MULTICULTURALISM AND INDIAN EDUCATIONAL POLICIES

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Abstract

India is a land of myriad languages, cultures, ethnic groups. Apart from it, the country has followers from different religious faith of the world. India is the amalgamation of diverse sub cultures spread all over the country and traditions that are millennia's old. India has been extremely sensitive to the importance of recognizing, protecting, and promoting cultural differences. Therefore, this paper tried to focus on the constitutional provisions of India in relation to multiculturalism. The paper has attempt to highlight the educational policies of India addressing cultural diversity in different levels of education i.e. primary, secondary, higher, teacher education. On the basis of the review it can be concluded that the Indian constitution and educational policies provides a well balanced model of multiculturalism . It is the need of the hour to transcend the multicultural perspective from policy level to the active public sphere especially in the education sector.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Multicultural Education, Educational Policies

Introduction:

The national culture of India is the amalgamation of diverse sub cultures spread all over the country and traditions that are millennia's old. In India, it is not possible to escape from the impact of its culture, be it politics, technology, education and development. Diversity is a strength in itself but transformed into a problematic issue when coexist with justice, equality and equal opportunity. India has been extremely sensitive to the importance of recognizing, protecting, and promoting cultural differences.The philosophy of multicultural education demands equal opportunity in terms of access, quality, equity, etc., for all without any sort of discrimination.

Multiculturalism:

The term multiculturalism is used to indicate a specific social and cultural school of thoughts adopts the liberal and all compulsive policy of cultural amalgamation. The phenomenon of multiculturalism is not new to the world and thus not new in academics but it gets a new air in the period of colonization. The imperial policies of developed nations and radical changes in the means of transport and development of international trade gave birth to new

multicultural society. It influences every human life and produces cozy atmosphere in which two different cultures co-exist and contribute to the process of acculturation. The scene of cultural crisis , ethnic dispute and religious riots of early 20th century have substituted with the cultural harmony, embracement of ethnic diversity and the acceptance of religious differences of mid 20th century. Many scholars of disciplines like sociology, history, political science, immigrant studies and literary criticism contribute much significant discourse to define and refine the terminology of multiculturalism.

The term multicultural is popularly used as adjective in the phrases like multicultural education, multicultural curriculum and multicultural society. Multicultural and multiculturalism are the words frequently used to describe the ethnic diversity. Multiculturalism denotes a society in which the several cultures co-exist. It means that it is a society, state, a nation, a country, a region or even a geographical location as town or school, which is composed of people who belong to different cultures. Oxford Advanced learners dictionary defines multiculturalism as the practice of giving importance to all cultures in a society and it includes people of several, different races, religions, languages and traditions. Multiculturalism is a late twentieth century literary, pedagogic, socio-political movement. It is an ideology that considers all cultures worthy and issues of study. It is compared to 'bowl of salad' where every piece maintains its taste and adds to total.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a philosophical concept built on the ideals of freedom, justice, equality, and human dignity as acknowledged in various documents. It affirms our need to prepare students for their responsibilities in an interdependent world. It recognizes the role schools can play in an interdependent world. 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 contribution of diverse groups. It prepares all students to work actively toward structural equality in organizations and institutions by providing the knowledge, skills for the redistribution of power among diverse groups. Thus school curriculum must directly address issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguism, ageism, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia. Multicultural education advocates the belief that students and

their life histories and experiences should be placed at the center of the teaching and learning process and that pedagogy should occur in a context that is familiar to students and that address multiple ways of thinking. In addition, teachers and students must critically analyze oppression and power relations in their communities , society and the world.Recognizing that equality 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.

Education policies approaches to multicultural education are the Multicultural Education approach promotes the transformation of the educational process to reflect the ideals of democracy in a pluralistic society. Students are taught content using inthe instructional methods that value cultural knowledge and differences and Educators who use the Social Reconstructionist approach to multicultural education go a step further to teach students about oppression education and discrimination . Students learn about their roles as social change agents so that they may participate in the generation of a more equitable society.

Educational policies related to Primary Education:

The Right to children Free and Compulsory Education Act(RTE) 2009 got an assent of president to provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of six to fourteen years belonging to the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST), the socially and educationally backword class , or such other group having disadvantage owing to social, cultural, economical, geographical, linguistic, gender or other such factor. SarvaShikshaAbhiyan(SSA) is the government's flagship programme launched in 2001 to provide universal access to elementary education for children to achieve grade appropriate levels of learning and also aims to eliminate gender differences and gaps between social categories. Goovernment of India introduced centrally sponsored scheme in 1995 to provide nutritional report to primary education in the line of universalization of elementary education.The idea behind implementation of mid day meal programme apart from child nutrition and educational advancement is social equity which helps to sit together and share a common meal.

CABE's committee report(2005) on Integration of cultural Education in the school curriculum points up that 'chalk and talk' approach doesnot give space to children to works in groups, to explore and learn together . If children are encouraged to work in a group activities , group projects and so on in the primary grades, gender and other kind of biases

will never get embedded in their mind. On other hand opportunities for imbibing the ability to accept the viewpoints of others, leadership qualities etc., will routinely become part of day to day school life. It further suggest that for the pre primary and elementary stage of school education the mother tongue shall be the medium of instruction so that children do not feel threatened by an alien language thrust upon them. This will ensure that the thinking process of child, which happens in the mother tongue / home language do not get hindered.

National Knowledge Commission(2007) believes that providing universal access to quality school education is corner stones of development and a minimum necessary condition for any progress towards making India a knowledge society. It further suggested that school education must be provided to all which requires integration of children of disadvantaged, minorities' communities along with children with disabilities or special needs. It also , underlines that there should be no distinction made in terms of the type of schooling provided within the government system for children from different social, economic and cultural backgrounds. It further stressed that school system should be flexible enough to cater the particular needs of students. Programme of Action(POA) 1992 emphasized linking of education and culture in order to promote the process of child personality development particularly in terms of discovering the inherent potentialities of the child. It suggested to take step towards the reflection of diverse images, of natural and cultural heritage in the school curriculum.

Educational policies Related to Secondary Education:

There has been hrowing concern about how best to meet the educational challenge of learner diversity. Due to social mobility , the student population in Indian schools becoming increasingly diverse, educators must respond with school reform efforts that meet the needs of all students. Thus various educational bodies and commission time to time made.

National Curriculum framework (2005) has emphasized on the importance of cultural diversity, as the greatest gifts of our country. It further says that "need to radically change the center verses periphery perspective on intercultural relationships in our country. Cultures on the so called periphery must receive must attention as cultures in the center. As for education , its implication is that ways of life other than one's own must be imaginatively and effectively presented as deserving of as much respect as one's own". CABE's committee report (2005) on Integration of Cultural Education in the school curriculum shows concern about the children of our country who do not have sufficient understanding of the strengths of

their own cultural backgrounds. Nor theyare aware of the cultural backgrounds of their friends and acquaintances. Improving the quality of cultural awareness the report suggested that the entire schooling should be based on the culture of the community.The Indian Education Commission's(1964-66) report also put forward a new "Common School System" for integration of cultural values into the school education should be designed and implemented , one that would bridge the cultural barriers by bringing all students together irrespective of caste, creed, location or gender to have access to education of comparable quality.

National Policy on Education(1986) has dwell on between formal system of education and the countries rich and cultural traditions which need to be bridged. Deculturalisation, dehumanization and alienation must be avoided at all costs. It has laid stress on taking step tofoster among students an understanding of the diverse cultural and social system of the people living in the different parts of the country. It also instated on promotion of link language and launching of programmes to increase substantially the translation of books from one language to another and publish multilingual dictionaries.

The policy focus attention on reorienting the curricula and process of education by cultural content in as many manifestation as possible. In our culturally plural society, education should foster universal and eternal values , oriented towards the unity and integration of our people.Secondary Education Commission(1952) emphasized the role of education creating awareness and understanding of cultural diversity of the nation. It says that "if a democracy like ours is to survive- a democracy which harbours so many faiths, races, and communities-education must cultivate in our youthan openness of mind and largeness of heart which would make them capable of entertaining and of blending harmonious pattern of differences of ideas and behavior. It suggested the ways school can create understanding among its citizen.It" it is possible for every school to do so, not only through the proper presentation of the various school subjects-particularly the humanities and social studies – but also by utilizing resources and opportunities provided by the fact that its students are drawn from different castes, creeds and classes".This will make student to learn and live harmoniously in the as community and later in the lager communityoutside the school.

National Knowledge Commission(2007) has recognized the significance of language not only as a medium of instruction or a medium of communication but also as determine to access. It recommended that the teaching of English as a language should be introduced , along with

the first languageof the child, starting from class I. It also suggested increase in the availability of English Language teachers and providing more bilingual and supplimentry teaching materials.

Educational Policies Related to Higher Education:

Education Commission(1948) lays emphasis on the use of regional language in the process of teaching and learning.NPE(1986) highlighted that in higer education in general and technical education in particular , steps will be taken to facilitate inter regional mobility by providing equal access to every Indian of requisite merit, regardless of origins. University Education Commission suggested that students should be encouraged to participate in the social and culutural activities, of the areas in which the colleges are situated of that they may become alive to the needs of the society in which they live. Report of the committee on "Concept and Framework of the community college scheme" highlighted that higher education is neutral to the cultural heritage of our country, be it the art, craft, handicraft, music, architecture or any such thing which deserves proper prevention and promotion through educational system with income assurance. Therefore , it suggested that curricula being taught in the universities today need to be modified suitably and updated regularly in consultation with the industry business and the service sector as well as the local community particularly the marginalized section of the population that include minority, first generation degree seekers, backward areas and low income.

Educational Policies related to Teacher Education:

The change on the educational scenario would rest on the academic excellence, professionalism and commitments of teachers and teacher educators working in perfect consonance with educational planners(The Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education,2004).It also emphasizes that the transaction of curriculum should be culture specific. The input derived from cultural anthropology , social psychology and socil-linguistics need integration with the educational theories and practices. It further says that" India's unity in diversity , contributions of different ethnic , religious ,regional, linguistic groups and minorities to the making of rich composite structure culture , art, literature, philosophy, architecture, mathematics and science must find a significant place in teacher preparation. It stressed on empowering teachers to evolve culture specific pedagogy for learners. NCTE(2009) suggested introduction of courses that engage student –teachers with contemporary Indian issues with interdisciplinary frameworks so as to locate education and

the learner in a socio-cultural, economic and political context with a thrust of diversity. It also emphasized on design of practical courses that enable observing and studying children in real contexts; provide hand on experience of curriculum/ text analysis and design. It also stressed on instituting teacher learning centers for grounding the education of pre service students within immediate classroom context, the wider sociaetal contexts and learner diversity.

Conclusion:

No educational system is wholly detached from its specific cultural milleu. Indian constitution and educational policies provides well balanced model of multiculturalism which disallows separatist tendencies but allows proliferation of diversity.Never the less , multicultural education is the starting point to eliminate inequalities in society by addressing the ills and shortcoming of an education system. The diversity of cultural, linguistic ,ethnic, religious, socio economic groups, in India calls for multicultural education programmes the reflect understanding and respect for childerns difference. In diverse country like India, multicultural perspective from policy level to the public sphere especially in the education sector , inside and the outside of the four walls of school from its vision statement to the evaluation through curriculum developments, pedagogies, school and community relationship and staff development etc. Diversity in the nation's schools is both an opportunity and a challenge. The nation is enriched by the ethnic, cultural, and language diversity among its citizens and within its schools. However, whenever diverse groups interact, intergroup tension , stereotypes, and institutionalized discrimination develop, Schools must find ways to respect the diversity of their students as well as help to create a unified nation state to which all of the nation's citizens have allegiance. We hope these design principles will help educational policy makers and practitioners realize this elusive but essential goal of a democratic and pluralistic society.

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