



Multiculturalism and Multicultural Education: Role of Teachers to Conduct a Multicultural Classroom Atmosphere

Prostuti Gogoi

Department of Education, Gauhati University
Assam, India

Abstract

The aim of the present paper is to analyse the responsibility of the teacher towards the holistic development of his students. In India, teachers are instrumental in developing an integrated nation irrespective of diversity. Classrooms are the places where students gain knowledge and information which generates an eager curiosity to explore the world they live in. A teacher is accountable for leveraging and maximising teaching methodology in shaping and structuring the student's mindset in a manner that will enable him to establish an ever shrinking world. An effective teacher shoulders the arduous responsibility of interacting with a large number of students as a single unit. He has to fully comprehend that he is dealing with students from dissimilar backgrounds, each with their unique tradition of culture, upbringing, religion, attire and language.

This paper is mainly based on secondary data. This paper focuses on challenges faced by teachers in the present scenario where ethics should be of paramount importance in nurturing intellectually healthy adults. It is researcher's endeavour to explore various strategies in implementing techniques wherein the teachers are a medium who create a neutral environment for the students thereby attaining the desired outcome.

Keywords: Challenges, development, responsibility.

1.0 Introduction:

Student-teacher bonding is the most sacred and trusted attachment a child develops outside his home. Unquestionably, teacher's place is no less than the parents in a child's life. Teachers are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that inculcates in the students an acceptance of all diverse elements. The environment thus produced is such that the students do not feel threatened by discriminatory thoughts, words or deeds. When a student enters the institution, he is emotionally fragile, vulnerable and desperately anxious to be on an equal footing with his peers. Each one of them has a unique identity built upon the foundation of their cultural background.

Only a sensitive teacher will be able to create a conducive atmosphere where the students can share their exclusive experiences about their ethnic diversity through debates, seminars, conferences and presentations.

India is acclaimed for its rich cultural and biological diversity. Our country is a melting pot of languages, castes, creeds, religions, traditions, cultures and attires. When we make our classrooms anti-bias, we help children be proud of their heritage, willing to accept human differences. Undoubtedly, the crucial responsibility of the teacher in the classroom is

bringing down barriers which obstruct free flow of independent thought. A teacher understands that children carry classroom experiences into their adult world and inputs provided in their childhood shapes their personality. When a student perceives that the teacher addresses everyone on equal terms, it instils in them fairness towards all. This is outside of book learning.

Exposing a student to diversity in an empathetic way at a tender age is actually a difficult task for the teachers and should be handled skilfully and tactfully. The origin of diversity arises from a person's name itself and here lies the vital role of teachers in binding these heterogeneous groups into one unit. Ignoring diversity cannot be the preferred solution, rather unravelling the intricacies that go into the making of different cultures can be the inspiration for integrated classrooms.

The teacher is instrumental to a large extent in holding the community together. As students develop an understanding that the core human values of every ethnicity are fundamentally similar, they appreciate the microcosm of the world that is represented in their classrooms. Group discussions are an ideal platform to simulate thinking. When each student is encouraged to share his views, barriers to communication are erased and a healthy exchange of ideas can take place.

Every single child in this enormously diverse and ever-evolving system has the inherent power to provide an invaluable resource for others. Critical thinking is encouraged in classrooms with dissimilar culture which helps them to better understand the others culture and uniqueness of the element.

Teamwork, Inter-dependency, and decision making are critical in the contemporary scenario. Efforts should be made to assist all students in developing and maintaining social skills. Students learn to accept differences and similarities among people and they grow with one another to create a better world for everyone. They regard others viewpoints and individuality with heightened maturity. The multicultural classroom guides students to have an equal vision towards marginal sections of society in order to develop teamwork and social skills. Their self-esteem is boosted as they are appreciated and accepted for their individuality and perspectives. They feel a sense of self-worth of their traditions and customs rather than alienation. When teaching is sensitively handled during the early impressionable years, it will undoubtedly inspire cultural sensitivity among pupils.

The famous book of William Hart's *Never Fade Away* deals with the multicultural student's issues and problems with great clarity. A teacher's greatest strength lies in his/her ability to bring the students together as a cohesive whole. *Never Fade Away* is a book that portrays this knack in an explicit way. In this he depicts how the unbending rules of burecracy can stand in the way of a child's development.

2.0 Objectives of the study:

The main objectives of the study which has been listed below:

1. To know the role of a teacher in order to conduct multicultural classroom environment.
2. To identify the barriers of teachers to create multicultural classroom atmosphere.

3.0 Methodology of the study:

The study is mainly based on descriptive type method. The secondary data have been found from different source. In the whole study, researcher analyzes the objectives in a descriptive way.

4.0 Need and importance of the study:

India has rich culture and biological diversity. Every student is from different cultural background. They want to know others culture. Classroom is the most favourable place to know one another properly. Simultaneously teachers are also got the opportunity to know everyone. So multicultural education helps to know others culture and also respect one's culture. Undoubtedly, Multicultural Education helps to promote cultural dignity among students. It also helps to understand how much the students are aware to know one's culture and also inculcate the cultural values among the students. So multicultural education is crucial for teachers as well as the students.

5.0 Analysis and interpretation of the study:

Culture is the backbone of the society. In the society, every individual is influenced by their culture. The way of living, way of thinking, way of dressing, way of fooding, pattern of interaction these elements can determined one's culture. We can say that, these elements are influenced to maintain a balanced personality of an individual.

In India, different ethnic groups are there and they followed their culture. Each culture is different from one another. Every child is acquired their culture after birth. The parents mould them according to their culture. Generally the children are connected in the school and try to understand other's culture as well as spread the culture of their own. So school is the basic platform, where students are from different cultural background. That is why it can be termed to a salad bowl where flavours from every culture create the cultural fabric of that society. They try to inculcate cultural values and respects own culture as well as others. In that case teacher should provide a crucial role towards the students. He also get the opportunity to know others culture. He should treat the students equally and also he should free from cultural biases. Because multicultural education is the view that cultural differences should be respected. In the classroom the teacher is connected with students properly. He should provide a very significant role towards cultural diversity. So multiculturalism is the sensitive approach towards cultural diversity.

Education provides a key role to remove cultural differences through equal opportunity. Multicultural education is a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social- class and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to assist the students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes and skills needed to function properly in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create civic and moral community that works for the common good.

Some strategies which a teacher can adopt while interacting with students to achieve harmony in the classroom:

1. A regulatory body comprising of teachers should be formed which sets in place basic codes of conduct to ensure smooth functioning during an academic session. There should be a periodic appraisal of the same.
2. A teacher should possess the foresight to deal with sensitive issues in order to attain the desired structure of the classroom.
3. Controversial queries and remarks must be attended to promptly as any delay in addressing such matters may put the teacher at the risk of being misunderstood.
4. A teacher should step out of the confines of a rigid framework to integrate the classroom through an informal dialogue. This will provide a common platform to students for free exchange of ideas, an opportunity for them to listen actively and respect others' perspectives.
5. The non-judgemental attitude of the teacher will go a long way in restoring equilibrium in the multicultural milieu.
6. Teacher should conduct seminar, workshop, group discussions on students own culture. So they can exchange their culture and traditions with others.

As we find out teacher has the vital responsibility towards cultural diversity. So from the training period prospective teachers should train how to maintain a multicultural classroom. From the period of training they should learn cultural diversity and cultural integrity. After the training he has to teach the students from different cultural background. Through the training they have learn about multiculturalism and cultural diversity. The curriculum should construct in such a way that the content should help the prospective teachers to inculcate within them. So in the period of training prospective teachers are trained to deal with multicultural classroom.

Barriers of teachers in multicultural classroom:

Multicultural education is more than cultural awareness. It is an initiative to empower all heterogeneous groups and to ensure curriculum and content. Inapplicability of customs and traditions from place to place is a huge hindrance to establishing multiculturalism. Teachers hesitate to come out from their comfort zone and the rigid and vast syllabus with time constraints creates pressure on the faculty. In addition to this personal prejudice on the teacher's part as a result of her own cultural influences creates an unhealthy environment where multiculturalism cannot flourish or prosper. Tendency to favour the majority in the class results in not being able to relate to the underprivileged which in turn acts as a road block to free flow of ideas. Authors of history text books may present facts in a distorted manner which generates wrong notions about one's heritage and culture.

In a classroom all students are not alike. And also teachers don't have any idea regarding all cultural background. So most of the time, he is unable to understand the students interest and potentiality.

Every student's language is different. So the teacher faces the language barrier to teach the students.

Undoubtedly, racial discrimination and racial shortcomings and prejudices also interfere in the multicultural classroom.

Unquestionably, racial-discrimination and racial shortcomings in education have no place in multiculturalism. When students are taught about different cultures and the importance of each of them in the formation of the society and the world, it creates new perspectives for them and they understand the importance of their lives in forming a better world for the upcoming generation. The core understanding of diverse cultures depends entirely on the facet of its introduction to the students. However, the diverse culture is also responsible for the cultural differences which lead to prejudice and discrimination in the society. So this aspect should be treated and handled with extra care and tenderness, otherwise it can lead to destruction of the system as well. Therefore, it should be presented and introduced in such a way to the students where they can find different ethnicity, nationalities and languages as a means of bonding. They should appreciate diversity with all its advantages and allow themselves to experience different ways of life and be a part of each other's traditions and behaviours & life style.

6.0 Findings of the study:

After analysing the main themes and objectives some of the results from the study which have been mentioned below:

1. Teacher student relationship is like father and son relationship. In classroom teacher get the opportunity to know others culture through the students. Because students are from different cultural background so he should know how to teach them properly. So that they can be able understand easily.
2. India rich in diverse culture. Here we found different ethnic groups. So for the first time teacher face challenges to teach the students.
3. The goal of multicultural education is to help students understand and appreciate cultural differences and similarities and to recognise the accomplishments of diverse ethnic, racial and social groups. It is a practice that hopes to transform the ways in which students are instructed by giving equal attention to contribute of all the groups in a society.
4. Teacher must work to shift students' prejudices regarding race and ethnicity. Prejudice reduction may also encompass teaching the tolerance of various religion, sexual preferences and disabilities.

8.0 Suggestion and conclusion:

As we understand that, teacher should play a vital role towards cultural diversity. Without teacher's intervention and inclination maintaining equilibrium in the classroom cannot be implemented. A student enters the portals of education hoping to become a well-integrated human being with the capacity of finding his rightful place in the world arena. Fulfilling these expectations to the best of his ability is what the teacher needs to create a win-win situation in a classroom consisting of a multicultural background. Teachers have an obligation towards society in cultivate young minds to becoming rational individuals having the aptitude to judge right from wrong. Thus, *multiculturalism* helps teacher combat stereotypes and prejudicial behaviour in the interest of social justice.

9.0 References:

1. Khatoon Sufiana, Rehman Shafkat, Ajmal Muhammad (2011), Teaching in multicultural classroom- Assessing Current Programs of Teachers' Training in Pakistan, International Journal of Humanities and Social Science,1(6),p 70-78
2. Tiwari Sushil K, Lal Dori (2016),Multiculturalism to address classroom diversity, International Journal of Peace, Education and Social science 4(1), p 19-23
3. Saikia Polee (2017), Sociological Foundation of Education, first edition, DVS publication, Guwahati
4. Goodwin Marilyn W. Cooperative Learning and Social Skills: What Skills to Teach and How to Teach Them, Intervention in School and Clinic, Web. 8 Sept. 2017. http://www2.ku.edu/~powerof2/feature/archive_s/dec_2000.shtml, 1999; 35(1):29-33.
5. Garcia EK. Multicultural Education in Your Classroom. TeachHub.com. Web. <http://www.teachhub.com/multicultural-education-your-classroom>, 2017.