

IMPLICATION OF CULTURAL FACTORS IN EDUCATION

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Abstract

In holistic terms, culture is the totality of group-specific values, ceremonies and way of life. Education promotes and enables the transmission of knowledge and skills from one generation to another. According to the opinion of Swami Vivekananda education as an inherent component leads to manifestation of perfection and poignancy, catholicity of vision and transparency. He focused on the education of the hearts. On the basis of Rabindranath Tagore 's opinion the aim of education is self-realization i.e. the psychosocial fulfillment of individual personality. Eminent sociologist Durkheim defines the importance of education as the medium of socialization with an understanding of values. Functionalist theoreticians view the function of education as a major contributor to social cohesion. Bowles and Gintis similarly discussed the notion of a hidden curriculum. It comprises the learning of discipline, hierarchy and passive acceptance of societal structure. A broader vision defines all these components are aspects of the cultural periphery. Paul Willis marked the existence of cultural values in shaping the opinion towards education. Pierre Bourdieu pointed out the interrelationship between the culture of school and home. Thus a link can be established between formal and informal education. A unification of values of education can be achieved by proper synthesis of several cultural traits. Swami Vivekananda's stress on 'man-making education' and Rabindranath Tagore's notion of 'self-realization' were linked with cultural aspects. This link element is inevitability of cultural aspects in education.

Keywords

Education, Culture, Value, Society and Self

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Contemporary society is dominated by culture in each and every aspect of life. In holistic terms, culture is the totality of group-specific values, ceremonies and way of life. On the basis of Tylor's definition, culture can be defined as an interconnected set of ways of thinking, feeling and acting which are more or less formalized and which, having been learned and shared by a plurality of individuals, serve both objectively and symbolically to unite these individuals in a particular and distinct collectivity. In fact this definition includes all kinds of human activities with an emphasis on patterns of behavior and values. Culture comprises more or less formalized ways of acting, thinking and feeling. A high level of formalization is visualized in the sphere of rituals, rules and knowledge. Hence in considering teaching the focus is on formalization on a higher level. Less formalization takes place in the sphere of inter-relationships between individuals. So teaching as an action is considered as highly formalized whereas the way of teaching is linked with less formalization. The cultural aspect is shared by plurality of individuals. This feature of collective existence is linked with the social nature of cultural application. Teaching as a process is connected with a number of individuals. Sharing between teaching communities is a necessity for the proper execution of the process of teaching. Culture is acquired or transmitted in the true sense of the term. Spread of knowledge is part and parcel of the teaching method. Several aspects of culture are intrinsically and extrinsically linked with major propositions of cultural traits. Apart from specific aspects of cultural scenario, symbolic existence is associated with this sector. The teaching method is linked with several symbolic characteristics. Thus a clear link is established between the teaching process and cultural traits. It is also said that human beings are distinguished from all other animals on the basis of culture. Education can be recognized as an aid for this kind of distinction.

As an institution major aspects of education are related to the transmission of norms and values of society. Famous sociologist Durkheim opined that 'society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands'. It is also a well-known fact that without these essential similarities, cooperation, social solidarity and social life itself would be impossible. In a broader sense these are values of society in general and the value of education in particular. Thus through education a link can be established between individuals and society. From a sociological perspective, education acts as a bridge between individual and society. Fixed set of rules is inculcated in the educational system as a whole. Due to the cultural diversity of different societies the nature of rules of education can vary from one society to another. In this aspect a link between culture and education is found to exist.

According to Swami Vivekananda it is an inherent component of education leading to manifestation of perfection and poignancy, catholicity of vision and transparency. So education to him is manifestation of values. Swamiji asserted that real education cares for and accelerates positive education. Proper education to him is linked with 'man-making', 'character making' and 'life-building' ideas. All of these concepts are linked with value systems with philosophical linkage. Thus concept of education of Swamiji is mainly focused on the cultural aspect in the application of ideology. Swami Vivekananda put emphasis on concentration in the essence of all knowledge. This feature has immense importance in modern teaching methods undoubtedly. According to Chakrabarti [2013], the education that caters to the cultivation of goodness in the form of patriotism also steers us to be morally good and sound. Unless the foundation of education is strongly based on the teachings of illustrious thinkers on morality, character-building becomes a myth. Swamiji advocates for universal learning and dissemination. 'Education teaches us never to yield before injustice and immorality, coercion and indiscipline, chaos and corruption writ large in man and society.' [Chakrabarty :2013] If a different look is given to the notion of Swamiji's concept of education, it can be easily revealed that he emphasized on the role of culture in this sphere prominently.

Rabindranath Tagore focused on self-education. This idea incorporates the freedom of every kind with special emphasis on freedom of intellect, decision and knowledge. To Tagore the virtues of equity, harmony and balance should be encompassed in the process of education from the totalitarian perspective. He also stressed that self-education can be attained through perfection. Therefore education is linked with the personality development of individual. There is a clear existence of a humanistic trend in his philosophical concept of education. This trend sharpens with special reference to mutual trust and love. To him, the principal aim of education is to develop power of thinking in its own way. All the concepts ultimately lead to the cultural aspects of education in overall sense. Thus the role of culture is considered as the most vital component in education in the opinion of Tagore also.

Eminent sociologist Talcott Parsons thinks that school takes over the role of 'focal socializing agency' after primary socialization within family. So in that way education can act as a bridge between individuals and society. According to him, individual has to move from the particularistic standard of the family to the universalistic standard of society. Education helps people to cope with the transition. As an institution education socializes people into basic values of society. Here also process of socialization and value learning has a direct link with culture. 'Researchers, often applying symbolic interactionism and the method of participant observation,

have documented the perspectives of teachers and students, the labeling mechanisms within a classroom, the general processes through which classes are constructed and negotiated, the different student roles and cultures which emerge within these classrooms, and the impact of social divisions (gender, class, disability and race) on these interactions.’ [Macionis and Plummer:2014]

Some early studies on the classroom suggest that, while teachers should be impartial, they are culturally conditioned to assess the student’s abilities by ranking them on a scale of other characteristics. These features include appearance, personality, enthusiasm and conformity. It is also a well-known fact that these features have a little link with actual ability. Some teachers favored boys over girls. Teachers give them more attention and opportunities to speak. There are some cultural stereotypes in the educational system. An example can be Asian girls as passive. There is a practice of labeling students in certain ways like ‘slow learners’.

Illich opined that educational institution performs four basic functions in society: the provision of custodial care, the distribution of people among occupational roles, the learning of dominant values and the acquisition of socially approved skills and knowledge. Illich used the term passive consumption which means uncritical acceptance of existing social order. Interestingly the lessons are implicitly linked with the school curriculum. In his words, ‘The hidden curriculum teaches children that their role in life is to know their place and to sit still in it.’ [As mentioned by A.Giddens in Sociology] He describes different educational frameworks. Study Materials can be stored in libraries and agencies for the availability of the students. Provision for communication networks must be there. Vouchers would be given to the students for the exchange of materials. Actually use of technology in education is the key focus of his theory. Thus role of culture is recognized by him from a different perspective.

Bowles and Gintis examined the nature of work and social relationships in the educational system. Hierarchical principles of authority and control are the basis of the organization of schools. Teachers give orders, and students obey. The teaching process is linked with jug and mug principles. Thus knowledge becomes compartmentalized and fragmented into several academic subjects. They also analyzed that social relationships in schools replicate the hierarchical division of labor in the workplace. Alienation from work in later life has a linkage with lack of personal involvement and fulfillment in schools. Hence on the basis of their understanding it can be said that the values of educational institutions ultimately take a significant position in the future lives of individuals.

Paul Willis focused on 'cultural reproduction' in discussing the educational aspect. According to this concept, children of lower class or minority backgrounds feel that in school they are not academically sound enough to fight for good jobs. Gradually they come to know about their academic limitations. They have to accept their inferiority in comparison to others. Thus the culture of the working class is reproduced by educational institutions through the next generation also. He also exemplified this theoretical construct with the existence of 'lad'. Lads are a gang of white students who are fight with school authority frequently. They have got pleasure from constant conflicts from minor issues. In their later life they find no satisfaction in the work sphere also. Willis pointed out that they have created a counter-school environment in the work sphere. Thus cultural aspects in educational institutions reflect in work situations in more or less the same way.

Pierre Bourdieu defines dominant culture as cultural capital. Normally cultural capital is unevenly distributed in society. Class difference is easily marked in educational attainment as a whole. He argues that students of upper-class backgrounds have built-in advantages because of their socialization within the dominant culture. The educational attainment of social groups has a direct connection with the amount of cultural capital they possess. In discussing the system of educational success, he places greater emphasis on styles. According to him form is more important than content in this situation. He thinks that teachers are strongly influenced by 'the intangible nuances of manners and style'. They are less privileged because of their cultural surroundings with a lack of linkage with dominant mode of culture.

Methodology

The study is based on secondary materials like books, journals, newspapers and so on. A small survey is done by the researcher to analyze the situations of 50 students and 50 teachers in Kolkata. The views of 100 respondents are considered in this aspect.. The samples of the survey are selected on the basis of purposive sampling method. The objectives of the study will be – 1] to elucidate the impact of Culture on Education and 2] to analyze the influence of Education on Culture.

Impact of Culture on Education

On the basis of collected primary data it can be said that till now nature of education is principally determined by the values of society. 80% of the teachers opined that values as the component of culture play an important part in education. 86% of the teachers agreed that courses and books are completely conditioned by the nature of the culture of society. Course content is formulated according to the ideals and needs of the society. This becomes a necessity to realize the cultural values as the background of the syllabus. Discipline is undoubtedly the cornerstone

of the entire system of institutions. Cultural values are the direct influence of constructing the discipline. The concept of discipline is directly associated with the present cultural patterns of societal structure. Thus through discipline culture connects education in practical ways. 92% of teachers considered the significance of discipline as a part of culture. They also put emphasis on the role of discipline in connection to education. Educational institution is a miniature form of society. This kind of institution not only forms the birthplace of formal culture but is an inseparable part of educational transmission. These are created on the basis of the cultural ideals and values of society, Hence these institutions school promote as well as develop the cultural setup of the society. 92% of the teachers felt that educational institutions are closely related to the cultural orientation of contemporary societal structure. A paradigm shift in the method of teaching is marked in terms of transformation from teacher-centered teaching to child-centered education. The transformation can be linked to project methods, seminars, symposiums, discussions, etc with respect to the influence of culture. Teachers should be the symbol of the ideals and values of the society.

Influence of Education on Culture

Education conserves the culture of the society. Each country has its focus on the values of its own culture. Education can be an aid of reservation of culture of entire society. Students can relate themselves to the theoretical concepts and practical application of culture with appropriate provision of education. Cultural preservation can only be possible through the transmission of culture from one generation to another. From the sociological point of view, it is recognized that the function of education is linked with the transmission of values and ideals to the next generation. Culture as the lifeline of society is related to continuity. Through the active participation of education as an institution the continuity of culture can be preserved. Sometimes truly cultural traits can be related to negative orientations. With direct as well as indirect cultural interaction, the motivation towards learning will increase normally. Through education good qualities like broad-mindedness and adjustment will automatically grow with the feeling of mutuality and cooperation. These kinds of cultural traits become very relevant in the context of integration as well as synthesis of culture in contemporary context.

The maturation of material culture is connected to the scientific and technological adaptation at a rapid leap. The pace of development of material culture is comparatively quick in comparison to the components of non-material culture. It is commonly seen that the values, norms and ideals of the society can't change at a rapid pace. Thus, a gulf of difference occurs between material and non-material culture. This difference is known as cultural lag. Education is the only accepted

way to bridge this lag. Several programs and activities related to development will be fruitful in solving this typical problem. Thus, it can be said that education can be effective for lessening the cultural lag.

Today the world is completely divided between different groups on the basis of ideologies, values, norms and significant cultural attributes. In this broader context it will be difficult to maintain unity in terms of cultural aspects. Proper education will give the essence of cultural unity. Educated people must be positively inclined to the goals of culture. This kind of attitude can come from the activities and actions of educational institutions. Culture can comprise of negative elements side by side with positive values. Education can play a corrective role in the abolition of negative perspectives of culture. Education is connected to aesthetics, artistic expression and beautification. These are directly connected to cultural aspects. In practical sense, the liberation of human mental structure can come through cultural application. It gives birth to a good structure of mind. Kindness, sympathy and similar virtues can come from educational attainment. So, inner positive human qualities which are parts of culture, must be enriched with educational aspirations.

Moral education becomes a significant component of the contemporary world for achieving cultural consistency. Proper education should be perceived as an actual way to reach to an understanding of pure culture. Education and culture are intertwined in the aspect of unifying mankind with the help of balancing the value system. Education normally treats culture as a holistic existence. Unity among this cultural whole is important from the perspective of culture.

Understanding in the matter of intercultural focus can be endorsed by education. Education gives meaningful insight into numerous cultures. Inter-cultural understanding gives the depth of realization about the broad cultural periphery. With this notion a group can grow their mindset and behavior beyond self-centered attention. In spite of own culture of human beings, there are some actually appreciated matters in each and every cultural pattern.

Now people are interested in policies and planning for better achievement of education. The practical scenario focuses on the understanding of the cultural pattern of the particular setting. Education plays an important role in promoting cultural assimilation. Through education the real aim of national culture can be accomplished. Therefore, unity and integration on national level can be linked directly with education. Education will be really fruitful when this is linked with Intercultural perspective. This type of education will be really helpful in focusing on the similarities and dissimilarities of several cultural patterns.

Culture and education have a two-way association because both can be attached to compliments and supplements to each other in numerous facets.

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