

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION IN INDIA: ISSUES AND PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract

This essay makes the case for culturally responsive teaching as a means of enhancing the academic achievement of students from varied cultural backgrounds and for equipping preservice educators with the necessary information, attitudes, and abilities. The particular elements of this teaching methodology are grounded in research findings, theoretical assertions, real-world experiences, and first-hand accounts from educators studying and assisting academically underachieving Indian learners. The creation of a repository for information about cultural diversity, making sure that cultural diversity content is included in the curriculum, exhibiting compassion and creating learning environments, engaging with learners from a variety of backgrounds, and adapting instruction to cultural diversity are the five essential components of culturally responsive teaching that are examined. Culturally responsive teaching is the process of enhancing learning by drawing on the characteristics, perspectives, and experiences of students from varied cultural backgrounds. Children from varied cultural backgrounds will thus do better academically when they receive an education through the lenses of their own culture and experiences.

BUILDING A KNOWLEDGE BASE IN CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The majority of educators approve that successful instructing involves a knack of both subject matter as well as instructive concepts. It has been asserted by Howard (1999) that, "We can't teach what we don't know." This claim is accurate in terms of student demographics as well as the subject content. However, far too many educators lack the necessary training to work with children from varied cultural backgrounds. Despite the growing student body and their disproportionately poor academic performance, a lot of professional programs are still unclear on what constitutes intercultural education. Some other programs are trying to figure out where it should go and what its "face" should be. Some people are really passionate about intercultural education.

The framework for culturally competent teaching contradicts the ambiguity since it maintains that meeting the educational requirements of pupils from varied cultural backgrounds requires a thorough awareness of cultural diversity. One part of this knowledge is knowing the contributions and characteristics of different cultural groupings. There are many facets to culture, some of which have a direct bearing on education and learning and are, thus, more important for educators to comprehend than others. These encompass the practices, communication styles, learning strategies, contributions, and patterns of relationships between caste and religious groups as well as cultural values.

Teachers should know, for instance, which religions and castes place a higher value on collaborating and solving issues and how these values impact learners' objectives regardless of enthusiasm, and educational output; how various religions and castes model suitable interactions between adults and children in the the learning environment; and how integration with regard to gender functions in various castes and religions influences the application of efforts to promote equity in the teaching environment. The first crucial part of the knowledge foundation for culturally responsive education is made up of these elements. Teachers need to know about cultural diversity beyond only acknowledging, honoring, and embracing the differences in values or the ways that caste and religion express similar values.

Consequently, gathering comprehensive factual knowledge about the quirks of various castes and faiths serves as the second prerequisite for creating a knowledge basis for culturally sensitive teaching. This is required to make education more exciting and engaging for students of all origins and beliefs, as well as representative of them. Too many educators believe that cultural diversity and their subjects—especially math and science—cannot coexist, or that doing so would require too great a conceptual and substantive leap for their disciplines to remain true to their disciplinary integrity. This is just untrue. There is room for cultural variety in every subject taught in schools.

Additionally, counting diverse content into the curriculum and utilizing multicultural instructional methodologies are also important aspects of culturally responsive teaching. These kinds of misconceptions are partly caused by the ignorance of many educators regarding the contributions made by other castes and religions to their respective fields of study, as well as their lack of familiarity with multicultural education. They could be aware of the accomplishments of a small number of well-known members of a certain religion or caste in a particular field, such as politicians serving in local, state, or the national government or well-known sports figures from the disadvantaged social groups.

It is possible that educators are ignorant of the achievements made by underrepresented social groups in similar fields. Furthermore, they lack sufficient knowledge on the less well-known but no less important contributions that caste systems and religion have made to the fields of arts, commerce, social sciences and sciences. It is also difficult for many instructors to engage in a meaningful discussion regarding the main theories, tenets, and recommendations of prominent experts in the field of multicultural education. What they believe to be true about the area is frequently based on misinformation propagated by critics, the media, and popular culture. Alternatively, their understanding is based on superficial scholarly overviews that don't go far enough into the examination of multicultural education. Instructors can compensate for these shortcomings by being more knowledgeable about the contributions that people from

other castes and faiths have made to a variety of areas and by becoming more aware of the ideas, research, and scholarship surrounding multicultural education.

This constitutes the third principal tenet of the knowledge base for culturally responsive education. It is not as hard to acquire this expertise as it would seem. From the dawn of time, people and organizations influenced by religion and caste have made significant contributions to India's rich history and culture. Furthermore, there is no lack of excellent material about intercultural education. All that has to be done is identify, acquire, and integrate it into teacher training curricula and classroom instruction. This can be partially achieved by requiring all aspiring educators to take courses on multicultural education and the influences of religion and caste groups on the subject areas they would teach.

CREATING A CURRICULUM THAT IS RELEVANT TO CULTURE

In addition to gaining a basic awareness of religion, caste, and cultural diversity, educators must also learn how to incorporate these concepts into curriculum designs and culturally sensitive teaching methods. The curriculum that is mandated for use in schools should provide a unique opportunity for teaching about cultural diversity. Formal lesson plans that have been authorized by the organizations in charge of overseeing educational systems and the governing bodies of the policy should be the first. Their basis and extra material should come from adopted textbooks and other curriculum requirements, such as the "standards" published by national commissions, state education authorities, and professional associations. However, the present curricular materials are still not as excellent as they should be, despite improvements throughout time in how they address caste, religion, and cultural diversity.

Culturally sensitive educators are able to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of instructional materials and curriculum designs from a multicultural standpoint and make the required changes to improve the quality of education for all students. The number, correctness, complexity, organization, goal, diversity, importance, and credibility of the narrative texts, teaching aids, role models, and original sources that are part of the educational resources ought to be the main focus of these inquiries. Culturally sensitive instructors must address a number of persistent patterns in the way that religion and caste-diversity are taught in official school curriculum. The avoidance of contentious issues like casteism, historical atrocities, powerlessness, and hegemony; the repeated emphasis on the achievements of a small number of well-known individuals at the expense of group actions; the proportionately greater attention paid to social groups that are socially and religiously disadvantaged than other groups; the decontextualization of women, their issues, and their actions from the perspective of their caste and religion; the disregard for poverty; and the emphasis on reliable data while restricting other kinds of knowledge (for example, principles, views, perspectives, and morals). Culturally responsive education reversibly tackles these tendencies by tackling controversy head-on, looking at a wide range of religious and caste people and groups, situating challenges across caste, social strata, faith, and gender, and presenting a diversity of facts and viewpoints. It also recognizes that these comprehensive assessments are necessary to explain the richness, vitality, and commitment of religion, caste, and cultural diversity. One way to begin this curriculum transformation process is by teaching preservice (and in-service) teachers how to conduct thorough cultural evaluations of educational materials and other learning resources, reviewing

them to better represent various cultural backgrounds, and giving them plenty of opportunities to put the skills they were previously assessed to use.

Before they can effectively eliminate barriers to culturally responsive teaching, educators must have a solid understanding of the ones that currently exist. The phrase "symbolic curriculum" pertains to several instructional materials that are regularly used in educational institutions (Gay, 1995). They consist of pictures, emblems, mottos, prizes, festivities, and other items that instruct pupils in information, abilities, ethics, and values. Symbolic curricula are frequently applied through the use of bulletin board graphics, commerce in order documents, images of champions and women of action, and publicly displayed representations of social etiquette, rules and regulations, ethical principles, and achievement badges. Because of this, school walls and classrooms are excellent places for "advertising," and the items that are on display may teach children important lessons. They eventually learn to value what is there, expect particular visuals, and discount what is lacking.

Culturally sensitive educators employ the symbolic curriculum as a teaching tool to help convey important information, values, and behaviors connected to caste, religion, and cultural diversity. Moreover, the instructors are to become highly conscious of culture. They guarantee that the visual aids used in schools accurately supplement the formal curriculum and reflect a broad range of age, gender, time, location, social stratum, along with geographical diversity both within and between religious and caste groups. For example, images intended to impart concepts regarding power, responsibility, and position of authority ought to include representations of both genders and diverse caste and religious origins alongside emotive symbols of these accomplishments. The sociocultural curriculum, often referred to as a third curriculum type by Cortés (1991, 1995, 2000), is essential to educating in a culturally relevant manner. This refers to the information, perceptions, and beliefs on religion and caste systems that are presented in the media.

Movies, TV shows, newspapers, and magazines are far more than just sources of amusement or factual data. They create knowledge (Cortés, 1995) and engage in conceptual supervision (Spring, 1992) as a result of the material they represent and propagate reflecting and communicating certain political, social, religious, caste, and cultural values and causes. Many kids only learn about religious and caste variety from the media; for others, classroom textbooks are not as influential or remembered as what they see on television. Sadly, a large portion of this so-called "knowledge" is false and usually biased. These depictions and illustrations have a detrimental effect on members of mainstream as well as minority communities. Caste prejudices and religion in the media are not just present in news broadcasts; they are present in a variety of programming. Teachers cannot ignore the messages they give because they are too strong.

Thus, a component of culturally responsive education involves critical and thorough studies of how religion, caste, and experiences are portrayed in the media and popular culture. Teachers must comprehend how the media's depictions of India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Europe, and the United States are tweaked; the impact that these have on various religious beliefs alongside caste communities; what traditional educational programs and lessons can do to mitigate their effects; and how to educate students to be informed consumers of and resistance of religion and caste facts propagated by means of the public's curriculum.

ESTABLISHING A LEARNING COMMUNITY AND APPLYING CULTURAL CARING

The establishment of classroom settings that facilitate the learning of students from varied religious and caste backgrounds is a crucial step towards preparing to teach in a culturally responsive way. Pedagogical practices are as, if not more, important for implementing culturally responsive teaching than multicultural curricular concepts. However, their actions extend beyond merely implementing technical "best practices" for underachieving members of socioeconomically disadvantaged groups. Much more is required. To assist these students in expanding their perspectives and succeeding academically, educators need to be skilled at using cultural frameworks, which entails utilizing their personal backgrounds and experiences. The first stages in accomplishing this are to create learning communities that are culturally responsive and to practice culturally sensitive caring.

Teachers from diverse castes and religious backgrounds should be so concerned about their students' academic achievement that they should demand nothing less than extraordinary work from them and make every effort to achieve it. This is not to be confused with the much-quoted notion of "gentle nurturing and altruistic concern," which can lead to benign neglect in the name of letting students from disadvantaged social groups find their own way and grow at their own pace. In addition, cultural responsiveness places educators in a moral, emotional, and intellectual collaboration with students from varied religious and caste backgrounds. This partnership is based on mutual respect, honesty, honor, and sharing of resources as well as a strong conviction in the potential of transcendence (Gay, 2000).

Teaching compassion is a social duty, a moral requirement, and an educational requirement. It requires that teachers use "knowledge and strategic thinking to decide how to act in the best interests of others . . . [and] binds individuals to their society, to their communities, and to each other" (Webb, Wilson, Corbett, & Mordecai, 1993, pp. 33-34). The "knowledge" that matters in culturally appropriate instruction is data concerning religion and caste-diverse groups; "strategic thinking" is how this social and cultural understanding can be applied to restructure learning and instruction; and "bounds" are the receptivity of learners engaging with one another as well as with instructors as participants to enhance their performance. Therefore, educators need to understand that providing culturally adaptive assistance is a proactive strategy that ensures academic accomplishment for children from diverse religious and social backgrounds by establishing high expectations and utilizing innovative methods.

Instructors have a genuine belief in the intellectual capacity of these children and a strong commitment to supporting them in realizing that potential without discounting, disparaging, or trivializing their cultural, religious, or caste identities. They build cultural strength and affirmation as the cornerstones upon which academic accomplishment is built. One of the most important aspects of culturally responsive education is the formation of a feeling of community among varied pupils. Many pupils from disadvantaged social groups grow up in cultural surroundings where the betterment of the community comes first and people are encouraged to combine the resources they have to address difficulties. Moreover, peoples' necessities are not ignored; rather, they are handled within the context of collective functioning. Individual members benefit or suffer when the collective succeeds or fails.

As a consequence, the group operates similarly to a "mutual aid society," with all members accountable for assisting one another and ensuring that everyone contributes to the common job. Culturally sensitive teachers know how to create more collaborative learning spaces and how conflicts between different work styles can undermine students' academic progress. Teachers should be aware of the process of developing culturally sensitive learning communities. Comprehensive or integrated learning ought to be prioritized. Culturally responsive education targets all three of the learning domains simultaneously, in contrast to traditional teaching methods that tend to isolate the cognitive, physical, and emotional domains. Information and skills related to personal, moral, social, political, cultural, and intellectual domains are transmitted concurrently.

For example, students receive instruction regarding their cultural background, respectable faiths, including the making of caste systems in besides math, science, reading, critical thinking, and social studies. Students learn about the history, traditions, and contributions of many religions and castes in addition to their own religion and caste structure. In order to promote equal opportunity and liberty for all people, teachers who are attentive to cultural variations help students recognize that knowledge has moral and political consequences and dimensions. This helps students feel compelled to take social action.

INTER-CULTURAL TRANSACTIONS

The fourth essential component of becoming ready for culturally appropriate instruction involves successful intercultural interaction. Porter and Samovar (1991) state that culture has an impact on "what we talk about; how we talk about it; what we see, attend to, or ignore; how we think; and what we think about" (p. 21). Moreover, it may be noted that Montagu and Watson (1979) define communication between individuals as the "ground of meeting and the foundation of community" (p. vii). For some learners, studying becomes difficult when there is no "meeting" or "community" in the classroom. The ability of teachers to effectively interact with pupils from varied religious and caste backgrounds typically determines what knowledge and skills they possess. The analytical thinking of students from different religion and caste backgrounds is culturally encoded, which means that cultural indoctrination greatly influences both the substance and expressive forms of their thought processes.

Teachers who instruct kids from diverse castes in belief systems must possess the ability to interpret these codes. Religion and social class interactions are fundamental aspects of group inclinations rather than descriptions of the actions of specific group members, as is the case with any cultural component. Depth, clarity, frequency, purity, purpose, and location continuums all have variations in how and to what extent specific persons display these attributes. However, people of different religious and caste groups may expressly differ in their cultural traits, which does not negate their existence. Teachers need to be aware of these facts since a lot of them are afraid to deal with cultural descriptors for fear of making unwarranted assumptions and categorizing. In an attempt to offset this risk, they downplay or reject the impact of culture on both their own and the actions of their pupils. The remedial procedures are based on direct confrontation and a critical understanding of the interdependent linkages that exist not just within people and groups but also among customs, values, and casteism. Instead of avoiding or rejecting these interactions.

Students in programs meant to train teachers for cultural sensitivity examine how the communication methods of various caste and religious groups effect educational techniques, reflect cultural values, and alter classroom dynamics to better accommodate these groups. Along with contextual information, social variations, language characteristics, rational thought and pattern, execution, terminology usage, roles and responsibilities of speakers and listeners, articulation, gestures, and the use of body language, they also cover knowledge of the language structures of various religions and caste communication styles. According to some criticisms, educating religion and caste-different kids might be more difficult and troublesome when it comes to the discourse characteristics of cultural communications than it is to teach structural language elements.

Without equivalent cultural understanding of these religion and caste groups, it is challenging to identify, comprehend, accept, and respond to the cultural markers and subtleties buried in the communication behaviors of highly religious and caste attached Indians. Teaching should be prepared for and implemented with consideration for a number of additional, more specialized aspects of religion and caste communication techniques. The discourse participation procedures are one of them. Many underrepresented minority groups adopt an active-participatory communication and participation style, while the majority in mainstream education and culture is passive-receptive.

In the first, the listener is passive and the speaker assumes an active position in instructional communication. When professors are speaking, students are supposed to listen silently and to speak only at designated periods with their permission. Teachers typically utilize convergent questions—questions that are directed at certain students and call for factual, "right answer" answers—in order to elicit their involvement. The fact that this pattern is repeated from student to student makes it serialized (Goodlad, 1984; Philips, 1983). On the other hand, the majority of Indian religions and caste groups that include marginalized communities have more active, participative, dialectic, and multimodal communication techniques. Presenters anticipate active participation from their audience in the form of questions, comments, and suggestions. Speaker and listener roles are interchangeable and flexible. This participatory communication approach is also known as "talk-story" (Au, 1993; Au & Kawakami, 1994) and "call-response" (Baber, 1987; Smitherman, 1977) among underprivileged social groups.

Additionally, it may be recognized in females as "rapport talk," which is a similarly similar technique of "talking along with the speaker" to demonstrate engagement, support, and affirmation (Tannen, 1990). These collective communication habits may cause issues in the classroom for teachers and students alike. Instructors who are ignorant and unappreciative view them as rude, careless, and inappropriate, and they take action to silence them. Telling students not to use them might effectively stifle their minds. They are also less able to think clearly, participate in meaningful conversation, and put out their best academic efforts when they are deprived of their normal speech patterns. A crucial communication strategy for implementing culturally sensitive education is comprehending the distinct task engagement and idea organization patterns of various religious and caste groups.

Students learn how to talk in a highly proper, linear, logical, and straightforward manner in school. In other words, they should speak and write clearly, refrain from overdoing the embellishments, concentrate on the subject at hand or go right to the point, and construct a convincing argument that makes sense from start to finish and from the individual parts to the

whole. During informational sessions and gatherings, students must present facts in an impartial, detached way, with rigorous sequencing. The degree to which the listener (or reader) can clearly understand the logic and relationships between the concepts is a measure of the discourse's quality, as is the clarity with which the descriptive material is presented; and the lack of superfluous verbiage, flair, or drama (Kochman, 1981).

It may be observed that many a scholar and researcher refers to this type of communication as topic-centered (Au, 1993; Michaels 1981, 1984). Topic-chaining communication is a distinct method of concept organization and transmission used in several nations. It is very context-specific and before wrapping up a learning task, a great deal of work goes into creating the social context. This is accomplished by the speakers' (or writers') heavy reliance on background information, their deep personal connection to the topic of the discourse, their heavy use of indirection (innuendo, symbolism, metaphor) in their idea delivery, their skill at weaving together several threads or issues into a cohesive story, and their integration of sentiments of enthusiasm, promotion, assessment, and aesthetics into their speech. A propensity to turn the speech conversational is another issue (Au, 1993; Fox, 1994; Kochman, 1981; Smitherman, 1994). in the discourse. These speakers' communication sounds like narrative, and their thought process seems to be cyclical. When someone is not accustomed with this communication style, they may see it as meandering, fragmented, and without focus, since the speaker never seems to finish an idea before moving on to the next (Gay, 2000, p. 96). Teaching that is sensitive to cultural differences will be impacted greatly by these and other variations in communication patterns related to caste and religion.

To accurately assess students' cognitive abilities, needs, and competencies in educational communications, to avoid breaking cultural norms of students from diverse castes and religious backgrounds, and to teach them how to shift their communication styles or use code-shifting to facilitate multipurpose communication with a range of people in a range of contexts, it is imperative to understand them. Thus, developing multicultural communication skills is a major goal and component of education that is sensitive to cultural differences.

CULTURAL COMPATIBILITY IN CLASSROOM TEACHING

The last part of being ready for culturally responsive teaching that this article covers has to do with actually educating pupils from varied religious and caste backgrounds. Since culture permeates all aspects of education, teaching religion to children from varied castes and backgrounds must be multiculturalized. Aligning instructional strategies with the wide variety of student learning styles is a helpful strategy to operationalize this concept in the teaching process. Alternatively, creating a continuity between the educational practices of caste groups, religion, and schools, as proposed by the contributing writers to *Education and Cultural Process* (Spindler, 1987). There are other ways to make these matches, junctions, or bridges, as suggested by the previous discussions. One teaching strategy that works well with a topic-chaining communication style is the narrative method.

Mentoring among peers and cooperative group learning arrangements mesh effectively with different communities' common cultural systems (Gay, 2000; Spring, 1995). Fiction and autobiographical case studies have the power to clarify caste and religious identification and affiliation problems beyond contextual (i.e., geographic, generational, and temporal) limits.

The idea of motion as well as activity, music, frequent variation in assignments and forms, innovation, and dramatic elements in education all improve the learning outcomes of marginalized groups and minorities. Cultural characteristics give guidelines for determining how to modify teaching strategies for students from different religion and caste backgrounds.

The first step in improving these skills is essential for those pursuing teacher education to confront the misconceptions and disagreements around approaches to learning. A few issues may be solved by understanding that acquiring knowledge techniques are an individual's approach to the process of learning, not their cognitive level. They are dynamic, multifaceted, and complicated like other cultural phenomena. People may be trained to transcend the boundaries of specific learning styles and there is flexibility within each style's constraints. There are fundamental structures to learning styles, and distinct patterns related to caste and religion can be identified (see, for example, Shade, 1989).

At least eight major components—which vary depending on the group—are included in the framework of religion and caste learning styles. These include learning objectives, task completion strategies, ideas structuring and communication strategies, physical and social environments for task completion, work, study, and performance space organizational layouts, perceptual stimulation for understanding, processing, and demonstrating competency, learning motivations, rewards, and incentives, and interpersonal interactional styles. In order to accommodate the various learning styles of students from various castes and religions, these dimensions provide multiple points of entrance and concentration.

Teachers must understand how they are set up for various religious and caste groups as well as the patterns of variation that occur within the settings in order to respond to them most effectively. Incorporating religion, caste, and cultural variety into the most important and high-status components of education is another helpful strategy for fostering cultural congruence in the classroom. Analyzing student performance metrics and curriculum, math, science, reading, and writing are the subjects or skill areas with the highest prestige and stakes in schools. Teachers notably need to learn how to multi-culturalize things, but changes should be made to both the official and informal parts of education. An in-depth examination of teaching methodologies finds that a significant portion of class time is spent providing cases, examples, and vignettes that show how concepts, abilities, and information are applied in real-world situations. These comprise the educational bridges that link the known and the unknown, the ancient and the modern, abstract concepts and actual experiences.

Instructors must build extensive libraries of multicultural teaching examples to utilize while instructing pupils from various castes and religions. This is not something that just occurs on its own will or because we want it to. It should be addressed in teacher training courses as it is a learned skill. Realizing the value of examples in the teaching process, learning about the customs and experiences of diverse caste and religious groups, compiling teaching examples from these valuable sources, and mastering the use of multicultural examples to teach a variety of subjects and skills are the first steps in the process. For example, you can use fabric designs, recipes, and religious and caste architecture to teach geometric concepts, mathematical operations, and propositional thought. As an alternative, use many instances of religion and caste literature to teach comprehension while reading, reasoning through inference, vocabulary building, and translation skills as well as the concept of genre.

Studies show that kids from varied religious backgrounds and castes do better academically when they are exposed to examples that are relevant to their culture. The work of these and other researchers may be used to extract a wide range of alternative strategies for integrating culturally diverse contributions, experiences, and viewpoints into classroom instruction. They should be a standard component of teacher training programs since they are excellent role models and motivators for implementing culturally sensitive teaching.

CONCLUSION

This topic just covers a portion of the elements involved in practicing and preparing for culturally responsive teaching. It is still plenty to learn, consider, and do. These recommendations are only a taste of the information and abilities that will enable educators to better educate their pupils to interact with members of the caste, religion, and mainstream Indian culture. A greater comprehension of the distinctive cultures of different caste and religious groups, how these factors affect learning patterns, and how classroom interactions and teaching may be adjusted to account for these variances are all necessary for this training. Since culture has a significant impact on the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that instructors and students bring to the classroom, it must be taken into consideration while addressing underachievement issues. This call to action is both straightforward and significant. It is straightforward because it simply asks of students from diverse religious and caste backgrounds what many Indian middle-class students already enjoy: the ability to approach difficult academic subjects from the perspective of their own cultural frames of reference, which provides them with power and significance.

It is significant because Indian education has not yet attained a higher level of cultural responsiveness to pupils from a variety of castes and religions. Rather, it has been required of these students to separate themselves from their culture and study in accordance with European and recently American cultural norms. They are forced to perform academically while adjusting to cultural norms that are strange and frequently new to them, putting them in a precarious situation. Their academic performance will improve significantly if this second stress is removed. This may be achieved by all professors adapting their teaching methods to pupils from various castes and religions while also being culturally sensitive. However, if they're not ready, it's unreasonable to hold them responsible for doing so. Programs for preparing teachers must thus be sensitive to the variety of caste and religion on a cultural level.

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