

Culturally Inclusive Class Room: Explore the Need for Addressing Cultural Diversities in Schools

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ABSTRACT: School is a milieu where we could see different attitudes and habits. Most often the dominant habits among these will determine who will succeed in educational area. Since the education system has a role in the determination of status quo how should these attitudes and habits be addressed and transmitted is quite important. What really makes it difficult to the lower class, in the social stratification, people to succeed in the education system is that the education system transmits the ideas and habits of the upper and middle class. Contradictory to western society our society is much broader in its cultural diversity and its social stratification. This paper examines the need for addressing cultural diversities in Schools. The researchers review current research across the discipline to provide an exploration on the need of addressing cultural diversities in the class room. This paper argues that there should be much understanding regarding cultural diversities to the curriculum makers and other educationalist to reduce the segregation of 'disadvantaged' in the educational area. The paper demands the stake holders of education to have inclusive attitudes not only in school curriculum but also in their teacher training programs.

KEY WORDS: Culturally Inclusive Class Room, Diversity

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I. CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

Systems are not at all equitable and secular. In educational situation the term equality means 'education for all'. Secular here means providing a harmonious environment to the learners to develop through the participation in learning cultures and community by minimizing exclusion from the same. An inclusive school challenges all kinds of discriminations and promotes democratic principles of social justice. The concept of inclusion in education is "a process of strengthening the capacity of the education system to reach out to all learners and can thus be understood as a key strategy to achieve EFA" (Education for All) (UNESCO, 1994).

Florian (2015) argued that "an inclusive pedagogy is an approach that attends to individual differences between learners while actively avoiding the marginalization of learners." So culturally inclusive education is one which addresses cultural diversity and different learning needs of learners. In the present study culturally inclusive education means the practices of learning activities, skills, works and response so as to meet students in a diversified or personalized way to reach out all students.

An education system is called inclusive when it has the potential to accommodate all kinds of differences. We are supreme to any other country in our differences. Our cultural identities and realities are different for every kilometer. We could see number of differences in our school on ground of religion, cast, language, class, believes etc. Each of these differences must be addressed at its own potential. Here arises the question how far our school is accommodative in this regards. Indian schools are inclusive from ancient times. But our inclusivity is at the interest of individual teacher. Clear cut plans and efforts are yet to be drawn. This paper tries to underline the importance of clear cut strategies for culturally inclusive education.

II. METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

The methodology used for the study was qualitative method. The present study aims to explore the importance of addressing cultural diversities in the class room. The study intends to depict how cultural diversity becomes an important issue in the field of education and it tries to explain why educationalists must be educated towards this. We all know the ultimate aim of education is to provide maximum opportunity to the learner to develop according to one's needs. Self-realization and self-identification of the learner is possible only when they are taught in their cultural identities and realities. The researchers reviewed current research across the discipline to explore the need for addressing cultural diversity and the researchers interviewed personnel from the discipline to know how far teachers are educated towards this issue.

III. CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION

The term cultural diversity itself is a topic for separate research. Simply it means inclusion of people from different culture in a single community. What numbers of cultures are required to reach the concept of diversity and what groups are eligible to be called diversified are to be answered here. These questions are not important in Indian context since no one can any doubt whether India is diversified. Grossberg (2011), states that historically culture has been viewed as belonging to a group, usually a nation. This definition is challengeable in the context of India since we have enormous varieties. A country like India we are endowed with difference in language, habits, attitudes, identities, etc. We are supreme than any other country in the world in diversity. The expectations and identities of learners are varied for every kilometer.

The social stratification on the basis of power holds by one group over other is at the maximum in our country. Communities placed at the bottom of this social stratification are weak according to their social, political, economic, cultural and educational aspects. This has great influence on the success of lower class people in the area of education since education mostly addresses the habits and ideas of the upper and middle class. Here the idea culturally inclusive class room assumes greater importance

IV. CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN EDUCATION

School reflects each and every pulse of society where it is functioning. The expectations of different groups varied. School work deals with these expectations and how these expectations are addressed and considered in schools is an important factor in education. All aspects of the school are influenced by culture (Hinde, 2004). Hollins (1996) viewed that “schools are shaped by cultural practices and values and reflect the norms of the society for which they have been developed.” “Education systems should be designed and educational programs implemented to take into account the wide diversity of characteristics and needs” (Salamanca, 1994).

School is a milieu where teachers meet students within an organized set up. Organizational set up here means, there are curriculum, teaching and learning methods and materials and all these are administrated by a person called teacher. Different interests are met together. How these interest are considered, whose interest will dominant and whose interest will be subordinated are the important questions to be addressed here.

There is an important relationship between culture and education since the culture of teachers and students affect education process in the class room. Hofstede (2010), states that culture is “the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others.” Since some cultural groups dominant other, cultural diversity is the prime factor which assumes greater importance in determining social stratification. “Culture cannot be separated from learning and learning cannot be separated from culture” (Young, 2014).

V. CULTURALLY INCLUSIVE CLASS ROOM

Culturally Inclusive Class Room is one which is accommodative of cultural differences and positively enabling for students of disadvantaged social groups by virtue of its physical and academic environment and activities. When we ask the question what is common to all nobody comes with an answer which is uniform to all. What is uniform to everybody is the difference. The uniform feature of the class room is difference. UNESCO (2008), states that education can play an important role in dealing with multicultural diversity. A class room is said to be inclusive when its practices is enough to be accommodative towards children from disadvantaged social groups.

Why Cultural Diversity is addressed in Class Room

“Cultural diversity is closely connected to human development and the ensuring of human rights” (UNESCO 2002). In education human rights is rightly termed as education for all. “Culture matters in the selection of instructional strategies” (Young, 2014). School, especially ours, is a milieu where we could see difference in habits, tastes, identities; realities etc. Each child is entirely a new project to the teacher in multicultural class room. It is the place where teacher meets the learners with instructional strategies to transmit the curricula. All students should receive equal opportunities to engage, learn, and participate in the class room regardless of race, class, religion, and gender. Teacher should ensure that the practices of school represent the ideas and realities of every students especially students who comes from marginalized sections. The selection of instructional strategies for learners requires consideration of the role of cultural identities in learning.

To sum up, how far our teaching community is educated towards these concepts is an important issue to be accounted. “Being aware of the cultural backgrounds of the pupils in one’s classroom is often attributed with overall good teaching practices” (Anders, Y. 2015). It is important for a teacher to give individual attention in the class room. The experts in the field concerned argued that our teacher training programs are not enough to accommodate these issues. The researchers demand the curriculum makers and educationalists to add ‘cultural diversity and education’ as a main issue to be taught in teacher education programs.

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