



MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR A CHANGING WORLD

ANITA R JAGTAP

Arihant College of Education, Pune

Abstract

Multiculturalism is a term used to describe many cultures and learning to get on with one another with mutual respect. Multicultural education is a whole school process that prepares students for their roles and responsibilities in an interdependent world. It places students at the centre of all school practices that promote multiple perspectives and an appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity within a democratic society. The teacher must have the following multicultural competencies for the on-going development of a multiculturally sensitive classroom.

Key words: *Multiculturalism, multicultural education, teacher, student.*

Introduction:

Democratic societies are strengthened by fundamental principles, such as freedom, equality, and justice. When variables like culture, ethnicity, race, and diversity are utilized in order to give some privileges to individuals from some groups and to reject others, then the provision of equal opportunities becomes a serious challenge for a society. Interestingly, every human being has a tendency to react against all forms of domination and has an intrinsic desire for freedom. For this reason, more than ever, education in and for a society must supply the schooling that is required for each student so that they can develop their own interests and learn to live, if not in cooperation with others, then at least peacefully. Dewey, strongly opposes putting students into fixed categories or classes and treating them as a member of a class or group. In other words, the school must provide a good balance between the curriculum, the teachers, and the administrators, as well as ensuring physical and moral conditions.

The never returning process of globalization has brought in the importance for quality education that emphasizes on development of knowledge and skills in students more than before.. Process of globalization brought in internationalization of education. Schools are now a days taking interest in providing internationally accredited curricular transaction to satisfy the need of parents to provide quality education to their children. This phenomenon is greatly influencing the academic culture the of class rooms.. All there aspects are bringing in the character of multiculturalism into the tradition classroom setting to an enhanced level. This trend has changed the atmosphere, conflicts, working patterns of teacher-students and teaching learning process to greater extent.

Concept of Multiculturalism:

Multiculturalism is a term used to describe many cultures and learning to get on with one another with mutual respect. It is a policy that emphasizes the unique characteristics of different culture in the world, especially as they relate to one another in receiving nations. The word was first used in 1957 to describe Switzerland, but came into common currency in Canada in late 1960s. It quickly spread to other English country. It also refers to a policy that endorses the principle of cultural diversity and supports the spirit of different cultural and ethnic groups to retain distinctive cultural identities. Concept of Multiculturalism in Indian society is more historical than original. Several cultures from the world over have entered India of which Aryan culture dominated to influence others. Later invasions and migrations has added more flavor to the concept. Each group has its own unique social background, religious believes, code of conduct, standard of living and value systems. As school is considered as a miniature society it is bound to have this concept.

Multicultural Education:

Multicultural education is a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity as acknowledged in various documents, such as the U.S. Declaration of Independence, constitutions of South Africa and the United States, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations. It affirms our need to prepare student for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in developing the attitudes and values necessary for a democratic society. It values cultural differences and affirms the pluralism that students, their communities, and

teachers reflect. It challenges all forms of discrimination in schools and society through the promotion of democratic principles of social justice. Multicultural education is a process that permeates all aspects of school practices, policies and organization as a means to ensure the highest levels of academic achievement for all students. It helps students develop a positive self-concept by providing knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups. It prepares all students to work actively toward structural equality in organizations and institutions by providing the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for the redistribution of power and income among diverse groups. Thus, school curriculum must directly address issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, ablism, ageism, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia. Recognizing that equality and equity are not the same thing, multicultural education attempts to offer all students an equitable educational opportunity, while at the same time, encouraging students to critique society in the interest of social justice. Multicultural education is a whole school process that prepares students for their roles and responsibilities in an interdependent world. It places students at the centre of all school practices that promote multiple perspectives and an appreciation of cultural and linguistic diversity within a democratic society.

Need of multicultural education:

We live in a world in which interracial conflicts and tensions seem to have become an inevitable phenomenon of daily life. On the positive side however, the last millennium has made us more knowledgeable about the nature of global acceptance, the equal-status situation, and mutual expectations. In today's society, as we enter the 21st century, the deepening ethnic background of nations, diversity within societies, and an increasing percentage of people who speak a second language have made multicultural education crucial. Multicultural education is seen as an opportunity to improve race relations and to help all students gain the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to take part in cross-cultural interactions. Children learn the difference when playing with one another.⁵ The same is true in education, as teaching has become a multicultural experience. Instead of fearing or ignoring the diversity in the classroom (and society), teachers can use diversity to enrich instruction. Multicultural education helps teachers to use diversity as a resource that can bring more meaning, tolerance, and opportunity to multicultural classroom. Both teachers and

students belong to diverse groups distinguished by variables such as age, social class, gender, race, and ethnicity.

Role of School:

Schools should make sure multicultural perspectives are incorporated into all aspects of school life by:

- promoting diversity as a positive learning experience
- incorporating multicultural perspectives across all learning domains
- incorporating multicultural, anti-racism, and human rights perspectives in school policies and practices
- enhancing teachers' and students' intercultural understanding and cross-cultural communication skills
- making sure all school policies, including three year strategic and annual plans, codes of conduct, dress codes and discipline policies reflect the diverse nature of the school community.

Multicultural Classroom: A multiculturally sensitive classroom provides every student with opportunities to achieve his or her potential. It allows students to understand and appreciate their own culture while recognizing its similarities and differences to other cultures and perspectives in society.

Important components of a multicultural classroom include (1) explicit awareness of cultural influences in society, (2) academic content that is relevant to cultural groups, and (3) skills to communicate effectively across cultures.

A common myth is that only schools with notable ethnic or racial differences need to embrace multicultural competencies. All teachers can prepare all students to become multiculturally competent citizens in a diverse society.

Changing role of Teacher:

The role of teacher in such classrooms is of importance to deal with all students on equal grade. Teacher can belong the any one of the group of students or to a separate group of

students. In any situation, an objective approach is expected in dealing with students. The teacher must have the following multicultural competencies for the on-going development of a multiculturally sensitive classroom.

Developing a multicultural approach to education is an ongoing process, not an instantaneous accomplishment. There is no limit to how multiculturally competent a teacher can become because improvement is always possible. Some suggestions follow for ongoing development of a multiculturally sensitive classroom:

- Evaluate the methods, books, and curriculum you use. Check to see if your lesson plans and text books offer a variety of perspectives and ideas concerning multicultural concepts.
- Engage the students in the learning process. Find out what they know and what they would like to know, and then explore different perspectives together.
- Ask probing and critical questions to yourself and your students to learn where and how you and they were exposed to information on certain subjects.
- Critically evaluate historical views from different perspectives. Relate concepts to the students' lives in society right now.

Understand the various cultures of students in your classroom and reflect on how the differences or similarities may affect your classroom and instruction.

Incorporating Diverse Methods of Teaching

Multiculturally competent educators provide a variety of perspectives on the subject matter they teach. Thus they foster students' critical thinking skills and also enable students to better understand the subject. The following are ways to facilitate this type of culturally sensitive atmosphere.

- Incorporate a variety of activities.
- Invite speakers to talk about specific topics.
- Provide a wide range of videos that will enable students to see different perspectives.
- Provide field experiences.
- Use a variety of books, art, and music.

- Encourage students to critically reflect on and evaluate different experiences.

Role of Institutions involved with Teacher Education program

Institutions of teacher education program at all levels need to think about this factor gaining importance in day to day classroom interaction. Teachers are to be made aware of this situation and various problems that are cropping up due to this situation In teaching learning and classroom interactions. There is a need to provide these matters in the curriculum and such learning experiences for pre service teachers so that they understand the concept and mould their behavior. The techniques and approaches need to be provided to them to deal effectively with students in a multicultural classroom. There is a need for pre service institutions to develop possible course content and other related activities regarding this matter. In service training can also look into matters by providing opportunities to teachers to exchange their views with others. Opportunity should also be given to make them understand about different cultural contents existing inside the classroom. These measures will help teachers and their students to live peacefully in a culturally diverse society.

Thus the world of 21st century has under gone a drastic change. Liberalization, privatization and globalization have lead to revolution in all spheres of life. The structure of society has also undergone tremendous change. Every society in present era is affected by the following forces:-

- Political trends
- Economic trends
- Technological and scientific break through
- Social, cultural and personal trends
- Post modernism
- Multiculturalism

Conclusion

Multicultural education is a new trend and it will become incorporated into most school curriculums in future years. Several prestigious universities in the world today require students to take classes in social studies. Thus, by using multicultural education, teachers, in particular, can help children value the significance of treating all people with self-esteem and

not judging groups of people for the actions of a few. More importantly, teachers must model tolerance and compassion in their words and behavior. They should also encourage children to explore their feelings about prejudice and hatred. In doing this, the society will secure a better chance to stop any further destruction and will be able to present potentially powerful opportunities for the next generation to learn and integrate respect and dignity for all people.

References:

Amin, J & Mdhavi, R. L.(2006). “Multiculturalism in classrooms: An emerging research trend” in Goel, D, R.(2006). Research Trends in Education, CASE: Vadodara.

Chakraborti, M. (1998). Teacher Education: Modern Trends. New Delhi: Kanishka Publishers.a.

Joseph, K. S. (2000). “Teachers in multicultural society” in Goel, D. R. (2000). Teacher education: Vision and Action, CASE: Vadodara

www.mu.ac.in/myweb_best/MAeducation_philosophy/chapter16pdf

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/multicultural_education

www.ncrcl.org/sdrc/areas/educatrs/presrvse/