

Cultural Responsibility of Teachers**11****Devika Phukan*****Dr. J. P. Saikia******Abstract**

In an ethnically diverse population of students it is imperative to provide empowering and equitable education for all the students. Here, the teachers play a significant role in the all-round development of the ethnically diverse students. With the increase in the numbers of ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse students in schools and colleges, it has become necessary to prepare teachers culturally responsive. This paper is an attempt to highlight the preparation of culturally responsive teachers. This paper is mainly based on secondary data. It has highlighted on the multicultural education programs for teachers.

Key words: *Culturally responsibility, ethnicity, all-round development of students.*

Introduction:

In an ethnically diverse population of students it is imperative to provide empowering and equitable education for all the students. Here, the teachers play a significant role in the all-round development of the ethnically diverse students. With the increase in the numbers of ethnically, culturally and linguistically diverse students in the schools and colleges, it has become necessary to prepare teachers culturally responsive. In comparison to the increasing numbers of culturally and ethnically diverse population of students in the classroom, all the teachers are not trained in multicultural education or culturally responsive education. Teachers without the knowledge of multiculturalism and diversity could hinder in the path of establishing equity in the society. A diverse teacher can benefit the students by providing a variety of perspectives. For this, one needs proper and planned programs and training. Such type of culturally diverse and

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responsive teachers can be able to understand the difficulties that the children of different ethnic and cultural groups are confronting in the classroom.

According to Gay (2000), culturally responsive teaching is the process of using the cultural knowledge, past experiences and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. It establishes meaningful relationships between home and school experiences. It also helps students to know and respect their own and each other's cultural heritage. It also incorporates multicultural information, resources and materials in all the subjects taught in schools.

Significance of the study:

In the present context of increasing conflicts among different ethnic groups it has become one of the important responsibilities of the educational institutions like schools and colleges to develop a feeling of togetherness among the students. This can be possible only through the help and insight of a culturally responsive teacher. For this teachers must acquire required knowledge, attitudes, skills and proficiency to work effectively. Considering this it has become necessary to develop pre-service teacher education programs which will include the knowledge, skills and dispositions which are important to educate diverse students. Through these teachers should be trained to teach in an ethnically and culturally diverse classroom.

Objectives:

The main objective of this study is:-

- Ø To understand the multicultural responsibility of teachers to respond effectively to the needs of ethnically and culturally diverse students.
- Ø To develop a comprehensive understanding of multicultural education and curriculum.
- Ø To identify the essential teaching practices for diverse students.

Methodology:

This study is mainly theoretical in nature. The required data for the study have been collected from secondary sources only, such as journals, books, research articles, magazines, internet, dissertations, etc.

Culturally responsive teachers:

Culturally responsive teachers teach the whole child. According to Ladson & Billings (1992), culturally responsive teachers develop intellectual, social, emotional and political learning by using cultural references to impart knowledge, skills and attitudes.

According to Villegas and Lucas (2002), the following characteristics are considered as the main characteristics of culturally responsive teachers:

- Ø A teacher must be culturally and socially conscious. It is a known fact that an individual's way of thinking, behaving is influenced by race, ethnicity, social class and language. Therefore, the teachers should be able to critically examine their own socio-cultural identities and inequalities between schools and society. If they have any negative attitudes towards particular cultural groups, these should be inspected and confronted.
- Ø By respecting cultural differences of students a teacher can impress the learning and academic performance of students. Culturally responsive teachers have affirming attitude towards students from ethnically and culturally diverse backgrounds.
- Ø They act as an agent of change. They develop skills for dealing with cultural and ethnic chaos.
- Ø In order to be a culturally responsive teacher, they must have knowledge about students, their past experiences, home and community, cultural life in and outside the school.
- Ø Culturally responsive teachers are able to create inclusive classroom environment by assisting the students to construct knowledge and build on their personal and cultural strength.

Culturally responsive teacher education programs:

In order to develop the above mentioned characteristics in a teacher, implementation of proper teacher education programs are very

important. One of the important parts of these culturally responsive teacher education programs is diversity. The objectives of the course should reflect the development of awareness and skills related to diversity. The chapters and projects included in the course should discuss the implications for ethnically and culturally diverse students. It should provide such activities through which students can attain knowledge and skills, and also acquire competence.

These programs should offer varied cross-cultural experiences. The curriculum, methodology and instructional materials of teacher education programs should be responsive to the values and cultural norms of students. Here, the teachers have to teach carefully in a culturally and ethnically diverse population of students. Pang and Sablan (1998) in their study mentioned that teachers who have learned culturally responsive pedagogy are more confident and effective in their instruction of diverse students.

Curriculum for culturally responsive teacher education programs:

In order to develop cultural responsibility of teachers, the teacher education programs should follow a culturally responsive curriculum. Morey and Kilano (1997) have proposed a three level curriculum for this program. These levels are –Exclusive, Inclusive and Transformed.

The Exclusive level of curriculum should include knowledge of traditional mainstream perspectives of diversity. Here, knowledge is limited to four ‘f’s – food, folklore, fun and fashion. At the Inclusive level, diversity contents are included. However, the traditional structure is kept intact. Here, diversity is discussed and compared to the traditional norm. This level of curriculum encourages students to construct their own knowledge. The third level of the curriculum is known as Transformed level which challenges the traditional views. It encourages re-conceptualization and new ways of thinking.

In teacher education programs the curriculum and field experiences should be set up in such a manner so that it enables the new teachers to engage in teaching and learning insight and consider all the ethnic groups, communities, etc. as resources of learning.

Recruitment of teachers:

It is necessary to diversify the teachers. In order to diversify the teachers, they should be recruited from underrepresented groups. Moreover, in order to teach culturally diverse group of students, teachers must acquire the ability of critical thinking and acting both individually and collaboratively with families, other teachers and members of the communities in which they teach.

Instructional strategies:

There are various instructional strategies of teaching such as analysis, case study, action research projects, technology, biographical and autobiographical exploration, use of audio-visual aids etc. However, to make these strategies effective the teacher should keep in mind the differences between students. They should be sensitive towards cultural diversity and also the needs of the students.

Suggestions for preparing culturally responsive teachers:

The following suggestions can be followed in order to prepare culturally responsive teachers:

Ø Teachers can be placed in a different field setting of ethnicity and socio-economic status. It is important for the teachers to learn about the lives and experiences of other ethnic groups in order to understand the historical experiences that have developed different attitudes and perspectives of various ethnic and cultural groups. Their personal knowledge can be enriched with such type of new experiences.

Ø Teachers should be provided internship in culturally diverse classrooms and communities.

Ø They should be able to build relationships with families and communities through participation in community centered activities.

Ø Newly appointed teachers should co-operate with those teachers who have in-depth knowledge and vivid experience with culturally responsive education.

Ø They must create a learning atmosphere in which both teachers and students feel respected by and connected to one another.

Ø Teachers can create challenging, thoughtful learning experiences that include students' perspectives and values.

Ø Teachers should recognize their affiliation with various groups in society, and the advantages and disadvantages of belonging to each group.

Ø Teachers are considered as the direct link between the institutes and students. Therefore, they are in a significant position to facilitate change. By becoming culturally responsive teachers, they can act toward change in the institution by questioning the traditional policies and practices.

Conclusion:

A good teacher can effectively teach in a culturally and ethnically diverse classroom. The teacher education programs should prepare culturally responsive teachers. Teachers must articulate a vision of teaching and learning in a diverse society. For this purpose these programs should develop the abilities of understanding student's cultural backgrounds, interests, their skills and other abilities. Culturally responsive teaching enables the students to be better human beings and more successful learners.

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