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## EDUCATIONAL POLICIES RESPONSE TO CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN SCHOOL EDUCATION IN INDIA

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### Abstract

Diversity is both an opportunity and a challenge. Educational policy makers and practitioners across the globe have found certain ways to respect the diversity of their citizens as well as to create a unified nation-state to which all of the nation's citizens have allegiance. However, the context of diversity between western countries and India contrasts. In western countries it has been seen that issues related to diversity connotes with immigrant population, ethnicity, skin colour, globalisation etc. As a result, their policies to manage diversity of its citizens are based upon the principles of 'melting pot' where the emphasis is on the formation of homogenous/national identity. India, due to its history of old civilisation, follows the principle of 'unity in diversity'. The Indian Constitution has also provided political and institutional measures for the recognition and accommodation of the ethnic and diverse identities. As a result, the policies in India emphasises on the composite/plural identity of its citizens.

The present paper seeks to analyse the current policies and programmes envisaged for addressing cultural diversity in schools. It also aims to evaluate if the extant policies are sufficient to meet the needs of students belonging to diverse groups. The idea of education entrusting through these policies is whether based upon the principles of assimilation or integration will also be unravelled. In order to highlight the different connotations that are attached with diversity in western countries and Indian context, the paper pursues to draw a comparative analysis of policies and programmes which are prevailing with respect to multicultural education.

**Key words:** Diversity, Multicultural Education, Cultural Diversity

### Introduction

India is a diverse nation where communities belonging to different ethnic, cultural and language background are residing since time immemorial. Diversity here implies the presence of different communities and cultures co-existing with one another. However, it is a paradox that existence of diversity in India, has laid negative impact on some communities. This can be observed in the form of hegemonic practices, marginalisation or exclusion faced by these communities. In the realm of education, schools are one such indispensable site that plays a significant part in perpetuating stereotypes and prejudices about certain communities.

The Preamble to the Constitution of India, the National Policy of Education 1986 and all other important policy documents emphasised the need to provide an equitable, quality education for all children. It is a different ball game though that these values are seen in explicit forms such as slogans on school walls or in the prefaces to school textbooks largely remain rhetoric. Schools turn into the site where the identities of children are reconfirmed that ensures the status quo of a hierarchical and unequal society (Nawani, 2014).

Children belonging to particular ethnic, cultural or linguistic minority face the brunt of the stratified society that actively fosters prejudices. The prejudices may further lead to open exclusion, subtle neglect, physical violence and caste abuse (Velaskar, 2012). This further leads to stereotyping of students by both teachers and peers which ultimately affects their performance and learning levels.

The cultural diversity of students which is an inseparable component in schools demands for a framework to meet the requirements of diverse groups. The concept of Multicultural Education is one such framework based upon a basic



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perspective, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyse and transform those structural, cultural and interpersonal aspects of education that maintain the marginal position and subordination of minority groups. It analysis the roles schools, school process and school structure play in the maintenance of racial, ethnic and gender subordination (Gay, 2003). The concept of multicultural education has also been acknowledged in important documents like Universal Declaration of Human rights adopted by the United Nations.

In order to understand the concept of multicultural education, it is essential to understand the meaning of culture in brief. People, who live together in a certain geographical environment, build a certain mechanism that helps them understand each other. They cooperate with each other, in order to reduce the challenge that comes from their environment. Though they have individual identities, they develop a common understanding and shared meanings for their environment. According to Banks (1977), “culture consists of behaviour patterns, symbols, institutions, values and other human made components of the society. It is the unique achievement of a human group, which distinguishes that group from other human groups. While cultures are in many ways similar, a particular culture constitutes a unique world.”

Multicultural education values cultural diversity and also confirms the plurality reflected by students, their communities and teachers. Multicultural education questions all forms of discrimination prevailing in schools and aim towards implanting principles of social justice. It facilitates students to develop a positive self-concept about their culture, society, history. The concept of multicultural education lays emphasis on school curriculum where discrimination based upon caste, culture, creed, gender, class, language, region etc. needs to be readdressed. Multicultural education argues for a teaching-learning process that addresses the cultural and social diversity of students through the means of pedagogic practices that are contextual. Multicultural education helps teachers and students to critically understand, analyse the oppression and power relations in the community, society and the world.

While talking about multicultural education and cultural diversity simultaneously, it is important to highlight that in such discussions the focus remains largely on visible, explicit aspects of culture namely language, food habits, language, religion and aesthetic convention. However, these aspects of culture which are visible are the ones which are taught deliberately and learned consciously and are only the tip of the iceberg of culture (Banks & Banks, 2010).

Multicultural education is based on the principle that “all students—regardless of their gender, social class, racial, ethnic, or cultural characteristics—should have an equal opportunity to learn in school” (Banks, 2010b). This goal is based on philosophical commitments to “freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity” (NAME, 2003). Developing more inclusive and respectful schools requires efforts on a number of fronts, including curriculum development, teacher training and classroom pedagogy, and school culture. Thus, the term multicultural education encompasses a wide range of efforts in education reform. Multicultural education as a multidimensional process not just emphasise on content knowledge but also on the approaches to empower individuals to act against social injustice.

Banks has described the dimensions of multicultural education in five overlapping areas. *Content integration* is the inclusion of materials, concepts, examples and values from a variety of cultures while teaching principles, theories and generalisation in a subject area. *Knowledge construction* is the recognition that all knowledge is socially constructed, created in the minds of human beings to explain their experience and thus, can be challenged. Ideas that shape society do change. As such, knowledge construction is a primary aspect of multicultural education because before teachers can effectively teach with a multicultural approach, they must reconstruct their world views. *Equity pedagogy* is involved when teachers alter their teaching methods to accommodate the various cultural differences of diverse students to stimulate academic achievement. *Prejudice reduction* concerns changing the students' attitudes towards differences of race and ethnicity. Prejudice reduction can also include teaching tolerance about religion, physical and mental abilities, and sexual preference. An *empowering school culture and social structure* elucidate the process of “restructuring the culture and organization of the school so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience equality and cultural empowerment”. It is the dimension of multicultural education that enables the functioning of other four dimensions.



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At global level, the emergence of multicultural education has been disseminated by international organisations such as UN where they have provided a normative, ideological prescription for reform work in the field of education (Terra & Bromley, 2012). The civil rights movement of the 1960s and 1970s gave birth to the first wave of multicultural education in the United States and it was subsequently followed in Canada, United Kingdom and Australia (Banks, 2010a). Since then, the movement of multicultural education has been broadening to defend cultural, religious, gendered, minority rights of the individuals across the globe.

Rich diversity of India in terms of religion, caste, language and culture makes it a classic example of multicultural nation and a nation of disparities as well. In order to mitigate the disparities, decision and policy makers have been emphasising upon the wide ranges of discussion in the light of evidence. These discussions are aimed at preparing the nation for facing critical challenges in the time of major economic and social changes. The Sixth Survey of Educational Research, conducted by NCERT during 1993-2000 (Volume – I) has highlighted such discussions for the decision and policy makers.

Paradoxically, the discussions highlighted in the survey as well as similar concern rose by academics across the nation remained unaddressed. Ignoring all these concerns the government in power in 1998, influenced educational organisation and marked the beginning of ideological shifts in school curriculum in the form of National Curriculum Framework for School Education-2000. Post this phase, the then existing government attempted to address the policy recommendations and academics concerns in the form of a document named National Curriculum Framework-2005. Other Official documents like NPE-1968, 1986, PoA-1992, SSA-2000, CABE Report-2005, and RTE-2009 and so on have also laid stress on various dimensions of diversity management yet the success of its implementation in schools requires open discussion.

### **Multicultural Education: A Broader Perspective**

One of the most important aims of education is to induce critical thinking. Education makes an individual capable to question the societal status quo in order to amend the fundamentals of practices and norms that produce unequal opportunities and life chances. Multicultural education is one such form of education which can liberate the mind from prejudice, intolerance, and injustice. Countries across the world have formulated certain approaches in the form of policies and programme to meet the objectives of diversity management within their jurisdiction.

In Malaysia, the Malaysian education system has picked itself up out of the shambles of its colonial arrangements and grown into a completely indigenous system that is robust and internationally recognized. It has established a great deal of tenacity and pragmatism in its efforts to build a nation that has been endowed with a multiracial population, with a precarious mix demographically, socio-politically, and socioeconomically (Malakolunthu & Rengasamy, 2012).

In 1995 the Malaysian Ministry of Education came up with the idea of creating “Vision Schools” by which primary schools representing the major races of the population namely Malay, Chinese, and Indian and with the medium of instruction in their respective mother tongue were to be located within a common compound. Under the Vision Schools philosophy, each school was to manage and administer on its own as a separate entity, while sharing common facilities such as the school cafeteria, courtyard, multi-purpose hall, library, and school field with the other two schools. The objective of these schools was the belief of the government that the new arrangement of the schools would help the children of the different races and ethnicities with the social environment and opportunity to mingle and interact and eventually befriend each other. Thus, the Vision School concept was perceived as a seeding place for the growth of racial harmony and integration (Malakolunthu, 2009).

Studies have shown that the Vision School concept was flawed in its implementation; hence, the government’s theory was not really tested. The Vision School was an attempt at multicultural education but turned out to be a simplistic model to achieve racial and ethnic integration and harmony. The critical analysis of Vision Schools suggests that the policy should



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have extended to other areas of school education such as the curriculum, pedagogical methods, instructional materials and text books, and assessment rather than limiting it to the sharing of physical premises and organizing of joint events. It was emphasised that students have to be educated and nurtured into becoming multicultural individuals who know, understand, respect and value differences among people as the reality of life (Malakolunthu, 2010).

It has been further emphasised that an educational reform does not guarantee its successful implementation just because it is solemnized as a policy. It has to be assembled or developed appropriately, taking into consideration the right dynamics. Policy dynamics may be encompassed within the framework of the policy cycle, policy instruments, and critical action domains, all of which have to be coherently and sequentially aligned to support a sustainable development toward the policy goal (Malakolunthu, 2010).

Malaysian education is looking ahead to subsequent phase of policy making to incorporate the elements of inclusivity and multiculturalism into the National Education Philosophy. The new form of Malaysian education has a great role to play in addressing the negative perceptions of certain segments of the Malaysian people and therefore produce greater harmony among them; it will also be socially and psychologically helpful to international students who would appreciate getting an education in a more amicable Malaysian environment (Malakolunthu & Rengasamy, 2012).

Multicultural education in Australia begun due to the social and racial stigmas that emerged towards migrants during the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this time, it was realised by the government that a cultural divide was taking place in the country. This time also witnessed the cease of 'White Australia Policy' and on the other hand cultural diversity was becoming prominent. Assimilation was seen as one possible way through which a nation could absorb its growing migrant population and also minimise the effects of its presence on the dominant mono-cultural environment. Outside of minorities losing their differences from this assimilation, these minorities have also taken on an American philosophy of the 'melting pot' an idea taken from American culture that merges all cultures into one, this practice was not popular in Australia and not well received. Alternatively, cultural integration allowed minorities to keep their differences but also participate in the greater social setting.

A number of policies have been adopted by governing bodies which centres on multiculturalism, in hopes of creating a society that is free from intolerance and accepting of all individuals no matter their background, ethnicity, religion, language or cultural background. The development and policy shifts of multicultural and diversity education can be seen through seven key policy documents from the 1980s to 2010. These are National Policy on Languages (1987), Asian studies Council Report (1988), National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia (1989), Adelaide Declaration (1999), Melbourne Declaration (2008), Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development (2008) and the Education for Global and Multicultural citizenship: A strategy for Victorian government schools (2009).

These policies are aimed at addressing challenges that are faced in building a multicultural society. To work towards a 'shared future', a commitment to build a nation that is diverse in its cultures and strives towards the ideal of a 'shared future'. The policies are embedded with the relationship between culture and society and the balance between them is how multicultural harmony is achieved. In multicultural policies, citizenship plays a key role in multiculturalism and thus the role of citizen and citizenship education becomes important in building a cultural diverse society.

It has been emphasised by Swetnam that an effective multicultural program should incorporate pre-service teachers' explorations of their own cultural values, practices, and beliefs, as well as those of other cultures so that the teacher candidates can begin to see themselves as a combination of similarities and differences in the big mosaic of human diversity. Also, every teacher education program should include some focused field experiences with diverse students. Prospective teachers need to gain experience and develop a level of comfort and confidence working with students from backgrounds different than their own. The experience gained in diverse settings is invaluable to the developing teacher for future





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application in any classroom setting. This experience should be focused, guided, and reflected on; otherwise it may serve only to reinforce stereotype (Swetnam, 2003).

In extension to Swetnam's argument, McInerney and McInerney also say that with the continuous evolvement of student's academic needs, the requirements to maximise student learning is also increasing. One such requirement is teachers' understanding and ability to navigate the vast cultural nuances, heritages and understandings that multicultural students brings with them into the classroom. So far, the research surrounding multicultural education centres on student understanding and awareness in the particular areas of English as a second language, adjustment, tolerance, respect, family and community. However, there is another area which needs attention of policy makers that is educators' realm. This can be done by introspecting the ways in which the journey of educators from pre-service teachers to practicing qualified teachers has equipped them to value, appreciate, realty and grasp the intricacies of the multicultural diverse backgrounds and personalities these students represent. The different ways a teacher is able to develop their understandings of multicultural awareness and education is to incorporate various strategies throughout the teaching process (McInerney and McInerney, 2006).

Canada is not just known as a country of immigrants but it is known as the first country in the world to have a policy on multiculturalism (1971). While French and British settlers conquered the landscape from the Native populations, many other groups of people also helped build the country. Presently, Canada's 33 million people reflect a vast diversity of cultural, linguistic, and religious backgrounds, skin colours and physical features – all of which ultimately impact the socioeconomic levels and life chances of people.

As an ideology, multiculturalism is a radical departure from the policy of assimilation, which was the goal of education until the mid-20th century. Multicultural Education in Canada represents a paradigm shift from an assimilationist model to one that incorporates other cultures. It began, like the Policy, with an emphasis on cultural songs, dances, and foods and broadened gradually to the study of other cultures and multiple perspectives on issues. From 1980s onwards, antiracist and critical multicultural models have become more common in schools. As education in Canada is a provincial responsibility thus its emphasis on multicultural education and the extent to which critical perspectives are prevalent varies from region to region. Historically, educational structures, policies, and practices have been Eurocentric in Canada and thus the need of the hour is to reflect new realities and provide a liberating education that recognizes the complexities of diversity and equity. Analyses of power relations and values such as respect for other people have profound consequences for the goals and practices in education (Ghosh, 2002).

Ghosh further emphasises that while legislation remains extremely important, it does not ensure effective protection of equal opportunity and recognition of diverse identities in Canadian society. Legislation can, nevertheless, result in reshaping the existing power relations and structures in society. Interpretations of multiculturalism have to be nuanced and contextualized in order to avoid a binary system of representation which solidifies and normalizes the gap between the "us" and "them". In the context of the extraordinary social changes in Canadian society and the world, the basis of education is to question and examine the roots of injustice and intolerance (Ghosh, 2002).

As far as the national level policies are concerned, they have also highlighted the need to understand education as an important instrument for national integration. The same has also been highlighted and argued by academics intermittently.

The National Policy of Education (NPE), 1986 has described education as a unique investment in the present and the future. It has aimed to promote national progress, a sense of common citizenship and culture, and to strengthen national integration. It states, "*Steps will also be taken to foster among students an understanding of the diverse cultural and social systems of the people living in different parts of the country*". NPE has laid special emphasis on the removal of disparities and equalising educational opportunities by attending to the special needs of those who have been denied equality so far. In this endeavour, special emphasis has to be laid on the education of women, SC/ST, minorities and physically challenged persons



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in order to ensure “their equalisation with the general population at all stages and levels of education”. It proposed a national framework for curriculum as a means of evolving a national system of education capable of responding to India’s diversity of geographical and cultural milieus while ensuring a common core of values along with academic components. It also highlights that in a culturally plural society like ours, education should foster universal and eternal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. Value education should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstitious and fatalism (NPE, 1986).

The Programme of Action (PoA), 1992 has emphasised on interlinking of Education and Culture in order to promote the process of child personality development particularly in terms of discovering the inherent potentialities of the child. Reform of curriculum, motivation of teachers and efforts to encourage the younger generation to participate in cultural and allied activities, will be some of the outstanding features of cultural perspective (PoA, 1992).

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) was launched with the mandate to provide useful and quality elementary education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years by 2010. The SSA also focuses on the education of the special groups and states, “*There will be focus on the educational participation of children from SC/ST, religious and linguistic minorities, disadvantaged groups and the disabled children*” (SSA-2000).

While highlighting the need for ‘Inclusive Education’ where the concept of inclusion has emerged from the ideas of providing equal opportunities to ‘all’ children, Swarup (2000) argues that providing equal opportunities does not mean providing similar things to all children. It means providing equal opportunities keeping in mind the diverse nature of their individual needs. In a society, when the children are given a right to belong, they are also given a right to their diversity. It further says, “Inclusion is both a process for and outcome of understanding, acceptance and valuing of differences among today’s school children and youth. It’s both a process and an outcome for achieving social justice and equity in the society” (Swarup, 2000 cited in 6<sup>th</sup> Survey of Educational Research).

While talking about the education of the Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes and Minorities Azad (2000) highlights that the content of education has to be reviewed in the light of cultural perspectives of the tribal communities especially at the initial stage of primary schooling. Since each tribe has its specific cultural nuances and value system, thus it has to be intrinsically woven into the educational endeavours. Given that the status of education of the minorities in India, the academic gap between the education imparted through the government assisted bodies, the relevance of the curriculum are worth probing (Azad, 2000).

Right to Education (RTE) also implies that it is the State’s obligation to remove whatever obstacles – social, economic, academic, linguistic, cultural, physical, etc. – prevent children from effectively participating in and completing elementary education of satisfactory quality. Right to Education must be seen not merely as a right for its own or the individual child’s sake, but also as an instrument of promoting other constitutional objectives, e.g. equality, justice, democracy, secularism, social cohesion, etc. The school has to ensure that it has to build on the child’s knowledge, environment and cultural identity, particularly linguistic, and develop the child’s personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential (CABE Report on Free and Compulsory Education Bill, 2005).

While reiterating that diversities in India are emphasised but never viewed as problems, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 says, “*India is a multicultural society made up of numerous regional and local cultures. People’s religious beliefs, ways of life and their understanding of social relationships are quite distinct from one another. All the groups have equal rights to co-exist and flourish, and the education system needs to respond to the cultural pluralism inherent in our society. To strengthen our cultural heritage and national identity, the curriculum should enable the younger generation to reinterpret and re-evaluate the past with reference to new priorities and emerging outlooks of a changing societal context*”. It further says that it is important to create an inclusive environment in the classroom for all students, especially those who are at risk of marginalisation. Differences between students must be viewed as resources for supporting learning rather than



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as a problem. Inclusion in education is one of the components of inclusion in society. Schools, therefore, have a responsibility of providing a flexible curriculum that is accessible to all students (NCF, 2005).

It can be said that the NCF-2005 acknowledges the different sociocultural-economic locations that children come from and underscores the need to connect textbooks with them. The National Focus Group Position Paper (2005) on “Problems of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Children” besides recognising the problematic conceptualisation and execution of policies meant for such groups acknowledges the curricular and pedagogic challenges confronting the education of tribals and also the insensitivity of non-tribal teachers towards children from such groups.

It is clear from the discussion so far multicultural education cannot be merely seen in terms of a set of policies, or programmes, or purely as legislative matter. In order to sustain the diversity in society, it must have the support of both inclusive policies as well as schools that have a moral, political, and ethical obligation to rethink their role in producing future citizens. From the view point of multicultural education, school is seen as a social system that encompasses highly interrelated parts and variables. In order to transform the school to attain educational equality, all the major components of the school requires substantial modifications. A narrowed focus on any one variable in the school, such as formal curriculum or teaching practice, will not implement multicultural education.

Education can be a powerful tool for combating inequity and discrimination in today’s conflict-ridden world. It must challenge the structures that maintain the uneven development within societies. It must be a process that liberates people not only from ignorance and poverty, but also from fear, vulnerability, injustice, and social inequality. In a knowledge society, ignorance will only create further inequalities. Philosophers such as like Freire and Tagore have emphasised the need to liberate the process of education itself by using methods that prevent depositing “knowledge” to the students. *“The oppressed must learn to liberate themselves, and in turn, their oppressors, who are also dehumanized through the very process of oppressing others”* (Freire, 1975). Education based upon the principles of liberalism facilitates learners to expose and challenge oppressive social structures that are often hidden because they are normalized.

### Need for Multicultural Education for Culturally Diverse Communities

Diversity is both an opportunity and a challenge. Educational policy makers and practitioners across the globe have found certain ways to respect the diversity of their citizens as well as to create a unified nation-state to which all of the nation’s citizens have allegiance. However, the context of diversity between western countries and India contrasts. In western countries it had been observed that issues related to diversity generally connotes with immigrant population, ethnicity, race, globalisation etc. As a result their policies to manage diversity of its citizens were based upon the principles of ‘melting pot’ where the emphasis was on the formation of homogenous/national identity. With the changing times, western nations have shifted from melting pot to integration. India, due to its history of old civilisation follows the principle of ‘unity in diversity’ which oscillated between assimilation and integration.

Multicultural education as a process designed to foster understanding, acceptance, and constructive relations among students. It helps students to integrate with each other while providing space for them to see different cultures as a source of learning and to respect diversity in the local, national, and international environment. Multicultural education help students to understand one’s own culture and at the same time understand that no one culture is intrinsically superior to another.

The contact between students can be explained further with the help of ‘Contact Hypothesis’. Here, contact means individuals from one group meeting and interacting with each other. The underlying theory behind the contact hypothesis is that prejudice is a consequence of unfamiliarity with others from a different group that results as negative stereotyping and prejudice towards this group. Contact with others from another group should expose individuals to stereotype disconfirming and this information results in more positive attitudes, beliefs and behaviours towards this group. Akin to



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contact hypothesis, Multicultural education functions under the assumption that prejudice and social exclusion is a result of ignorance about the out group (Killen and Rutland, 2011).

Multicultural education when constructed carefully and implemented well, can pave way for self-expression, open dialogue, critical thinking, and analysis of alternative viewpoints among students. Multicultural education that emphasizes the learning about the history, traditions, and cultural practices of one's own culture and the others can help students feel comfortable to communicate effectively with people from many cultures and in many situations thus overcoming the feeling of alienation and isolation. When done effectively, multicultural educational practices can help students transcend identities, self-concept, and outlooks about life and thus create attitudes that may make them more open to new experiences and help students develop multiple perspectives. These practices would need carefully crafted culturally responsive education policies and well implemented practices. All those involved in the process will have to be engaged in the development of curriculum and strategies that would lead to the creation of a culturally responsive teaching-learning organization.

### **Role of a School in Addressing Cultural Diversity**

Schools are considered to be playing an emancipatory role for transforming lives of the individuals. Besides this, schools also reflect the values of the societies that finance them. And, it often results in social discrimination of certain communities within the educational system. This discrimination expresses itself both in the structures of schooling (such as curriculum, assessment) and in the patterns of teacher-student interaction. The structures of schooling that tend to reflect the values and priorities of the dominant group have a direct influence on the academic achievements of minority group students. This is done through construction of patterns of identity negotiations that student experience in their day to day interaction with teachers within school (Little et al., 2013).

Little (2013) has further emphasised that, "the language, ethnicity and culture that children and adolescent from migrant backgrounds bring to school are assets that must be exploited first for their own benefit as individuals and then for the benefit of the larger school community" (Little et al., 2013). However, the main reason due to which these assets are not being exploited can be attributed to the relations of power in a wider society. This range of power varies from coercive to collaborative in varying degrees and it has the ability to let teachers state their roles and the types of structure that are recognized in the educational system.

Coercive relations of power are an exercise of power by a dominant individual, group or country towards the disadvantage of a subordinated individual, group or country. For instance, school policies which forbid minority group students to use their native language in a school can be considered as expressions of coercive relations of power. Such policies are completely ideological and have no relation with the empirical justification with respect to either language learning or academic achievement. On the other hand, collaborative relations of power indicate the sense of the term 'power' that refers to being enabled or empowered to achieve more. Here, 'power' is a dynamic entity that varies on the basis of interaction with others. In other words, interaction between teachers, students includes a process of empowerment that enables them to challenge the operation of coercive power structures (Little et al., 2013).

For a school to act as an agent of change, to create enabling conditions for implication of multicultural pedagogy needs to address hegemony and gaps prevailing within educational system. As suggested by theorists such as Gramsci in his theory of hegemony that the association between education and power relationships affects transmission and accessibility of knowledge. Bourdieu's theory of cultural capital suggests, "The set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of the world that governs its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices" (Bourdieu, 1976, 1997). In addition, Apple's and Giroux's concept of critical pedagogy, counterhegemonic pedagogy or emancipatory pedagogy can be seen as important instruments to counter hegemony. Multicultural education has the scope and capacity to be counter hegemonic (Apple, 1990; Banks & Banks, 2010).





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According to Banks & Banks (2010), there are four levels of integration of multicultural content. First is the Contributions Approach that is applied when a school attempts to integrate multicultural content into the mainstream curriculum. It includes insertion of ethnic heroes/heroines and discrete cultural artefacts into the curriculum, the criteria to choose these ethnic heroes/heroines is similar to that of mainstream heroes/heroines and cultural artefacts. In this approach, although, discrete cultural elements like food, dress, dance, music are included yet the focus is not on their meaning and importance. Second is the Additive Approach that talks about the integration of ethnic content into the curriculum, by adding content, concepts, themes and perspective to the curriculum without altering its basic structure, purposes and characteristics. Third approach is the Transformation Approach that is fundamentally different from the other two approaches. Under this approach, the fundamental goals, structure and perspective of the curriculum are changed. This approach enables students to view concepts, issues, themes and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view. Fourth approach is the Social Action Approach that largely includes all elements of the transformation approach but adds elements that facilitate students to take decisions, actions related to the concepts, issues, or problem related to the concept (Banks & Banks, 2010).

However, there is another side to these approaches as well. Given the fact that these approaches focus upon the success stories of heroes whereas the focus should also be upon the barriers they encountered, and how they tackled with the barriers. The process through which they became heroes/heroines should also be addressed. Besides focussing upon the unique characteristics of a community, students should be oriented to view this uniqueness as holistic and dynamic wholes. Along with lifestyle related information, the content should also include 'institutional' structure, such as racism and discrimination so that reasons for powerlessness; marginalisation can be contextualised by the students. Instead of merely offering information about one particular community, the focus should be on helping students to view society from diverse cultural and ethnic perspective and to understand the ways in which the histories and cultures of the nation's diverse ethnic, racial, cultural and religious groups are interconnected (Banks & Banks, 2010).

## Conclusion

India being a culturally diverse country can best benefit from multicultural education that has been seen as the most popular approach used by educators to describe education for pluralism. Schools can be the major site of intervention that can be reformed around principles of pluralism and equality and can further contribute to broader social reform. The gap between translations of policy into practice based on cultural, social, economic and linguistics contexts of the society needs to be explored. Therefore, it becomes imperative to examine the practice of policy at the micro level (micro level here connotes school level). The study of the policy and its implementation could yield paramount lessons to resolve prevailing educational issues with special reference to problems related with cultural differences.

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