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MULTICULTURALISM IN INDIAN EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

India is a nation of diversity and education has never followed a single format over the years. The present paper is an attempt to examine how multiculturalism remained over the different historic periods namely, ancient period, medieval period, colonialism to independence in educational system in India. From the ancient period till date, it is perceived that only through the integration of local and global educational perspectives shall multicultural education be effective in India and humanity shall flourish in the world with natural, social and ethical values.

KEYWORDS: Multiculturalism, Indian education, Multicultural education.

INTRODUCTION

Indian culture is not a single identity; it is an amalgamation of diverse religions, varied demography, history, and a unique geographical extent for thousands of years. Due to India's diversity and enormous population, harmonising the Indian

educational system necessitates a multifarious system of administrative and professional organizations as well. In a self-governing country like India, which is grounded on the principles of multiplicity and respect for others' point of view, educationalists have to nurture multiculturalism as a value (Samuel, 2010).

The National Association for Multicultural Education outlines multicultural education as: Multicultural Education is a philosophical conception constructed on the epitomes of liberty, righteousness, egalitarianism, justice, and human dignity as accredited in several documents, such as the Constitutions of the United States and South Africa, U.S. Declaration of Independence, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights assumed by the United Nations.

Multicultural education formulates every student to work vigorously on the road to structural equivalence in establishments and provision of knowledge to institutions, temperaments, and expertise for their dispersal of power and revenue among assorted groups. Therefore, the core curriculum of schools should unswervingly address disputes of sexism, racism, classism, linguistics, ageism, hetero-sexism, xenophobia and religion based intolerances. It is further deemed that multicultural education is based on the promotion of students' confidence through their life experiences and antiquities positioned at education wherein learning should encompass the different methods of thinking so as to create new possibilities by embracing diverse culture. On the whole, students and teachers should examine the power relations that exist in the society and embrace multicultural education to mitigate factors which hinder multicultural perceptions.

Objective of the study is to analyse the perspectives of multiculturalism in the Indian context during the different historic periods for developing multicultural education.



2. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS

2.1 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is a scheme of principles and components that identifies and compliments the occurrence of all assorted groups in an organization or society, recognises and values their socio-cultural dissimilarities, and emboldens and empowers their constant involvement within an inclusive ethnic framework which authorises everything within the organization or society (Rosado, 1996). To be precise, in India, it discusses the existence of huge dissimilarities among the population in terms of cultural, language, folkloric, religious, and other ethnic characteristics. Established upon this recognition of communal and cultural mixture, multiculturalism is also a form of integration which recognises the privileges and requirements of the groups within the mainstream, the applied acceptance of which differs significantly between places and states (Mashau, 2012).

2.2 Multicultural education

Multicultural education is stranded in the principles of social impartiality, education even-handedness, and a commitment to expediting educational know-hows in which all students grasp their complete latent as learners and as communally mindful and lively beings, locally, nationally, and globally. Multicultural education reveals the fact that schools play a vital role in laying the groundwork for the revolution of education and society wherein inequality and domination could be eradicated with multicultural education (Suh & Smuel, 2011). Over the years, the classification of multicultural education progressed, which on the insights of preceding researchers are as follows:

Banks (1993) describes multicultural education in a wider sense: "Multicultural education is an awareness affirming that all students, irrespective of the groups to which they fit in, such as those connected to gender, background, race, principles, social class, religion or extraordinariness, should experience educational equivalence in the schools".

Johnson et al. (2005) emphasises the notion of multiculturalism and the morals it is created on. They preserve that multicultural education is initiated on the values of parity, diversity, and social righteousness. It is an educational approach that integrates the schooling of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds in a school environment that supports diversity and egalitarianism.

Totally, these definitions are grounded on moral ideologies, particularly the principle of impartiality and care. From the responsiveness of justice and care originates esteem for diversity, parity, privileges and responsibility, apprehension for other human beings and their points of view, and added self-governing standards. As children nurture and become citizens of a democratic culture, they need to grow not only cognitively but also ethically.

3. MULTICULTURALISM IN INDIAN EDUCATION

3.1 Education in India- Ancient period

India's multiculturalism can best be comprehended by first appreciating its extensive history, commencing with three main races (Hasan et al., 2004). The Proto-Australoid were named according to Basham(2004) because of their resemblance to Australian Aborigines. The Paleo-Mediterranean arrived in India from South Asia. The Caucasoids spoke an Indo-European language that was associated to the language of people in Europe. Furthermore, other races also established their reign in India which includes: Mongolians, African slaves, Arab traders, Turks, absconders of Parsi and so on who then married Indian women. Many spiritual groups also established a home in India, including Hindus, Muslims, Christians, and Zoroastrians. All through the period known as the Indus Valley civilisation and culture (3250 B.C. to 2000 B.C.), many diverse cultures flourished. The predominant Hindu culture endured many rounds from overrunning armies, including Greeks, Muslims, and Europeans. After the supremacy of the Indus Valley Culture in the north, the Dravidian culture in the south originated. India's past was categorised by prodigious diversity. An important point on education in Vedic period is that education was made free for all (Shweta, 2016). Women were given equal opportunities to learn and acquire knowledge. However, education was biasedly distributed within the members of classes such as Brahmins and Kshatriyas whereas children from lower castes were deprived to learn

(Kumar, 2012). In 6th-7th century AD, Nalanda University comprised of 10,000 students with 2000 staffs covering students all over the world.

Multicultural education was emphasised in ancient India which is evident from eminent scholars who lived in the nation. There was no bar for attaining education except for the lower caste. For example, Vasishtha who lead the school of Brahmanism was born to a prostitute. Sage Vishwamitra belonged to the Kshatriya clan; however he composed Gayathri mantra. Veda Vyasa, who composed Mahabharatha was born to a fisher woman. Valmiki, who composed Ramayana was considered to be from a low caste. These examples indeed clarify Indian education was served to almost all the communities that prevailed during the ancient times of India (Malhotra, 2014).

3.2 Education in India- Medieval period

The medieval period was the time when India witnessed a number of attacks from foreign nations. Several foreign rulers and traders conquered the nation and settled in the country so as to establish dominance, business and trade. Invaders who were mostly Mohammadians brought their culture into the nation and attempted to spread the culture. Education was one field wherein the invaders had excellent interaction with the native scholars, collaborated with each other through ideas. Knowledge fields such as religion, philosophy, arts, architecture, astronomy and mathematics were combined with Islamic ways of learning (Maheshwari, 2012).

Two brothers namely Sheikh Azizullah and Sheikh Abdullah were identified to be rational science specialists and were the heads of the madrasas at Agra and Sambal. Apart from those men who headed different disciplines, learned scholars from Persia, Arabia and Asia were asked to take charge of the education in madrasas (Padmanabhan, 2011). This is one important move for multicultural education in medieval India when scholars all over the world were asked to take lead roles in Indian educational institutions.

3.3 Education in India- from Colonialism to Independence

After the fall of the Mughal Empire, the British inherited India and had an "intimidating chore of governing a huge and ethnologically diverse terrain. Consequently, in order to comprehend the "linguistic cultural composition of India (Sarangi, 2009)", the British utilised numerous enumerative approaches such as censuses, gazetteers, and interpretations of ethnography in order to classify and label the linguistic demography of the nation. This was finished mainly to advance an understanding into the diversity that could aid them control over the massive and heterogeneous social structure of India (Sarangi, 2009). English gained dominance over Persian as the language of government in 1835. Hindi and Persian were engaged only at the lower organizational levels subsequently, whereas English became the language of the exclusive and the intellectual due to the Macaulay's Minute on Indian Education in 1835 (Sekar, 2015).

After this Minute, western education which played a vital role in embedding English as a medium of instruction within the dominion of higher education as quoted by Macaulay (Vanishree, 2011). Ever since independence, federalism has persisted to be the most operative method of administration and resolution of battles. The Indian Constitution makes the preservation and refinement of such rights the basic rights of every Indian citizen and in this regard Article 29 (1) discerns the fact that any segment of the citizens of India having a distinctive language, script or culture of its own will possess the fundamental right to safeguard the same which means that if a minority needs to maintain its own ethos and language (Guchteneireet al., 2003). Nonetheless India's linguistic diversity give English an significant role in its economy, and this role has extended due to globalization in recent decades (Azam et al., 2011).

4. CONCLUSION

The study is an attempt to examine how multiculturalism remained over the different historic periods in educational system in India. Indian education has evolved over the years wherein the nation has witnessed a number of changes with respect to war, conquests, trade and so on. Indian history itself is segregated into ancient period, medieval period, colonial era and modern era. Of all these periods, Indian education has been embracing multicultural values such as diversity, parity in education. The beginning of multicultural education in India came into existence in the 1200 BC when education was made free to all. This was the time when Indian education was developing under the guidance of the Hindu Vedic values. Within the 934 BC, Indian educational system started to embrace almost all knowledge disciplines such as philosophy, arts, architecture, mathematics,

and literature. Indian educational universities became predominant within the 7th century BC to 10th century AD wherein the most popular of them all Taxila, Nalanda and Vikramshila. All these universities were globalising Indian education to the world by admitting foreign students and scholars to learn and work in these universities. Multiculturalism was embraced in these universities.

However, in the medieval period Muslim invaders conquered India and spread Islam. In this regard, education was spread with the values of Islam. Islamic scholars collaboratively worked with Indian scholars to embed knowledge. Multicultural education was spread across the nation during the medieval time. The rule of the Islamic conquerors ended when the British Raj came into existence. British India emphasised on bringing English as the core language in India. With English, the British attempted to bring knowledge from all over the world. The colonial era was not impacted by the British but also by other foreigners such as the Portuguese, Dutch and the French. India, even after the independence flourished with multicultural values since the culture of these foreigners has been adopted either sparsely or diversely by people living in India even in the modern world of today.

Recently with the advent of globalisation, multicultural education has become more crucial although this nation is been multicultural society for long period. It is necessary to uplift public awareness to become mature global citizens with continuous and long-term effort through multicultural education. Systematic and effective multicultural education needs educational contents which includes 'multicultural citizenship' and 'global challenges'. Multicultural citizenship will deal with subjects of identity, diversity, equality, justice and citizenship. In global challenges there will be subjects of interdependence, peace and sustainable development.

In this study the followings can be proposed for multicultural education in India. Firstly, various educational programs should be developed in consideration of levels of schools and grades since the objectives and contents of learning should be designed according to the developmental stage of students. Secondly, research on teaching method and evaluation considering situation of India is needed. Thirdly, it is essential to realize that multicultural education is indispensable subject for all Indians as national as well as global citizen.

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