



THE RELEVANCE OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY: AN ANALYSIS ON DIMENSIONS

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ABSTRACT :

Multicultural education is based on the philosophy of equal educational opportunities and social justice for students and teachers within educational institutions as well as in the community as a large. India is a multicultural country signifies 'unity among diversity'. The demography in the societies of the country has been rapidly changing day by day. Multicultural societies have been formed due to effect of urbanization and industrialization. As a result, students of diverse backgrounds have been increasing in modern educational institutions. Students in the same class are belongs to different culture, ethnic groups, race, caste, language, religion, health and economic conditions. Understanding the cultural pluralism through education is helpful to create harmony and peace in the society. As a modern topic of study in education discipline, 'multicultural education' is a way of teaching that ensures understanding the equality in diverse classroom. The paper will deal with the concept of multicultural education as an emerging educational paradigm of the 21st century focusing its history, theoretical background and role of teachers at local level.

Keywords: : Multicultural, diversity, cultural consciousness, inclusive.

I.Introduction:

School plays the vital role in developing democratic values among students. The Mudaliar Commission 1952-53, National Education Policy 1986 and National Education Policy 2020 have emphasized on inculcation of democratic values among school students to become divergent future citizen of the large democratic country. During pre-independent India, a less number of schools and colleges are continued. After independence the number of



schools, colleges, teachers and students are increasing. Students of minorities are also come forward to pursue higher education. The numbers of minority students continue to increase in different states of the country as well as in Assam. The dominant culture in educational institutions had drastically shifted to multicultural teachers and students in the twentieth century. Thus multicultural education has emerged as a new perspective to view the classroom as assimilation center of learners representing diversity. Both educational system and economic progress contributes to develop human resource. Global interdependence among people for knowledge construction and sharing has been also increased. Education is liberalized under globalization and thus effects on privatization of educational institutions. Since the inception of the National Educational Policy of 1986 and the subsequent approval through the Programme of Action (POA) of 1992, as also the educational effect under globalization of the nineties, the turn of the century saw the entire education system of India being revamped and restructured keeping a view on the demographic population.

The challenges of poor retention and dropout of indigenous students from elementary schooling is found high in different parts of the country. These Students have faced the problem of language barriers in the classroom as they have spoken their indigenous language in home. The incapacity of teachers to effectively deal with multilingual and multicultural classrooms also hinders them to assimilate and to pursue further higher education.

John Dewey has rightly says, 'School is a miniature society'. Pupils are comes from different localities and background. They interact with each other and thus school gives them opportunity to socialize. They can learn and transmit behaviour, traditions, social norms and other elements of culture. Students are taught about good behaviour in schools including aspects like cooperation, mutual respect, and dignity of individuals, group loyalty, democracy, decision making and citizenship. They are taught to active participate in social activities such as community work, Scout, Guide, Red-cross society, NSS, NCC etc. Students need to work together through deliberate activities. So, teachers' attitudes, teaching styles, instructional materials, counseling as well as assessment methods demand modification to cope up the changing notion of multiculturalism.



The constitution of India reflects the principle in multicultural value. The preamble of Indian constitution provides Justice in social, economic and political, Liberty in thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, Equality in status and opportunity and Fraternity in dignity of the individual and unity and integrity of the nation. Under the Indian constitution, the fundamental right for the people are Right to Equality (Article 14 to 18), Right to Freedom (Article 19 to 22), Right 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). The fundamental duties of Article 51 A signifies the duty of every citizen of India to up hold and protect the sovereignty, unity and integrity of India, to promote harmony and the spirit of common brotherhood among 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 spirit of inquiry and reform; and to abjure violence. Moreover, different ordinance and acts have been launched to protect people from the abolition of their rights.

Recently, NEP 2020 discloses an emerging data of loss of 220 languages in last 50 years alone all over the country. UNESCO has declared 197 Indian languages as 'endangered'. Various unscripted languages are confronts with severe danger of becoming extinct soon. Unfortunately the languages were become extinct with passed away of a senior member of a tribe who spoke that language in lifetime. Still the 22 languages included in Eighth schedule of Indian constitution are also facing manifold problems. Therefore the policy plan to take a major effort from both the Central and State governments to invest in large numbers of language teachers in all regional languages around the country, and, in particular, for all languages mentioned in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution of India. States should make bilateral agreements to hire teachers in large numbers from each other, to satisfy the three-language formula in their respective States, and also to encourage the study of Indian languages across the country (4.12, 22.5 NEP 2020). It is remarkable that the policy provide greater flexibility in the three-language formula. It does not impose any particular language on any State rather provide the provision of choices of States, regions, and of course the students themselves. The students who wish to change one or more of the three languages they are studying may change it in Grade 6 or 7. Teachers are encouraged to use a bilingual approach,



including bilingual teaching-learning materials, with those students whose home language may be different from the medium of instruction in school.

A good example showed by Kalinga Institute of Social Sciences, Odisha can be mentioned in regard to this matter. The institute was awarded the UNESCO King Sejong Literary Prize in 2022 for its inclusive, sustainable and equitable approach towards indigenous students. The institute has been working to ensure multicultural education through the provision of 'Mother Tongue- Based Multilingual Education Programme' since 2013. The programme tries to bring the gap between home language of indigenous students and school language. They adopt facilities for learning of students, target their need, transit curriculum, capacity building of teachers, participation of parents, peer group interaction, smart pictorial classrooms, used TV, radio, SMS, laptops, mobiles for blended learning, promote and preserve socio-cultural heritage.

For instance, Sivasagar district, one of the eastern most districts of India, is the habitat of peoples belongs to different race, tribe, language and culture since hundreds of years. The census of India 2011 reveals 90.44 % population of the district live in rural area. There are about 132 villages covering six Blocks in Sivasagar district. The villages in the district are inhabitant of different community such as Ahom, Koch, Mishing, Deori, Tea-garden, Nepali, Bodo, Tai khamiyang, Turung, Garo, Tiwa, Konyak Naga, Nocte and Meitei community. Moreover, some families came from other states such as Rajasthan, West Bengal, Bihar and Punjab to the state many decades before with the purpose of business and their inherit become permanent inhabitant of the district. The Scheduled caste people constitute 3.7% and Scheduled Tribe were 4.3% population in Sivasagar district in 2011 census. It is also noticeable that 7.00% are Scheduled caste and 1.79% is Scheduled Tribe under Sivasagar Municipality Board. The statistical data on demographic division of the population of Sivasagar district on the basis of religion signifies that 87.51% people are Hindu, 8.30% are Muslims, 2.88% are Christian, 0.08% people are Sikh, 0.34% is Buddhist, 0.02 % is Jain, 0.74 is from others and 0.12% is not stated in the census. Although the most spoken language in the district is Assamese, yet a large number of people are speaking dialect in their home environment, local area and among community. Students from all these diverse community, race, caste and religion are admitted in



the same schools and colleges and interact with each other. Hence, the teachers must promote the cultural tolerance, develop positive attitude towards other culture and a sense of inclusion in classroom atmosphere at early age setting.

Review of Related Literature:

Some studies done in the field of multicultural education are mentioned below:

C. Abacioglu and the others in the study on effects of multicultural education on student engagement in low and high concentration classroom The goal of the study is to provide a quantitative account of the current segregated learning environments in terms of multicultural curriculum and instruction, as well as their possible impact on student outcomes that can mitigate these challenges. The investigation covers 34 upper-primary school classroom teachers and their 708 students. It reveals that peer relationships can mediate the positive as well as negative effects of different dimensions of multicultural education on student engagement.

Erni Munastiwi employed a quantitative case study on implementation of multicultural education in early childhood stage at Abdullah School of Aligarh, India utilizing classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with school staff and document analysis. The sample included the principal, teachers and students of the school. Thematic analysis was employed in the study. The investigator found that the approach of the school to multicultural education is deeply rooted in principles of inclusivity, respect for diversity and gender equality. The study found effectiveness of execution of multicultural values at a formative age in schools of India. The curricula and extra-curricular activities of the school also emphasized the respect for diversity.

II. Objectives of the Study: The objectives of the paper are stated below:

- 1] To analyse the concept, objectives and dimensions of multicultural education in the context of educational institutions.
- 2] To analyse the role of teacher in multicultural classroom in entrust cultural consciousness among students.



III . Methodology:

This study adopts a qualitative research design supported by document analysis and thematic review of existing literature. Secondary data were gathered from scholarly articles, government reports, educational policy documents, and case studies from both national and international contexts. Sources included peer-reviewed journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science, official education commission reports in India, and UNESCO and UNICEF publications on multicultural education. A thematic analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was employed to identify recurring patterns and core themes related to the dimensions, challenges, and impacts of multicultural education. These dimensions were analyzed in relation to Indian classroom realities and global educational trends, ensuring cross-contextual validity.

IV. Analysis and Discussion:

Multicultural Education: Concept, Objective and Dimensions

The thought on Multicultural education is originated during the Civil Rights Movement in US in sixties and seventies decade of twentieth century. In initial, scholars such as Washington Williams, Carter G. Woodson, W.E.B. DuBois and Charles H. Wesley have contributed towards development of this concept. Later, James A. Banks, Allison Davis, Sonia Nieto, Mary Lou Fulton are the pioneers of the aspects of multicultural education. In India also, educationists have investigated the school system from multicultural dimension and the few writings, studies and analysis have been done.

The concept of multicultural education is comprehensive and inclusive in nature. Multicultural education refers to any form of education that incorporates the histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of people from different cultural backgrounds. It is a deliberative strategy to promote equality and equity among students coming from miscellaneous background through more culturally diverse curriculum, instructional strategy and classroom interaction. Multicultural education promote acceptance of diversity, mutual understanding and participative behaviour among students. It is based on the consensus theory



emphasize on interrelationship, interdependence, harmony and interaction. The academicians have defined multicultural education from different perspective:

Multicultural education is an idea, an educational reform movement, and a process.
(Banks, 1997)

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)

It covers all students belongs to diverse cultural, ethnic, language, religious and socio-economic background. Multicultural classrooms promote tolerance to other cultures and respectful to others. A number of different pedagogy incorporating histories, cultures, minority studies, contributions of diverse groups, ethnic studies, women studies, freedom movement can help students to gain knowledge of other's culture. Integrated curriculum should be prepared from primary stage onwards so that students can develop self-esteem, decision-making and critical thinking. Thus, this thought can inculcate democratic outlook among students and they will become good civic citizen in future. It gives importance on self-reflection of students. Students are encouraged to bring different aspects of their cultures into the educational institution through manifold academic and co-curricular activities. Schools and colleges can organize seminars, literary competition, quiz, recitation, sports and cultural programme on different cultural aspects. Multicultural education promotes equality and social justice to all students by condemning classism, racism, cultural supremacy and other forms of discrimination.



Objectives of Multicultural Education:

Multicultural education is needful implement in diversified cultural educational institution. The aims and objectives of multicultural education are stated below:

❖ Promote democratic values among students: Multicultural education gives emphasis on development of democratic values among students. The schools and colleges should provide ample opportunities to develop good civic qualities among students. Students should learn to preserve their own culture as well as to respect the culture of classmates belong to other communities. Teachers should also understand the self-esteem of students of different culture.

❖ Preservation of culture: Multicultural education fosters to preserve historical records and culture of different ethnic groups. It specially emphasizes to preserve the culture of minority groups. Educational institution organize ethnic museum, ethnic study centre, publish books on ethnic community, cultural rally on ethnic castes and competition on cultures of different community.

❖ Ensure social justice and equity: The educational institutions foster equal educational opportunities among students. Equal provision in admission process, learning materials, stipends, scholarships as well as in job market irrespective of their caste, religion, language or economic condition can prevent prejudice and discrimination. Students are equipped with knowledge, values and skills so that they can participate in societal changes.

❖ Multicultural education also aims to create a safe, accepting and successful learning environment for all students in school campus.

❖ In addition, National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) was founded in 1990 at Washington, DC that works as a premier international organization on the issues of equality, inclusion, diversity and justice in school. It determines six goals regarding multicultural education with the view to:

- Respect and appreciate cultural diversity,
- Promote the development of culturally responsible and responsive curricula,



- Promote the understanding of unique cultural and ethnic heritage,
- Facilitate acquisition of the attitudes, skills and knowledge to function in various cultures,
- Eliminate racism and discrimination in society,
- Achieve social, political, economic, and educational equity.

NAME declared that multicultural education helps the students to develop positive self-image, offers the students an equitable educational opportunity, allows multiple perspectives and ways of thinking, combats stereotypes and prejudicial behaviour, teaching the students to critique society in the interest of social justice, to create healthy environment.

Dimensions of Multicultural Education:

In regard to dimensions of multicultural education, James A. Banks, a leading scholar in the field of multicultural education, had identified five dimensions. He is professor of Education and Director of the Centre for Multicultural Education at University of Washington, USA. He had written many books in this field such as An Introduction to Multicultural Education, Multicultural Education: Goals and Dimensions, Dimensions of Multicultural Education (1995) etc. The thought of Professor Banks is listed below:

- 1. Content integration:** According to Banks, 'content integration deals with the extent to which teachers use examples and content from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, generalizations, and issues within their subject area and discipline'. The curriculum constructor should incorporate life scratches of heroes, events and histories of culture groups from different parts of the state and the country.
- 2. The knowledge construction process:** Banks remarked that teachers need to help students understand, investigate, and determine how the biases, frames of reference, and perspectives within a discipline influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it.
- 3. Prejudice reduction:** Banks identified that 'the lesson and activities used by teachers to help students to develop positive attitudes towards different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups'. Misconceptions, unfavourable judgment and negative attitudes of



students towards other social class, religion, gender, ethnic groups, language and beliefs can be modified by teaching methods and positive school environment.

4. An equity pedagogy: He also remarks that multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, social class, ethnic, racial or cultural characteristics should have an equal opportunity to learn in school. According to Banks the teachers should modify their teaching ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender and social class groups.

5. An empowering school culture and social structure: It refers the culture and organization of the school must transformed in ways that enable students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups to experience equality and equal status.

Equality and equal status should be maintain in attitudes, beliefs, and action of teachers and administrators, the teaching styles and strategies used by teachers and in assessment and testing procedures. Multicultural education reduce class conflict, social separation, racism, classism, wrong interpretation of social thoughts rather it develop endurance, tolerance, patience, forgiveness, religious unity, mutual respect, contentment, happy life and overall development of a nation. It integrates students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups, their parents, teachers, administrators and local community.

Role of teacher in implementation of Multicultural education in classroom teaching:

Multiculturalism helps in development of equality in the classroom. The teachers of modern age are aware of the change of contemporary society. They must include the notions of diversity while teaching. The teachers have the responsibility in encourage multicultural assimilation in the educational institutions.

- a. Teachers can keep up the statistical data of demography of their region and number of students representing heterogeneous community, religion and linguistic background of their respective school and colleges.
- b. The teachers should discuss on curriculum and pedagogy that includes topics of cultural difference. At the classroom level, for example, teachers may modify or incorporate lessons to reflect the cultural diversity of the students in a particular class.



- c. Teachers can increase their awareness of the need for multicultural education among students and colleagues in which they teach. They can implement it at the micro level within their individual classrooms as well as at the macro level with the implementation of programs at the school or district level.
- d. The teachers should develop new teaching skill to implement multicultural education into the classroom. Teachers in classroom can use some innovative teaching methods:
 - (i) Individual instruction: with the aim to improve individual maladjustment problem.
 - (ii) Group activity: with the aim of developing social competences.
 - (iii) Community Work: with the aim to develop social demographic structures.
- e. Examples used by teacher in classroom teaching should touch the norms of different society, race, class, area.
- f. Students are introduced to the skills needed for adjustment in multicultural society such as group work, working with conflict and challenging behaviour, and teamwork. Students take courses in creative and practical subjects, such as art, drama, dance, sports, woodwork, music or gardening that can need cooperation among them.
- g. The teacher should know about an unseen attempt of relationship among diverse students, group dynamics and classroom bond. Some students easily adjust with others and some find it difficult. The teacher should be aware of such behaviour that will help back him/her for better teaching.
- h. Teacher should encourage students to bring aspects of their cultures into the classroom, schools and colleges through organizing cultural programmes. In fact multiculturalism in classroom can play a vital role in helping the teachers to teach and understand the different cultures background students and development equality.

V. Conclusion:

As a social being every human has the arduous responsibility towards the society. Parents, member of the family, peer groups, well wishers and teachers have an important role to play in reducing social disparities. Education is the powerful instrument of change and progressive improvement of human behaviour. The purpose of educational institution is



socialization of students. Therefore, Multicultural education is a good avenue to relate education with cultures. Diversity in India is both an opportunity and a challenge. Multicultural education is an Endeavour to remove barriers and to overcome challenges regarding equality and equity. It is necessary to introduce multiculturalism and multicultural education to equalize the students irrespective of their caste, creed, race, ethnicity, religion and gender.

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