

SITUATING TEACHER EDUCATION WITHIN ESSENTIALS OF 'LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER'

**Rishabh Kumar Mishra
Prof. Bharati Baveja
University of Delhi
Delhi, India**

OVERVIEW OF PRESENTATION

This paper has been written in three sections -

- The first section, explores ‘essentials’ necessary for ‘learning to live together’.
- The second section of the paper deals with empirical data and analyzed pedagogic practices of social science aimed at integrating the essentials of ‘learning to live together’.
- Following the analysis of empirical data presented in the second section, the third section of the paper discusses a framework for teacher education programme which will help in sustaining this effort for long. The crux of this framework is ‘reflection’.

Essentials of 'Learning to Live Together'

- The story of human civilization begins when human beings started living together with a sense of belongingness and togetherness.
- Since that time humans were engaged in constructive as well as destructive processes.
- **Constructive processes** always lead us towards process of becoming 'human' while **destructive processes** always put question mark on humanity.

Essentials of 'Learning to Live Together'

Education *should nurture an individual-*

- *who appreciates the beauty and potential of nature, the interdependence of all forms of life and the need for harmony;*
- *who is happy and at peace with one's self and consequently makes peace with others,*
- *who has understanding and respect for cultural diversity and is able to communicate and cooperate with persons of different origins;*
- *who values good human relations and is committed to mutual trust and coexistence; and work towards the common goal of society and mankind' .*

Essentials of 'Learning to Live Together'

- Educational processes ought to create a better understanding of other people, mutual understanding among us, and peaceful ways of living.
- Education cannot be satisfied with bringing individuals together by getting them to accept common values shaped in the past. It must also enable the individual to reflect on the question of 'what for' and 'why' to live together.

Essentials of 'Learning to Live Together'

- Education should contribute in creating a learning society; a society where every aspect of life at both individual and social level, offers opportunities for learning and doing, to every individual irrespective of his social background.
- Given the pluralistic social order marked by aggressive global forces, communal conflicts and vested political interests, it is essential education produces critical thinker who can take informed decisions and act with courage and conviction.

Essentials of 'Learning to Live Together'

This goal can be achieved only if the sense of 'togetherness' and 'belongingness' becomes intra-psychic from inter-psychic.

**Space for Hope:
Situating Essentials of
'Learning to Live Together'
Within The Pedagogic
Practices of Social Science**

Pedagogic Practices And 'Learning to live together'

We are taking stance that essentials of 'learning to live together' can become essential part of our everyday cognition only if it is seen as essential part of 'pedagogy'. Here, we are looking for such integration in the pedagogic practices of social sciences.

PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES AND 'LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER'

- In a pedagogic setting learner is viewed as an active and reflective being. Along with developing teaching-learning processes, pedagogic setting builds self esteem and identity of learners as well as teachers. *Seen from this standpoint, pedagogic practices need to take into account of a wide range of concerns such as a learner situated in socio-cultural setting; learning tasks that engender motivation and understanding; and classroom discourse; and an appreciation of the affective dimensions of learning .*

PEDAGOGIC PRACTICES OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

- Whether teachers practice traditional or constructivist approaches, their major concern was to transmit knowledge given in books and somehow enable their learners to score 'good' marks.
- Both kinds of teacher (Traditional as well as so called constructivist) believe that learners were not able to comprehend social processes as they were too young to think about these issues.

SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO LEARNING

- We decided to establish a pedagogic setting in the school, adopting a socio-cultural approach to learning. Socio-cultural approach to learning explains learning and
 - (a) knowing as a social process,
 - (b) situated in physical as well as socio-cultural context and
 - (c) distributed across person and tools.

SOCIO-CULTURAL APPROACH TO LEARNING

- After reviewing the related literature written on social constructivism, Applefield, Huber and Molallem (2001) summarized the basic tenets of social constructivist perspective as follows- (a) learners construct their own knowledge, participating in authentic activities and internalizing the tools of practices, (b) learners are reflective beings, they can think and reflect on their lived experiences, (c) Social interaction/ dialogue play a crucial role in learning

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND ‘LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER’

- Against this theoretical backdrop, activities were designed for setting up community of learners engaged in the process of knowledge construction.
- It was kept in mind while designing these activities that the knowledge and understanding about society that learners bring to the classroom must be acknowledged. This aspect of activity makes it authentic; similar to real world problems.
- Learner’s engagement in such activities would enable them to reflect critically on social realities and thus enable them to revisit their beliefs which influence social cohesion.

Activity 1: Diversity and Discrimination

This activity aimed at discussing the concept of ‘Diversity’ and ‘Discrimination’. The overview of activity is as follows:

- A handout was distributed to the class. In the space provided in the handout, students were asked to mention their name, state, religion, language, food, festivals, dress and some specific cultural practices of their family. Some blank space was also provided so that they could fill any other relevant information about themselves.
- Once they finished working on their own handout, they were asked to share and discuss the details filled with their neighbors. This helped them to highlight and appreciate the similarities and differences in the content which they had mentioned.

Activity 1: Diversity and Discrimination

- They were then divided into groups of five and asked to talk for three to five minutes on major forms of diversity.
- The forms of diversity that came up after discussion were written on the blackboard.
- Further discussion was generated around the issues that emerged.

Activity 1: Diversity and Discrimination

- The following forms of diversity came out during classroom discussion -Physical appearance (color, height etc), Region, Religion, Caste, Intelligence, Social Class, Gender and Language.
- During discussion, many stereotype and prejudices of learners came up-
 - “Biharies eat rice only”*
 - “He eats beaf”*.
- These kinds of stereotypes and prejudices are challenges for social cohesion. These points were taken into account and included in the classroom discussion.

Activity 1: Diversity and Discrimination

- Significant finding that emerged during discussion that caste and class were significant dimensions of differentiation. This was evident in the fact that most of the learners mentioned their caste and class in the untitled boxes.
- During the class activity it was observed that a significant category of discrimination i.e., differently abled was missing.
- This activity not only brought out their understanding about social diversity and discrimination but also reflected their stereotypes and prejudice. The activity made them revisit their stereotype and reflect on their prejudice.

Activity 2: Rural Economy

The following set of hypothetical problems was given to the class and their responses on the same were sought.

- The students were divided in groups of four. They were given a reflective exercise where they were supposed to plan economic activities for farmers who had already sown their crops for the season and had finished all tasks related to farming. The students were told that until harvesting, the villagers were facing the problem of seasonal unemployment.

Activity 2: Rural Economy

- While planning the activities, they were guided to keep the following points in mind-
- The task should generate monetary benefits for the farmers.
- All the villagers who are capable and willing to work should be included/employed in these activities in some way or the other.
- Through these activities some social cause or purpose should also be served. Along with this, the task should provide scope for people to nurture and develop-care, brotherhood and co-operation among each of them.

Activity 2: Rural Economy

- It is evident that the variety of suggestions and proposed economic activities thought out by the children were not restricted to the examples stated in their textbooks.
- This shows that while working in groups they go beyond the given information and put their ideas in a constructive way.
- During the observations, it was found that every group took time to arrive at a consensus.
- It was observed that while planning, they were also focusing on how their activity fulfilled the criteria of social cohesion ('love, goodwill, cooperation).

Activity 3: Local Government

- At the beginning of the class, a case vignette (from the book) was given to the class and the learners were asked to read it.
 - When they had read it, the following questions were posed to them to generate discussion-
 1. What are the major issues discussed in the *Panchayat* meeting?
 2. What could be the other issues that can be discussed in the *Panchayat*?
 3. How does *Panchayat* arrive at any decision?
- These were only guiding question for the discussion.

Activity 3: Local Government

One student narrated his own experience to the class, which is as follows-

“Last year I went to my village. My uncle fought with my father and separated my family .My father went to the *sarpanch* and requested him to intervene and divide the property in a fair manner. Then they brought some of their other people along with them and fairly divide the property.”

Activity 3: Local Government

They were asked to highlight/hypothesize how the process of decision making would take place in a group? The learners came up with the following responses-

“Every person will express his view. While he/she is expressing his views everyone else would listen to her. They may agree or disagree. In case of a disagreement, they will argue it out within the group. Gradually, this process will move further and the group will eventually arrive at a final decision, possibly which suits all or most. In this process everyone’s voice(s) will be heard. Each idea is important. This whole decision making process looks at the welfare of the community as a whole and. It is kept in mind that the decision should not harm anyone.”

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

- Learner's engagement and ownership in classroom pedagogic processes, teachers modeling the culture of inquiry in classroom and importance of communication within the group can be easily seen as the crux of these activities.
- Rather than relying on teacher's unquestionable authority, students in such pedagogic settings propose and defend their own views. They also respond thoughtfully to views of others. This process leads them to be a member of the 'community of inquiry' .

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

- The whole class benefits from 'sum of cognition'.
- Multiple voices are heard within these pedagogic setting.
- A new participant structure emerges in classroom where power and authority shift from teacher to the students.
- It was found that learners were able to see themselves as question 'posers', decision makers and participants of democratic discussion where their views and ideas were heard.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Evidently, teachers play an important role in clarifying and developing values conducive to 'learning to live together'. It is therefore imperative that teachers, both prospective as well as in-service, need to be consciously trained to develop among their students values, skills and behavior essential for living together.

A WAY FORWARD: SITUATING
TEACHER EDUCATION WITHIN
ESSENTIALS OF LEARNING TO LIVE
TOGETHER

AN OVERVIEW OF PREVAILING TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

- The traditional Teacher Education programmes separate theory from practice and learning from doing by virtue of their curriculum design.
- Focus upon merely skills and competence, overshadows the learner's lived experiences and their ability to appreciate and critically reflect upon social reality(s).
- Prospective teachers are not provided an understanding to see education itself as a problematic process, a process which is also guided by power ideology, contributing to uneven distribution of knowledge and thus pushing the 'other' on margins (Giroux, 1988). Traditional approach fail to develop teaching competence required to generate a culture of inquiry in the classroom.

ENVISIONING TEACHERS AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

- Teacher education should not aim at preparing teachers who snugly fit in the existing schools and comfortably adopting their practices, but should prepare teachers who are able to critically reflect on existing practices and suggest effective measures to alter them.
- There is a need to problematize these well entrenched practices and ways of thinking about education and suggest ways for promoting critical inquiry and reflective thinking among prospective teachers.

ENVISIONING TEACHERS AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

- Critical inquiry and Reflection are essential processes for teacher's learning as through these processes only they can organize and plan what they want to do in class (reflection before action). During teaching they can use their tacit knowledge for meeting spontaneous and unique situations (reflection during action), and after teaching they can identify, make sense and draw inferences for future of what they have done in the classrooms (reflection after action).

ENVISIONING TEACHERS AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

- Teaching is praxis and professional development of teachers has to be based on two distinct but interrelated foundations- practice based on reflection and reflection based on practice.
- Reflective teaching also contribute in developing attitudes which will promote attributes of living together such as open-mindedness and shouldering responsibilities.
- Much of what is built into the making of a teacher stems from experiential learning, by engaging in actual practice in real situations and making discerning observations surrounding that.

ENVISIONING TEACHERS AS REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER

- A teacher education programme envisioned on above mentioned objectives can create a culture in teacher education institutes where experiential learning, self study, cooperative and social learning, reflection based on inquiry, self expression, professional communication and intense sharing among communities of peers, would become integral and automatised.

“Two year B.Ed programme: A Curriculum Framework”.

The objectives of this programme are to-

- Develop an understanding of school related issues and a repertoire of pedagogies suitable for varying learning environments.
- Develop sensitivity to children from different groups, abilities and interests.
- Enable prospective teachers to problematise educational situations and adopt an inquiry-oriented approach to teaching-learning and to professional development.

“Two year B.Ed programme: A Curriculum Framework”.

- Try out small-scale classroom-based investigations individually and in collaboration with other colleagues that contribute to and inform school teaching.
- Provide an increased understanding of other systems of education that are engaged in the development of human beings.
- Interact with other professionals for the purpose of sharing, collaborating and growing in the profession.
- Develop a conceptual framework of educational theory located in philosophical, sociological and psychological bases and a personal theory of teaching.

SITUATING TEACHER EDUCATION WITHIN ESSENTIALS OF LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER

This kind of ‘culture’ will not merely prepare a ‘technician’ but a ‘person’ who is engaged in conjoined action with his/her learner in the pursuit of knowledge and is committed to the development of herself and those of her learners.

THANK YOU