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Multicultural Education in Secondary School: Issues and Challenges in Indian Context

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Abstract

India is a multi religious, multi caste and multi ethnic country. Unity in diversity of our country is the identity in the world. Diversity in the nation's schools is both an opportunity and a challenge. The ethnic, cultural, and language diversity among its citizens and within its schools enrich the nation. Multicultural education is an approach to teaching and learning that is based on democratic values that affirm cultural pluralism within culturally diverse societies in an interdependent world. The assimilation perspective of multicultural education is that micro-cultures must give up their original culture and identities in order to blend in or become absorbed into the major indo-Islamic culture. The Indian perspective is that micro-cultures can retain many of their traditions such as language, religion, and social customs while adopting many of the aspects of the predominant Anglo-Western culture. The Indian perspective of multicultural education recognizes cultural pluralism as an ideal and healthy state in any productive society and promotes equity and respect among the existing cultural groups. The purpose of this article is to explain the Indian perspective of multicultural education and how secondary school can use it to remain models of academic excellence in pluralistic and democratic societies. What is challenge in front of multicultural education? What is the role of teacher in multicultural education?

Key Words: Multicultural Education, Secondary School & Multiculturalism.

Introduction

In the era of globalization as our society becomes more and more dependent on other societies, it is critical that the schools address the problems of the world as a whole. The development of the global identification provides the students with the opportunity to see how as a nation we fit into the world society. It allows students to better understand that the actions of a nation must not only be viewed in terms of the implications for that nation but what are the effects on the whole world. Children who have developed both a strong ethnic and national identity should have the perspective to also develop a global identification, which should in turn make them better citizens of the world community.

India is a second largest country on the based on population**.** There are so many culture, religion, caste and ethnic group in my country. There is not possible to include the every cultural ritual in the curriculum. This is big challenges in the construction of curriculum. However, some major cultural religious rituals must be included in the curriculum. In the

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teacher education, it is not possible to know the every cultural ritual. It is challenge in front of teacher how include the every cultural characteristics in teaching learning process. School is the miniature of the society and sub-system of society. The student belongs to every culture, religion, and caste in the classroom. Multicultural classroom environment is fruitful for students in the development of the personality. In the duration of teaching learning process, the students understand about so many cultures. It is helpful in the social development and spiritual development of students. In a secondary school level the education must be include multicultural education.

What is Multiculturalism?

The concept of multiculturalism is a new concept because the Indian culture was an ancient period and medieval period was very closed and conservative society. The concept of multiculturalism represents a new orientation toward the future. Unfortunately, in all the heated discussion around the term no clear definition of the concept has yet emerged. People are thus left to read into the term whatever their biases.

Multicultural education is a progressive approach for transforming education that holistically analyzes and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education. It is grounded in ideals of social justice, education equity, and a dedication to facilitating educational experiences in which all students reach their full potential as learners and as socially aware and active beings, locally, nationally, and globally.(Paul Gorski 2000)

Multiculturalism is a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society, acknowledges and values their socio-cultural differences, and encourages and enables their continued contribution within an inclusive cultural context, which empowers all within the organization or society.(Yusof, 2003)

Concept of Multicultural Education

India is unique country in the world in the base of culture, because there are so many cultures in this country and one of the oldest cultures in the world. So, multicultural education is demand of Indian scenario. 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 addresses multiple ways of thinking. In addition, teachers and students must critically analyze oppression and power relations in their communities, society and the world.

Multicultural education may also contribute to the lives of students of color beyond the classroom. It may facilitate the development of positive self-esteem, leading to students who feel better about themselves and their work. This positive view extends to the home cultures of the students as well, demonstrably increasing pride in and comfort with their home cultures. Multicultural education may also enhance the skills of students of color with other racial and ethnic groups, increasing positive cross-cultural interactions. Lastly, multicultural education may provide these students with the tools to have better navigate dominant paradigms of the mainstream White world.

Multiculturalism is not restricted to people of color it is a universal issue that needs implementation in educational institutions, on all levels. Equality does not have to mean monolingual or bilingualism in every building, but it does require a multicultural awakening in curriculum development, which provides Equity.

Dimension of Multicultural Education

James A. Banks, professor of education and director of the centre for multicultural education at the University of Washington in Seattle, is recognized as a leading scholar in the field of multicultural education. He has detailed find critical dimension of multicultural education.

- **Content Integration**- deals with the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concept, generalization and issues within their subject area or disciplines.
- **Knowledge Construction**: student learns how to build knowledge him or herself.
- **Prejudice Reduction**: describes lessons and activities used by the teacher to help student to develop positive attitudes towards different racial, ethnic and cultural group.
- **Equity Pedagogy**: exists when teachers modifies their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of student from divers racial, culture and social class groups.
- **Empowering School Culture and Society Structure**: created when the culture and organization of the school are transformed in ways that enable student from diverse racial, ethnic and gender groups to experience quality and equal status.

Indian Constitution (1950)

The constitution of India reflects the form belief in multicultural value for the state and in the international affairs. The preamble of Indian constitution are included the words Justice (social, economic and political), Liberty (thought, expression, belief, faith and worship) and Equality (status and opportunity) Fraternity (Dignity of the individual and unity and integrity of the nation). Under the Indian constitution, the fundamental right for the people is, Right to Equality (Article 14 to 18), Right to Freedom(Article- 19 to 22), Right to Against Exploitation (Article 23 & 24), Right to Freedom of Religion(Article- 25 to 28), Cultural and Educational Right(Article 29 & 30) and Right to Constitutional Remedies(Article- 32). Under the fundamental duties(Article-51-A), it shall be the duty of every citizen of India- to up hold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India, to promote harmony and the sprite of common brotherhood amongst all the people of India transcending religious, linguistic and regional or sectional diversities; to renounce practices derogatory to the dignity of woman, to develop the scientific temper, humanism and the sprite of inquiry and reform, to abjure violence (Upadhayaya, 2006).

Goals of Multicultural Education in Secondary Education Level

Multicultural education is very important in Indian scenario because India is a multicultural country. Basically, in secondary level of education it is necessary. There are following goals of multicultural education in secondary education.

1) Develop and foster a democratic and just society where all groups experience cultural democracy and empowerment.

2) The main goal of multicultural education is to develop the peace and harmony in the society.
3) Improve academic achievement of all students and multicultural knowledge.
4) Help the student to develop the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to function within their own and other micro cultures and within global community.
5) Provide opportunity to gain cultural competencies.
6) The multicultural education is removing the prejudice about other culture, religion and race.
7) To have every student achieve to his or her potential.
8) To encourage students to take an active role in their own education by bringing their stories and experiences into the learning scope.
9) To appreciate the contributions of different groups who have contributed to our knowledge base.
10) To develop positive attitudes about groups of people who are different from ourselves.
11) To become good citizens of the school, the community, the country and the world community.
12) To provide decision-making skills and critical analysis skills so the students can make better choices in their everyday lives.

To achieve these goals, it is very essential for teacher to be knowledgeable about different in culture, religion, ethnicity and even the language spoken by the student.

Issues & Challenges of Multicultural Education in Secondary Education

There are four main challenges in front of the implementation of multicultural education in secondary education in India. These are following:

A. Acquiring Knowledge: Banks proposes four areas of knowledge teachers need to effectively implement multicultural education: major paradigms in multicultural education; Major concepts in multicultural education; historical and cultural knowledge of major ethnic groups; And pedagogical knowledge to tailor curriculum and teaching style (Banks, 1994).

B. Changing Curriculum: Few teachers, regardless of their training, start their teaching careers at an institution where multiculturalism has already won full integration into the curriculum or where they are given free reign over the curriculum. This means that teachers who want to use multicultural curriculum must find ways to integrate it into their existing lesson plans or integrate special multicultural lessons into the existing curricula.

C. Communicating Complexity: As teachers labor to build multicultural knowledge and include multicultural curriculum in their classrooms, they also wrestle with exactly what to include in a multicultural curriculum. Teachers, already facing brief periods for lessons and few supplied multicultural materials, have still another challenge to face: the complexity of the material.

D. Valuing Multicultural Education: Teachers also face challenges to putting multicultural education into practice, and push back from administration, school systems, and parents for teaching multicultural education. Part of the challenge to teaching multicultural education is structural. Teachers, and even principals, do not generally have complete authority over their classrooms.

Conclusion

Finally, it may be concluded that diversity in the nation's schools is both an opportunity and a challenge. Teachers should help students acquire the social skills needed to interact effectively with students from other racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups. Schools should provide opportunities for students from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and language groups to interact socially under conditions designed to reduce fear and anxiety. A school's organizational strategies should ensure that decision-making is widely shared and that members of the school community learn collaborative skills and dispositions in order to create a caring environment for students. Schools should create or make salient super ordinate crosscutting group memberships in order to improve intergroup relations. Students should learn about stereotyping and other related biases that have negative effects on racial and ethnic relations.

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