support to teachers during the pandemic? Please elaborate. whether it was access to device internet connectivity training, you said they have done so that I noted any other kind of support from these

33:53

offline union a memory access to devices, connectivity will be in the input follow up, overload the union?

34:03

No, other than training they haven't done anything. They haven't provided any other .

34:12

in your region, what kind of support will be needed by the teachers for their work in future?

34:17

, they should be provided with good gadgets like laptops or smartphones with good connections like either free connections from the government likewise, okay. Okay.

34:59

And anything else?

35:04

 and of course according to their salaries .

35:12

 if you want to know more about this union thing, you better contact Miss Angela. That's what she's advising you because she can get she can use a lot more information about the union works alone. Okay, okay,

35:28

okay. Yeah, no problem I'll do that definitely.

35:37

Yes, yes, absolutely. Thank you so much. Yeah. Yeah. Does your organization have any specific plans for supporting teachers in future ?

36:09

actually, they have some plans, but due to this Corona pandemic, they haven't met. . And as I said earlier, Miss Angela is having all the plans .

36:25

 So, as I understood from what Padma maam said, she worked as a teacher previously, and then she was working as an education officer with the government. And now she's retired.

36:39

Yes, yes. Okay.

36:48

I'll definitely be contacting Miss Angela. But she also and nevertheless asked a few questions that are left. What are your main concerns with regard with teachers work in future?

37:45

actually, what she's telling with the pandemic situation, they are not able to like, finish their syllabuses and work on time. And it is very difficult to prepare the students for any kind of exams, like all o levels and a levels.

38:36

that teachers are not able to teach the syllabus that they're required to teach and they're not able to prepare the students for entrance exams?

38:44

 Yes. Okay.

38:47

 How do you think the teaching profession will change in future?

39:19

actually, right now, she doesn't have any idea how we're going to be changing future, but what she's telling will be more most of the time it will be like, it will be professional like remotely. Well, that's what she thinks.

39:33

Teaching in through remote . Yes, that means the online mode of teaching or something remote teaching is different or online teaching. does she mean different thing or does she mean the same thing?

39:47

Same thing, same thing. Okay. Do you think that digital learning technologies will continue to be used in future in your area?

40:15

she thinks so with these things, if everything like change into normal situation. This odigital learning technology will not continue Yeah, that's what he thinks. If everything goes well and if this pandemic situation get over, she thinks this digital learning technologies will not continue.

40:51

Okay, so she's saying that digital learning technologies may not continue, but what will happen to them when the schools will reopen?

41:24

 Actually, she thinks sometimes, like earlier students used to have after school classes. So now she thinks about this after school classes, they will turn into this digital learning technology.

41:38

Okay, okay. Is there anything else that she wants to tell me regarding how our pandemic has impacted teachers work?

42:11

She wants to add, because normally, the teachers can identify weak students when they are dealing with face to face. But with the level like these digital learning, actually, they can't find any weak students, they can identify any weak students among from the all the students, because they won't be able to get chance to like, help them more. Like normally teachers like giving more attention to those weak students now, but now we are given these digital learning technologies, they are not getting any chance to be like special Attention, attention to those students .

43:26

So like you said that teachers time with the children instead of five hours, it is now one hour. It's been really reduced. I just wanted to know, you know, so this is, of course, one of the challenge that teachers are facing. So in that challenge itself, some teachers must have done well, and some teachers must have struggled more. So are there any observations with regard to Who are these teachers who could survive the online mode?

44:32

basically, you're asking how to evaluate the teachers performance, right? Whether they are like doing good or not.

44:42

I am asking the same question, but I'm asking it from the perspective of the teacher. So when we say evaluate, we will say that somebody outside is evaluating but teachers must be having a reason of why they're behaving the way they are believing. So that's what I want to know.

45:01

Ah, actually, she's like, telling something else. I think what she's mentioning this time duration is not enough for anyone to like, , how do you say?

45:23

Okay to cope up with the syllabus? That's what she mentioned earlier on?

45:27

 Yes, yes. Okay.

45:29

 Okay. All right. No problem. So I think we'll close the interview. What's your good name? My name is Aranda. Yeah. Yeah.

45:40

Thank you so much for intervening and helping me out, conduct the interview.

45:45

45:52

Yeah, no problem, but then it gives me an idea of what is happening in Sri Lanka because I am only talking about things from the Indian perspective. So that will be useful and it will give me more leads as to what are the things I need to explore.

46:22

Sure, sure.

46:38

Thank you. Bye. Bye.

46:44