



Need for Innovation in Classroom Practices in Higher Education in Order To Evolve Common Good in Society

KEYWORDS

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ABSTRACT *Need for innovation in classroom practices in higher education in order to evolve common good in society is the need of the hour today. With market-friendly globalization gaining momentum, our education, particularly higher education is being led more by market forces and market values and less and less by human values. Incessant craze for learning, and learning should become an inner organic need. In this scenario, the role of the teacher becomes very important in order to initiate and accelerate classroom practices which will help in the evolution of common good in society.*

It is believed that conscientised teachers can initiate and accelerate the dynamic process of socio-economic, politico-cultural and eco-environmental transformation from within the four walls of the classrooms by innovating classroom practices from time to time in order to evolve common good in society.

Innovating means fundamental re-thinking and radical re-designing classroom practices with a view to making our classrooms the basic stage wherein teachers and the students work together to initiate the process of change. This requires two basic exercises; firstly, identifying and dismantling the obsolete practices; and erecting in their place innovative practices which are required and relevant to evolving common good in society.

John Stuart Mill asked "What is just society?" He says: "Allowing individuals to live their lives as long as they didn't infringe on the rights to others, to the idea that the resources of society should be distributed to all, including those most deserving first".

Pierre Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, April 20, 1968, to June 4, 1979, defined thus his interpretation of 'Just society'. He said:

"The Just Society will be one in which the rights of minorities will be safe from the whims of intolerant majorities. The Just Society will be one in which those regions and groups which have not fully shared in the country's affluence will be given a better opportunity. The Just Society will be one where such urban problems as housing and pollution will be attacked through the application of new knowledge and new techniques. The Just Society will be one in which our Indian and Inuit populations will be encouraged to assume the full rights of citizenship through policies which will give them both greater responsibility for their own future and more meaningful equality of opportunity. The Just Society will be a united Canada, united because all of its citizens will be actively involved in the development of a country where equality of opportunity is ensured and individuals are permitted to fulfill themselves in the fashion they judge best."

However, the recorded history of mankind does not provide any evidence about its existence. But it does provide complete evidence of struggles that have been waged and

are being waged against unjust practices.

Jean Jacques Rousseau said: *"The first person who, having enclosed a plot of land, took it into his head to say this is mine and found people simple enough to believe him was the true founder of civil society. What crimes, wars, murders, what miseries and horrors would the human race have been spared, had some one pulled up the stakes or filled in the ditch and cried out to his fellow men: "Do not listen to this imposter. You are lost if you forget that the fruits of the earth belong to all and the earth to no one!"*

He further adds: *"Every man having been born free and master of himself, no one else may under any pretext whatever subject him without his consent. To assert that the son of a slave is born a slave is to assert that he is not born a man." "Man was born free, and he is everywhere in chains. Those who think themselves the masters of others are indeed greater slaves than they."*

Works of Adam Smith, Hobbes also show that justice can be advanced by remedying redressable injustices.

However, the structure of our society itself poses a challenge. The exercise of evolving common good in society has to take place in our geographically and demographically vast, socially plural, culturally diverse, hierarchical, egalitarian, and mostly androcentric society, economy and polity.

Despite the significant progress made since independence to improve the living conditions of the people, the development-deprivation concerns such as eradication of illiteracy, ignorance, remedial poverty and unemployment, preventable diseases, avoidable morbidity, premature mortality, inequalities, redressable injustices and marginalisation of women continue to be our concerns even today.

What we are seeing today is not democracy in which people matter most; it is a democracy in which money matters most. The majority are being ruled by moneyed minority. With globalization gaining momentum by the day, our education, particularly higher education is being led more by market forces and market values and less and less by human values. Education today is becoming a big business. In the name of efficiency, ethics is being sacrificed.

As Joseph E. Stiglitz, Author of "Making Globalization Work" says: "Development is about transforming the lives of people, not just transforming economies." He further adds: 'I believe that globalization has the potential to bring enormous benefits to those in both the developing and the developed world. But the evidence is overwhelming that it has failed to live up to this potential. The problem is not with globalization itself but in the way globalization has been managed. Economics has been driving globalization, especially through the lowering of communication and transportation costs. But politics has shaped it. The rules of the game have been largely set by the advanced industrial countries – and particularly by special interests within those countries – and, not surprisingly, they have shaped globalization to further their own interests. They have not sought to create a fair set of rules, let alone a set of rules that would promote the well-being of those in the poorest countries of the world.'

Environmental degradation is a big reality today. In the name of progress life-sustaining nature is being mercilessly massacred. There may be wealth generation but at the cost of health degeneration. They are simultaneous process. What is created is being measured, but not what is destroyed.

Women are still being marginalised in the mainstream social like, even though they bear more than 50% of the work burden. In addition to having full-time employment, they are solely responsible for the household affairs such as cleaning, cooking and being the primary care giver to their children. This is despite the efforts being made to empower them. Violence against women is recognized today as a major social problem. This violence includes a wide range of violations of women's human rights including spousal violence, which is usually directed at wives or girlfriends, sexual assault and eve teasing. The problem of violence against women rages all over the world and is a crisis in almost all societies. We need to not only focus on the problem and ramifications but also on how to prevent this problem from occurring in the first place.

A person's upbringing plays a major role in their views of the world, and indeed, what they believe about common good in societies. Firstly, parent's attitudes are very important in shaping a person's view of the world, because as a child, your parents are one of the first people whose thoughts and views on a subject you hear, and until a person grows and becomes more aware of things going on in their society, your parent's views are the ones you adopt. As you grow, it is your friends that influence your beliefs the most, including your attitude towards others. Then a school a person attends is another factor which can shape a person's beliefs about common good in society.

As a teacher, it is up to him or her to inculcate the right values, beliefs and attitude in their students, in order to achieve common good in society. Hence, need for innovation in classroom practices in higher education in order to evolve common good in society is very essential.

Some of these innovations that can be adopted are as follows:

1. The teacher should, first and foremost, should abandon colonial classroom culture, which are characterized by undesirable silence, submissiveness and uncritical acceptance on part of the student. This has to be replaced by democratic culture. Creating a democratic classroom environ-

ment means involving students, on a regular basis and in developmentally appropriate ways, in shared decision making that increases their responsibility for helping to make the classroom a good place to be and learn. It must create a support structure that calls forth students' best moral selves by strengthening society and holding them accountable to practice respect and responsibility. Students must work with the teacher in a continuing partnership to create the moral culture of the classroom. It should involve a face-to-face circle meeting emphasizing interactive discussion and problem solving.

2. Democratic culture, in a classroom begins with the recognition that diversity can only be embraced where there is a centre to which all feel a positive sense of attachment. Such an aspect is intimately connected with the question how social relations are structured within class, age and gender formations.

3. Education syllabus formulated by schools/colleges should reflect the social realities of society they serve and represent the vision of the society they seek. There must be a large variety of shared undertakings and experiences. For making classrooms transformative, the dichotomy between the teachers and students should be gradually reduced so that reciprocal learning can be encouraged. Value-based education should be taught if you want the students to lead a value-loaded life. Academic freedom, implying institutional and individual autonomy should be completely utilised to sensitise and conscientise the students inside the classrooms but especially towards people at large.

4. Technology today can to a great extent bring in constructive innovation in classrooms. However, it cannot replace a teacher. Audio-visuals aids should remain as aids only. It can however help in many ways the teacher to be more effective and productive. For example, replace mono-disciplinary approach to teaching by multidisciplinary approach. It can replace rote learning through reflective consciousness. It can also help the teacher in evolving competencies expected of teachers in order to take up innovative exercise.

The role of teacher is undeniable to initiate and accelerate the process of evolving common good in society. The question however remains: how it make it actually happen?