



Education and Inter- Cultural Understanding

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ABSTRACT

Education is a driving force which sets the foundation of a nation. Education gives us a base to start, to meet tremendous challenges with futuristic approach. Education enlightens mind and soul. Education brings knowledge, knowledge brings wisdom & wisdom removes all the doubts and dilemma of mind, guides the individual to make correct decisions , differentiate between right and wrong and take the correct path ahead. It makes you rise for larger causes of society and for not just betterment of yourself but also your family, society and your nation. Education not just engages with the individuals but the entire country, the Culture. The present paper discusses that it is only through education, that knowledge to understand cultural diversity of the country and the wisdom to respect and embrace its diversity can be inculcated. It gives you the maturity to work towards your growth & development as well as of the country.

KEYWORDS : Education , Education system , Culture , Cultural diversity.

Introduction

Education is that process of development which consists the passage of human being from infant to maturity, the process whereby he adapts himself gradually in various ways to his physical & spiritual environment. by T.Raymont.

Education is not preparation for life, Education is life itself. By John Dewey.

When a child is born, he is new to the world, unaware of the surroundings, social fabric system, society, and customs. As he grows old he is influenced by informal as well as formal agencies of education. Gradually the child develops his mental & emotional self along with his daily physical growth. (1) Education is that plant which later cultivates into a big tree with deep strong roots which gives stability and meaning to one's existence on this planet. Education develops the individual like a flower, by developing his individuality in all aspects – physical, mental, emotional & social .With this all round development individual becomes a responsible citizen who utilizes all his capabilities to develop his own self, his society and his nation to the highest extent.(2)On one hand education develops the over-all personality of the person, on the other hand ,it contributes to the growth and development of society and at large a nation. It is only and only through education that a nation's culture and heritage is preserved, nurtured and inculcated into future generations.

Education in its true sense is like a deep ocean. If we look at the definitions given by renowned educationalists then we will observe that education has a very wider broader meaning.

Professor Drever "Education is a process in which the knowledge, character and behavior of the young are shaped & moulded."

S.S.Mackenzi "In the wider sense, it is a process that goes on throughout life, and is promoted by almost every experience in life."

John Stuart Mill "The culture which each generation purposefully gives to those who are to be its successors in order to qualify them for at least keeping up and if possible for raising the level of improvement which has been attained."

In fact education is part and parcel of life, on which Lock has aptly remarked "plants are developed by cultivation and men by education."

Education engages with the country and its culture

Education not just engages with the individuals but the entire country, the Culture. It gives the knowledge to understand cultural diversity of the country and the wisdom to respect and embrace its diversity .It gives you the maturity to work towards individual's growth & development as well as of the country.

Education helps us to understand unique cultural nuances & traditions of each state & ethnicity. It gives us the intellect to respect it, preserve it for future generations.

Role of education in cultural understanding

Education enlightens mind and soul. Education brings knowledge , knowledge brings wisdom & wisdom removes all the doubts and dilemma of mind, guides the individual to make correct decisions , differentiate between right and wrong and take the correct path ahead. It makes you rise for larger causes of society and for not just betterment of yourself but also your family, society and your nation .Our nation is culturally diverse. Education makes you mature in your thinking and brings compassion, respect and understanding towards diverse cultures. It also sensitizes you to understand your role & responsibility in preserving it .

Education the foundation, Education the only Instrument

Education is a driving force which sets the foundation of a nation. Education gives us a base to start, to meet tremendous challenges with futuristic approach. Education only can bring positive attitude in the mind-set of people towards acceptance of cultural diversity of our nation. Attitude towards preserving cultural heritage and respect for the same should be instilled in an individual at a young age.

Education is a key instrument which helps an individual in comprehending a clear, broader prospective about other people, their culture, and tradition and sensitize them to be respectful about their own as well.

As the world is shrinking, distances reducing, role of education should not be limited to just preparing young minds for global challenges as per the changing times but also to anticipate them on time & bring the same in educational institutes. Education is the main instrument which shapes identity and is directly responsible for the entire perception and on a large scale social change. Hence its role becomes all the more crucial.

In any nation education and its policies are the criteria of a controlled, disciplined social structure, social well – being, individual personality development and economic progress. The speed with which social, political and economic scenario is changing in the entire world and in our nation, it's very important that we do introspection, intensive observation and analysis of our education system. Its challenges ahead, aims and future ahead.

Threads of current education fabric system

Education system, approaches of education & its aim has gone through a transformation in the last decade.

There was a time when youth of our nation took pride in age old Indian traditions and culture. But today's youth is confused and struck by the glare of western culture and lifestyle. Today's education is taking our youth away from our own culture. Current policies and approaches of education is definitely making our youth competitive but failing to sensitize them towards our cultural heritage and its preservation .Current education system is subject oriented. It emphasizes more on the subject knowledge and intelligence rather than any efforts

to develop or inculcate any emotional values towards our culture .currently it is based on how well you can memorize the factual data available in your subject text book and then regurgitate those facts on the day of your test. It is more of a memory test than learning test. There are hardly any subjects based on human values and ethics .Nowhere has it made an effort to sensitize the youth about our culture and how to preserve it and take it forward.

Cultural sensitivity includes not only knowledge that diversity exists between and within cultural groups but a refusal to make value judgments against differences i.e. being better or worse , more or less intelligent or right or wrong – as they are simply different.(3)

Cultural sensitivity focuses on the importance of knowing and being sensitive to the culture of other individual (4)In a culturally diverse country it becomes really essential that inter – cultural understanding, sensitivity towards different cultures and respect for that is taught to individuals at a tender age in schools through formal education.

This Cultural awareness and sensitivity can be brought only when the mind-set of the people changes. The History of the world is a proof that education has been the root cause for any change which takes place in the social, cultural, political and economic aspects of human life. Education can mould a person in the desired manner. It's a very powerful instrument. It can sensitize them for emotional and cultural integration in a culturally diverse country .For this we need to re-organize our education system. It should essentially have contents on national and human values which in turn develops attitude of respect for national culture and its history. (5)

Need of the hour

As discussed above that our country is a culturally diverse country with people having different religions & traditions. These dictate their way of living .Because of these diversities in culture they sometimes live in isolation from others. This isolation leads to disharmony in society which leads to disapproval to each other's way of living and conflicts. This disturbs the fabric of society, its peace & harmony and is to an extent detrimental to peace and harmony of the entire society and nation.

However education is a powerful, effective medium that can develop this understanding of other's cultural patterns, beliefs and ways of living and teach them to appreciate the same. Development of such understanding synthesizes cultural harmony, mutual respect for each other, peace and progress of society and helps in nation building.

To build this inter – cultural understanding and to promote cultural harmony educational institutes are suggested to take the following steps.

- 1) Children at school level should be taught subjects which emphasizes on inter- cultural understanding.
- 2) Children at school & college levels should have subjects in their curriculum which develop this understanding.
- 3) Cultural days should be celebrated often where costumes, lifestyle, cuisines of all the cultures should be studied and appreciated.
- 4) Cultural Seminars should be kept where free exchange of thoughts & opinions should be welcomed.
- 5) National and International delegators should be called for students to be exposed to their valuable views and over- all perspective.

Conclusion

Culture is not static but dynamic .It keeps changing & it's keeps growing .A rapid rise in the means of transport, modes of communication & internet has shrunk the whole world into one small unit .Due to this one culture invades the other culture and influences it .Due to this one notices the fast changing patterns of our cultural beliefs, values, ideals, our thinking patterns and behavior. Also due to rapid progress of scientific inventions & technological advancement, material culture has over shadowed other aspects of culture like ideals, values, norms of life. These are lagging behind and there is created a gap .This Culture lag can only be corrected and filled by education .Education only can sensitize an individual to respect, preserve, & contribute to the development of culture of a nation.

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