

Is Harmonious living Possible through Teacher Education?

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ABSTRACT: Teachers are called 'the torch bearers' of creating social cohesion and a learning society. The teacher education should be such that is capable of producing teachers who are equipped with life skills, can play multi-dimensional role as supporters, humane facilitators in teaching learning situation and should be the true followers of ideals stated in the constitution.

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I. INTRODUCTION

What the teacher is, is more important than what he teaches. Teaching is one of the most influential professions in society. In their day to day work, teachers can and do make huge difference to students' lives directly through the curriculum they teach and indirectly through their behaviour. It is the teacher who gives an impress of his personality to the students. The personality has vital influence on the students' learning, manners, behaviour and above all his character and personality. Therefore, shaping of human character largely lies on the shoulders of the teachers. Hence teachers are called 'the torch bearers' of creating social cohesion and a learning society.

Now here comes a very important question that if teachers play such an important role in nation building then- How important is the role of teacher education?

The answer is very simple that since teachers have a great responsibility in shaping future of nations, therefore teacher education and training becomes a matter of crucial importance for national development. NPE, 1986 has stressed that "The status of the teacher reflects the socio cultural ethos of the society, it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers". So teacher education should be such that is capable of producing teachers who can play a multi-dimensional role as a supporter, humane facilitator in teaching learning situation and can actively contribute towards the process of renewal of school curriculum keeping in mind the changing societal needs, personal needs of the learners and the national development goals. Therefore, if we want schools to prepare new generation that believes in harmonious living, we need to prepare teachers that in addition to having good content knowledge can infuse the spirit of responsibility, commitment, cooperation, trust, generosity, compassion amongst students. Hence the bigger responsibility lies on the shoulders of the teacher education.

But it is sad to realize that we live in an era of violence in the forms of terrorism, war, crimes, injustice and oppression and exploitation amidst a seemingly outward development enjoyed by a few. The majority of mankind lives in stark poverty struggling for bare survival. There is so much confusion and disorder in the society man has built for himself. This state of disorder and confusion in the society is affecting the children's innocent minds. Children naturally absorb the spirit of violence in the atmosphere and will soon grow to be the next generation of perpetrators of violence. Therefore the need to nurture peace in the hearts of the children is the need of the hour. This can be easily dealt with if the teachers and students are equipped with Life Skills which goes a long way in developing harmonious living.

II. LIFE SKILLS

Life Skills have been defined by World Health Organization (1993) as "the abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enables individuals to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life". 'Adaptive' means that a person is flexible in approach and is able to adjust in different circumstances. 'Positive behaviour' implies that a person is forward looking and even in difficult situations, can find a ray of hope and opportunities to find solutions. Thus it makes one flexible and optimistic and hence helps to make informed decisions, solve problems, communicate effectively, empathize with others and cope with managing their lives in a healthy and productive manner. So if children are equipped with life skills, they can easily negotiate, resolve conflicts and hence can be prevented from falling into the trap of violence.

Life Skills and Harmonious Living dimensions of curriculum appears in school timetables in different ways as these dimensions have already been discussed at international levels.

- Learning to live together'(synonymous to harmonious living) is one of the four competencies identified as important by the international commission on Education for twenty first century by Jacques Delors. The other three being learning 'to know', 'to do' and 'to be'.
- Government of the world committed to 'life skills' at the World Education forum held in Dakar in April 2000.

Conventionally subjects like history , geography, literature and religious education touch on civic knowledge and personal ethics but now specific 'living together' subjects have been added on the time table such as peace education, moral science, value education etc. This in turn removes apprehensions, mistrust and doubts about others and encourages living together. Therefore, a culture of peace reflects an active, positive and participatory process where diversity is respected and differences are tolerated, dialogue is encouraged and conflicts solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and cooperation. So life skills like active listening, critical thinking, problem solving and conflict resolution are the skills emphasized in the context of education for peace promoted in NCF 2005.

NCF (2005) strongly recommends,

“The curriculum must enable children to find their voices, nurture their curiosity to do things, to ask questions and to pursue investigations, sharing and integrating their experiences with school knowledge rather than their ability to reproduce external knowledge”. It motivates schools to “provide opportunities to students to question, enquire debate, reflect and arrive at concepts to create new ideas”. Hence, inculcating life skills amongst teachers is of vital importance, only then teachers can impress those skills upon their students.

In addition to this, I think harmonious living can also be realized if teachers and teacher educators follow the principles of our constitution in the true spirits and integrate it with the philosophy of education. The Indian Constitution provides a long term perspective on our educational system including that of teacher education. The founding fathers of Indian Constitution solemnly resolved ' to constitute India into a Sovereign, Socialist, Secular and Democratic Republic and to secure to all its citizens: justice, liberty equality and to promote among them all fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the integrity of the nation'. To develop the skills and competencies of the students for getting through the examinations would not be enough. Teachers must understand the impact of the constitution in its true perspective and integrate it with the philosophy of education. In the absence of such an attempt, transplantation of ideas and ideologies may prove counter- productive.

III. IDEALS OF THE CONSTITUTION

Let's discuss the ideals one by one:-

- **Socialism**- It means to abolish an exploitative social order, bridge the gulf between the rich and poor, ensure egalitarian justice and provide equal educational opportunity to all.

Teacher educators and teachers need to appreciate that socialism is not Utopian ideology; it is in fact a movement for transforming non-egalitarian and hierarchical social order in India and removing exploitation.

- **Secularism**- It means equal respect for all religions of the country-'Sarva Dharma Sambhava'.

Teacher educators and prospective teachers should emphasize the commonality of religions and their essence. They need to guard against the dangers of fundamentalism. Teachers have to convince students and community that if secular forces are weak, India cannot remain strong.

- **Democracy**- It should not be confused with the representative government or rule of the majority. It is an antithesis of all kinds of tyrannical and despotic modes of governance. More than apolitical system, it is a way of life. Its values include respect for the individual, freedom of thought and speech, sense of responsibility etc.

So teacher educators and teachers need to practice democratic way of life in the school and present a model before the students. The social climate of the institution should encourage students to imbibe democratic principles and culture.

- **Justice**- It implies fair play and absence of discrimination.

Teachers have twofold responsibility which is as follows:-

1. To provide meaningful education to children of different potentialities without any discrimination.

2. To create a demand for social justice among students and through them in society.

An unjust society with privileged people having an edge cannot remain at peace or make progress.

In teacher education institutions, justice as social value has to be discussed and the consequences of all kinds of injustice need to be fully explained.

-**Liberty**- It includes freedom of thought and expression.

Teachers and their educators have to inculcate necessary moral values for proper use of freedom with self-imposed discipline. They need to convince and impress upon their students that in the absence of equality, the concept of freedom is an illusion.

-Equality- It means fairness in treatment.

Teachers have to convince the students that the oppressed and downtrodden will not tolerate such injustice for long. They should develop critical awareness about social realities which are not divinely ordained but manmade. Teacher has to convince that peace and prosperity depends on equality which is essential for inculcating the feeling of fraternity.

- Fraternity- It is the extension and propagation of family feeling towards others and it calls for treating them as brothers despite differences. It is the actualization of the spirit of ' Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' or what Delors Commission calls ' Learning to live together'.

India being a multi-cultural and multi- lingual country, there may be some who still believe in their superiority. By means of educational persuasion, teachers can help change this mindset and protect the dignity of individual.

IV. CONCLUSION

Hence if teacher educators internalize these values and pass it on to their students that is prospective teachers, Teachers pass it to their students and then students further pass it on to the society and if this chain is maintained then the aim of harmonious living in true sense will not be a farfetched dream. If any one of the constituents of this chain fails then the entire system will be a failure. Those who want war prepare young people for war but those who want peace have neglected young children and adolescents, as a result they are unable to organize themselves for peace. Teacher's and Teacher Educator's role cannot be undermined in inculcating peace in the students.

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