"Transforming Education for a Multicultural Society"

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Abstract

The changing composition of the classroom and broader society which is becoming increasingly diverse and the proliferation of communication media & technology which is becoming increasingly accessible to most sectors of the population are the two developments challenging current educational practice in the India. Teachers today find themselves working with more diverse students than ever before students increasingly has access to sophisticated portable, personal communication devices that in many cases deliver information more rapidly and more engagingly than textbooks and traditional classroom pedagogy. Far too often the focus in teacher education programs has been on curriculum content rather than on effective and appropriate instructional strategies for teaching and reaching diverse groups of students. If we are to prepare today's teachers for the changing composition of our society and schools, colleges of education need to do much more. Multicultural education needs to be integrated throughout teacher preparation programs. In this research article the researcher tries to study the present situation of India as a multicultural society, suggest reforms in teacher education programme and suggest the classroom strategies for transforming education for multicultural society.

Key Words: Transformation, Education, Multicultural society

Introduction:

"Today's children are living a childhood of firsts. They are the first daycare generation; the first truly multicultural generation ; the first generation to grow up in the electronic bubble, the environment defined by computers and new forms of television; the

first post-sexual revolution generation; the first generation for which nature is more abstraction than reality; the first generation to grow up in new kinds of dispersed, deconcentrated cities, not quite urban, rural, or suburban" Richard Louv While the composition of the student in the classrooms grows increasingly diverse, the teacher workforce remains comparatively more homogeneous (white, female and middle class). Many of today's teachers have had little in the way of thorough multicultural education, that would help them recognize and respect cultural differences, similarities and identify effective strategies for successfully engaging students from different backgrounds. At the same time, these teachers growing up in a majority culture have been exposed to media messages about minorities that have often marginalized such groups or presented stereotypical or inaccurate information. This is the reason why the researcher wants to study the present situation, think about the reforms in teacher training programme and the classroom strategies to transform education for multicultural society. For this the researcher has decided following objectives

Objectives:

• To study the present situation of India as a multicultural society

• To suggest reforms in teacher Education Programme

• To suggest classroom strategies for transforming education for multicultural society.

The present situation of India as a multicultural society

India has a rich and unique cultural heritage, and has managed to preserve its established traditions throughout history. It has always absorbed customs, traditions and ideas from both invaders and immigrants. Many cultural practices, languages, customs and even monuments are examples of this co-mingling over centuries. India society is largely pluralist, multilingual and multicultural. Diversity is a part of Indian way of life. From region to region, diversity in the social structure is prominently seen. The diversity factor notwithstanding, this is a common thread running through the India's. Unity in diversity is best seen in India in a maze of seemingly disparate peoples. This book attempts to present exhaustive and elaborate details about India society and Culture. It provides comprehensive information n the roots of India civilization, the caste system, religion and faith, social relations education, languages, arts and crafts, dance, music, fairs and festivals, status of women and so on. This work will be a valuable reference tool for teachers, students and researchers of social sciences and all who are interested in India society and culture. India perhaps has one of the most diverse and multicultural societies in the world today. With over 400 spoken languages and over a 100

different communities of people based on language, religion and caste multiculturalism is woven in the fabric of India. Situation in Teaching learning context The basis for teaching should always be the student. Regrettably this foundation is too often forgotten in the urgent need to cover content or make. The individual, including teachers, not just students, is lost in the rush for measurable outcomes that may or may not identify meaningful learning, but will almost always make the front page of the local paper, ranking schools and test results with little attention given to the social or cultural content or context of the school population. Reforms need to be done in teacher Education Programme The focus in teacher education programs has been on curriculum content rather than on effective and appropriate instructional strategies for teaching and reaching diverse groups of students. If we are to prepare today's teachers for the changing composition of our society and schools, colleges of education need to do much more following are the reforms need to be done in teacher education programme:

.Multicultural education needs to be integrated throughout teacher preparation programs and reinforced at numerous points in the progress to licensure.

In addition to addressing this in required courses and reading material prospective teachers must be given numerous opportunities to visit schools with diverse populations, so they have the opportunity to observe, question, participate, learn, make mistakes and correct them.

Theoretical knowledge is one matter, experiential knowledge is another; both are needed for a rounded education.

With so many young people now having so much access to so many media messages inside and outside of the classroom, it becomes increasingly necessary for schools to not only integrate these tools but to give students the cognitive skills necessary to understand how media operate, whose interest they serve, and how they influence perceptions. For this to happen, media literacy like multicultural education must find its way into more teacher preparation programs

Classroom strategies for transforming education for multicultural society.

Those of us, who advocate for multicultural education, believe that students and their life histories and experiences must be placed at the center of the teaching and learning process and that pedagogy should be developed which is relevant to these students.

That means that teachers must have not only a firm command of their subject, they must have deep and thorough understanding of cultural differences in their students.

In conceptualizing the individual, teachers must first acknowledge that his or her own distinctive character is shaped by gender, race, ethnicity, language, religion, sexual orientation and other factors. Self concept or identity development begins early within the family unit and soon includes the interactions between these and learned/shared beliefs, values, customs and practices. These elements not only contribute to and construct individual identity they also impact the way individuals perceive the outside world. Multicultural education helps both teachers and their students develop a positive self-concept through shared knowledge about the histories, cultures and contributions of diverse groups.

Media, through media representations in film, television, music, advertising and other formats contribute to the way we see others and they in turn see us. Media literacy can be a powerful tool and an important component of the multicultural classroom, when students and teachers examine, challenge, confront, validate or refute the information contained in these depictions.. In other words, their own cultural upbringing made it difficult for them to recognize how those outside of that culture might think, act or feel.

STRATEGIES

Following are the useful strategies within existing curricula which can be implemented immediately, without special resource or personnel allocations, or any major structural or social changes within schools, to foster a climate more favourable to the development of a multi-cultural society.

• Culture Symbol Analysis

This involves an examination in a cross-cultural context, of a number of significant cultural symbols. For example:

(a) the process of giving names to people in different cultures;

(b) the meaning of the names themselves;

(c) the ways in which names create and express ego-identity and group-identity;

(d) the non-verbal symbols and artifacts of different cultures.

Such a project is currently under way..On the assumption that attitudes change as a result of increased information and interpretive awareness, this could be a very powerful strategy.

- Culture Learning Through Socio-Literature

There are various ways in which socio-literature interprets and illuminates human nature, the human condition, and various social problems. Sensitivity developed through socio-literature can contribute to intercultural understanding and to greater value being placed on multi-cultural societies. Common factors underlying cultural diversity can be extracted, e.g. themes within personal, social, religious, political or economic institutions; responses to human relationships, concepts of love, and responses to existing realities.

- Psycho drama

This approach is more immediate than socio-literature, perhaps because of its special technique. Psychodrama enables the important psychological dimensions of multiculturalism to be highlighted, whether the drama includes tension, conflict, prejudice, violence, defeat, or the creation of a competent, coping self.

- Role-Playing

At a less formal level, role-playing can be a valuable means of under-standing what it feels like to be in the other's shoes; what different perspectives one has; and the socially induced constraints inherent within Various roles. According to cognitive developmental theory, role-taking the ability of the child to enact and empathize with another's View point is an important stage in moral growth and can effect attitudinal changes.

- Games

These can be informal, e.g. posing a problem in which a minority person might be involved, and using buzz sessions to produce solutions. At a more formal level, the game could approach something like SIM/SOC where aspects of society are simulated and where, for example, students could come to realize very vividly what it means to be powerless and without recourse to decision making or policy making segments in the community.

- Intercultural Experience

With cultural diversity a rich source for the school to tap, it should be relatively simple to arrange cultural interchange, e.g. between two families for a day, a weekend, a vacation. Such

an interchange, to be enduring, should probably go beyond the sampling of different foods and the wearing of ethnic dress, the participation in song and dance, etc. to cultural nuances. Perhaps any interchange is a positive move at this point in time.

• Media

Visual information on different cultural groups (to supplement verbal and symbolic information) may produce heightened awareness and sensitivity towards such groups. This can be as complex as the viewing of several films which is less directly relevant to the situation of cultural diversity in India, but provides a conceptual framework within which to view difference. Or local films on living can be viewed. There can be Media Centre encouraging children make their own films on the problems and issues as they perceive them.

• Content Analysis

Content analysis of existing textbooks and reference books is useful. Students can be sensitized to the inadequate representation given to various ethnic and minority groups. Myths and stereotypes can be exploded or modified.

These are but a few of the strategies teachers could use and develop now, if they themselves are committed to, and feel that it is part of their role, to contribute to a society that could eschew many of the cultural conflicts and tensions that have be fallen other nations. Educators can help weave into Indian society a rich multi-cultural texture, built on the acceptance of difference and diversity, and convinced of individual worth, regardless of ethnic or racial origin. Such a stance seems critical in the uncertain world in which we live.

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