

Preparation of Teachers: Working towards greater culturally and linguistically diverse class rooms in India

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Abstract

We live in a country with an abundant array of diversity. Diversity is evident in individuals, the environment, and all aspects of life. Culture is very comprehensive concept that includes all the ways of being. Culture refers to the traditions, rituals, beliefs, and values that are shared amongst a group of individuals and Multiculturalism refers to the sharing of many cultures. The language and cultural situations of class rooms in India are like a mosaic with a bewildering variety of speech patterns. The students has many different aspects of life span like: cultural identity (name), age, sex, ethnography, race, intelligence, socio-economic status, language, religion, learning styles, personality types, interests, values, etc. After mixing up these differences, the multicultural class room's takes place like a mosaic of many color pieces/spots. Then let us consider if we have to teach these type of multicultural and multilingual classrooms then what type of teaching skills, strategies or methods should be use? And what languages should be adequate for the medium of instruction in these multilinguistic class rooms?. These quests of education in India at different levels of classes can't be properly discussed without refers to its multicultural context. We know that each individual/person/student is a part of at least one culture. A teacher is also an active part of a culture thus whenever there is a need to buildup strategies and methods for teaching in culturally diverse class room, a teacher should have to prepare himself with the knowledge of diverse cultures of the present students. They should have to learn the student's background, family traditions, student's climate about their birthday celebration, process of nurturing etc. Taking these considerations in mind in this paper we will provide fundamental information of multicultural and multilinguistic class room profile of students in India. Many of the education commissions are also analyzes and recommends towards these problems, but what loopholes remains to fulfill, researcher will try to discuss with little efforts.

Keywords: Multiculturalism, Multilingualism, culturally and linguistically diverse classroom.

Introduction: The nature of our national composition demands the multicultural and multilingual preparation of teachers. Our nation is not just a melting pot wherein human and individual diversity fuses into a uniform structure (ideology). On the contrary, uniformity is a mosaic of oscillatory, diverse colors in which a cultural mixture forms a variegated whole called the Indian culture. This multicultural mosaic univocally defused in our Indian schools. National and regional demographic changes and distribution shifts Indian class rooms more diverse in its every aspect. This is the time when our schools urgently need teachers who serve as cultural translators and cultural brokers. "Cultural brokers and cultural translators mediate between the majority and minority cultures. They help minority students understand, adapt, and thrive in the academic and majority culture. At the same time, the teacher as cultural broker helps the school to understand, to adapt and serve all students" (Moore, 2012). In other words, the teacher as cultural broker bridges the cultural chasm and smoothes the cultural mismatch, by empowering students to achieved both

academically and socially in the larger society. Unfortunately, most teachers lack the knowledge, skills, and experience that build the requisite professional assurance for working with culturally and linguistically minority children. Though teachers generally feel confident in their ability to implement core teaching skills, many express reservations about their ability to teach students from a culture different from their own (Association of Teacher Educators, 1991). This insecurity surely contributes to their aversion to teaching in culturally diverse schools and bars them from becoming cultural brokers and language translators. Thus the ultimate challenge for teacher educators is to prepare perspective teachers who connect meaningfully with their students in an ethnically, culturally, linguistically complex class rooms in India.

Before going on the discussion part of the paper we have to be familiar with some keywords operationally, so that we can understand the paradigm of this paper.

Culture: Culture is the shared values of knowledge, belief, thoughts, customs, ideas, habits, and many other relevant things that are common between the members of a specific society. Culture is also used to define the complex networks of practices and accumulated knowledge and ideas that are transmitted via social interaction and exist in specific human groups or cultures. Some aspects of human behaviors like language, social practices like kinship, gender and marriage, expressive forms like music, dance, ritual, religion, and technologies like cooking, shelter, and clothing are called to be cultural universals, usually found in all human societies. Culture is different from community to community, region to region, or country to country.

Multiculturalism: According to Wikipedia (2018), the free encyclopedia; Multiculturalism describes the existence, acceptance, or promotion of multiple cultural traditions within a single jurisdiction, usually considered in terms of the culture associated with an ethnic group. This can happen when a jurisdiction is created or expanded by amalgamating areas with two or more different cultures or through immigration from different jurisdictions around the world. Multiculturalism that promotes maintaining the distinctiveness of multiple cultures is often contrasted to other settlement policies such as social integration, cultural assimilation and racial segregation. Multiculturalism has been described as a "salad bowl" and "cultural mosaic". (Abdullah, 2009)

Culturally and linguistically diverse classroom: Culturally and linguistically diverse class room is that where the students are from different cultures and languages. In this study the Indian school's class rooms or institutional class rooms will be treated as linguistically and culturally diverse class rooms.

This diversity in culture and language takes wonder place in Indian class rooms. At some places or fields these diversities are in majority while at some places these are in minority, this is due to geographic and regional foundation of India. If a teacher is trained towards handling these class rooms in his teacher education program through multicultural education or any other way, then they should have to modify their strategies and methods of teaching and learning with time to time, but if a teacher had face a lack of this programs and subject studies then clearly a problem stand in front of them. In teacher education program in India, as a subject multicultural education provides vital role to prepare perspective teachers towards this culturally diverse class rooms.

In Indian classrooms the students have many different aspects of life span like: cultural identity (name), age, sex, ethnography, race, intelligence, socio-economic status, language, religion, learning styles, personality types, interests, values, etc. After mixing up these differences, the multicultural class room's takes place. Thus teacher's preparation toward this class rooms should be very keen. They have to adopt common root of environment in class rooms and prepare a common and multidimensional strategy to teach. But questions are that what constitute the common root of environment? What will be the common way of teaching? How they prepare him/herself towards this? What competencies they should have to develop towards this class rooms? For this they have to know common factors of every elements of a class room. They have to familiar every common aspect of the children's life span, that's why they could make a better strategy to teach them. Now we will discuss the preparation of teachers working towards culturally and linguistically diverse class

rooms for this, some competencies that must be developed in teachers and perspective teachers as follows with mindset of all above definitions and facts:

Development of working competencies of teachers towards culturally diverse class rooms:

1. **Reflective practices:** Every individual deal with ones internal feelings and this influences the performance in each course of action. The lack of internal attachment creates a monotonous environment and the performance of the individual is also diminished in absence of reflective practices. The important lack is that in the absence of reflections towards their culture individual underestimates oneself. They are not affiliated with their culture strongly as well as not a respect for others culture, they treated as only show off for others culture, this shows the difference between their thoughts and practices, which is negative for the class room environment (Daniel& Friedman,2005). In the educational settings generally the students and teachers are known about different cultures but they have not developed reflections, which is an essential component of teaching-learning. The teacher has the ability to develop the reflective practices in him as well as in students, so that the student and teachers can work together for the multiculturalization and it can be done throw arousal of self respect in terms of their culture, which is based on reflective practices.
2. **Effective cross-cultural communication:** The way of perceiving knowledge and culture is observation and communication, this affect the learning outcome. Communication may be verbal or non verbal. The communication based on particular ideologies of culture promotes only that particular and neglect others.
 “Effective cross-cultural communication skills help teachers create a classroom environment that encourages good interpersonal relationships. This important interpersonal skill requires an understanding of the interrelationship between language and cultural meaning. Cultural context and personal experience mediate meaning”(Chisholm, 1994).
 For example, the word weddings, funeral rites / obsequies will convey a different meaning. In addition, effective cross-cultural communication requires knowledge of these cues set the stage for interpersonal communication.
3. **Construction of the cross-cultural values:** The values are blossoms of cultures, which fragrances the society and school with their pure natural and humanistic nature. Just like a garden different cultural plants have different flowers of values which creates a pleasant environment by their fragrances. In most of the society’s problems related to values are faced and encountered on the basis of only one cultural value and other cultures values are underestimated due to the lack of proper understanding (Indani, 2013).
 To remove such types of unknowingness and misunderstanding there is the need to develop the understanding of cross cultural values.
 Since the values of all the cultures are identical as a whole only way of operation may be different. This is to be notified and emphasized to enhance the working competencies of teachers towards culturally diverse class rooms.
4. **Catalyze the multicultural environment:** It is not sufficient only to understand about different cultures and valuing them but there is the need to create such an environment in which different cultures may enrich and serve the humanity. Generally there is the lack of catalyst which can promote multiculturalism. Different cultures are changing with their own different rates in different regions, they are not integrated. The reason behind is that rate of change vary with respect to different cultures and they are not taken account as in the same phase. In the school setting there is the absence of multicultural activities, although some cultural activities are operationalize but mostly they are single culture (Jane K. Lartec et al. 2014)

Therefore, to resolve these problems the teacher is capable by developing his working competencies towards cross cultural diversity in classroom situations. . For example; seminars on multiculturalism, expert lectures in multi cultures etc.

5. **The ability of antiquity of nutrients and innovation announcer:** In the present scenario it is observed that most of the cultures are declining or they are changing in such a way that it deviates from its originality. While few of them are orthodox, they do not accept any change. This is related to superstitions, religious fanaticism, dogmas etc. but the need of the present system is that there should be integration of cultural heritage and socio-scientific innovation.

To eliminate these problems the teacher should be capable to restore and conserve their cultural heritage as well as adopt the new cultures and promote the students for conservation of heritage and adoption of innovation.

6. **Expertness of the application of ICTs:** Information and communication technologies play a significant role in the transmission of the cultures. And important factor is that ICT is culture free. But due to the lack of ICT knowledge and scientific attitude these types of cultural transmission are not taking place in that ratio, what should be.

Therefore the teachers have to be well-known about ICT, its use and applicability, enthusiastic for Novelty in teaching strategies and methods via ICTs.

7. **Curriculum analyzer:** Curriculum is an important aspect of educational settings which provides proper direction not only to teacher and students but also class and institutions. Most of the formal education is achieved by curriculum, therefore curriculum is so important. Curricula of different level of schools are determined by different educational bodies. For example; NCERT provides syllabus for school level students while NCTE provides syllabus for teacher's education program in India. In many of the researches it is found that the curricula are influenced by hegemonial cultural ideologies. This is improper embedding of cultural ideologies dominantly. These create cultural declination and mitigate the enthusiasm of the competent teacher.

Curricula have certain limitations in terms of cultural diversity. But curricula should be inbuilt with different cultures in the sense that all the cultures are similar and development of cross-cultural curriculum is essential for conservation of cultural diversity. The teacher should not be influenced by hegemonial cultural ideologies besides cross-cultural ideologies. He must be able to analyze the curriculum and associate the cultural knowledge with the knowledge of curriculum content. This competency of curriculum analyzer can be developed by nurturing the quality of keen observation and positive attitude in teachers as well students.

8. **Assessment of student's cultural competency:** This is not only enough to develop the teacher for culturally competencies but to encourage students. Since there are different vices in school situation, the teacher has to diagnose it and proper remedies should be provided. It can be done only if the teacher is able to assess the cultural competency of the students.

9. **Novelty in teaching and problem solving skills:**

- **Teaching practices based on child-centered approach:** Terry &Irving (2010), states that the teachers need to know how to adapt the content of instruction and teaching style to students' cultural and individual preferences. Curriculum, methodology, and materials should invite students to identify with the educational process and enable them to function properly. Teachers identified the value of focused practices such as constructing a respectful, interactive and inclusive classroom or school ethos and providing opportunities for students to experience learning in varied contexts, including the classroom, whole-school activities, and in their communities.

- **Process of knowing /learning:** Generally speaking, different cultures are learned in different ways. In some countries students often work in groups and do collaborative activities. In such type of learning the students learn from one another. "In childhood stage cultural learning occurs by elder member in the form of stories, histories told by grandmother etc. which provides the basis for the development of cultural knowledge in students (Dalglish, 2002). This cultural knowledge of students is utilized by the teacher to develop multi-cultural knowledge in students. Since cultural acquisition varies from culture to culture and process of knowing and learning. Therefore the perspective teachers have to be competent to know the different process of knowing and learning of cultures.
- **Process of problem solving:** Cultures have different ways of solving problems. "It is surprising that given the same set of problems and circumstances, cultures can arrive at very different solutions. Cultures reason differently and arrive at solutions based on their distinctive values, philosophy and beliefs" (Johnson, 2006). At this point a study done by Texin (2002), elaborates with a research question and analyzed on the basis of responses:
Question: Suppose, you are on a boat with your mother, your spouse and your child. Suddenly, the boat begins to sink. You determine that you can only save one of the other passengers. Whom do you save?
Analysis: According to survey results, 60% of Americans save their spouse, 40% save their children. The reasons typically offered run along these lines:
 Save Spouse: "My spouse is my partner for life and I can have more children.";
 Save Child: "Children represent the future, so it is vital to protect them first. Probably, my spouse would support this decision."
 However, among Asian cultures, or Americans of recent Asian descent, nearly 100% of respondents state that they would save the mother. The rationale I have heard offered is this:
 Save Mother: "My mother gave me life; I owe her my life. I can marry again; I can have more children, but I cannot replace my mother or otherwise repay the debt I owe her." (as cited in Johnson, 2009)

On the basis of above analysis it can be say that for a teacher it is necessary to observe the problem handling skill and develop that specific and a variety of problem solving skills which can be utilize to solve the problem differently by the students of different cultural back ground.

Development of working competencies of teachers towards linguistically diverse class rooms:

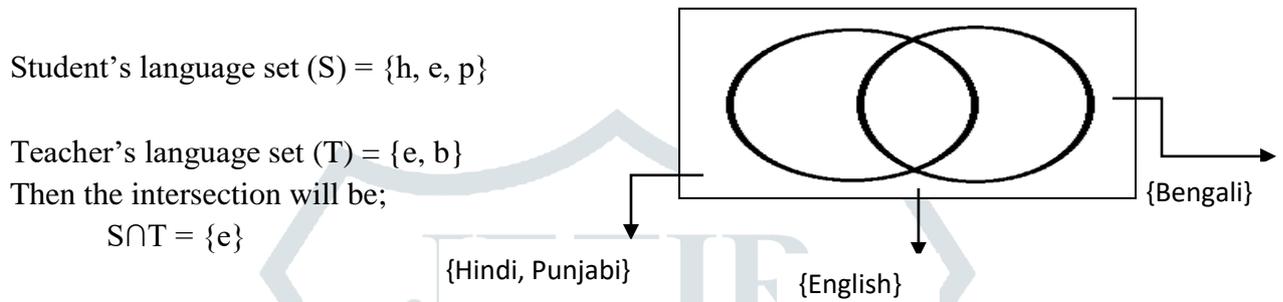
Since there are many common root of cultural aspect of a class room, but there is another problem i.e. language. Is there any common way to communicate with the children of different-different languages? Theoretically it may seem illogical but practically happens true. In our country there is more diversity in language of communication. Students have always faced this problem sociologically. The role of language as a medium of instruction in promoting an effective teaching and learning is an issue that has drawn the attention of many researchers all over the world for many years. In Indian class rooms students are belongs to great variety of regional language. As the classes move higher, language problem becomes wider. Because in India the primary /upper primary etc. schools are situated in local region, generally student's regional language and teachers languages are common. Thus to communicate them is not as difficult as in higher classes. For example; the university level students belongs to several regions of India, they are linguistically more diverse than lower classes. Taking all these descriptions in mind, the preparation of perspective teachers should have to prepare themselves as multi-language achievers.

Before discussing the competencies for linguistically diverse classroom, the present scenario and proposed solution can be analyzed with the mathematical representation of common way of instruction in linguistic diverse class rooms:

Here, a very important concept of set theory must be applicable to find the problem of common language of a class room.

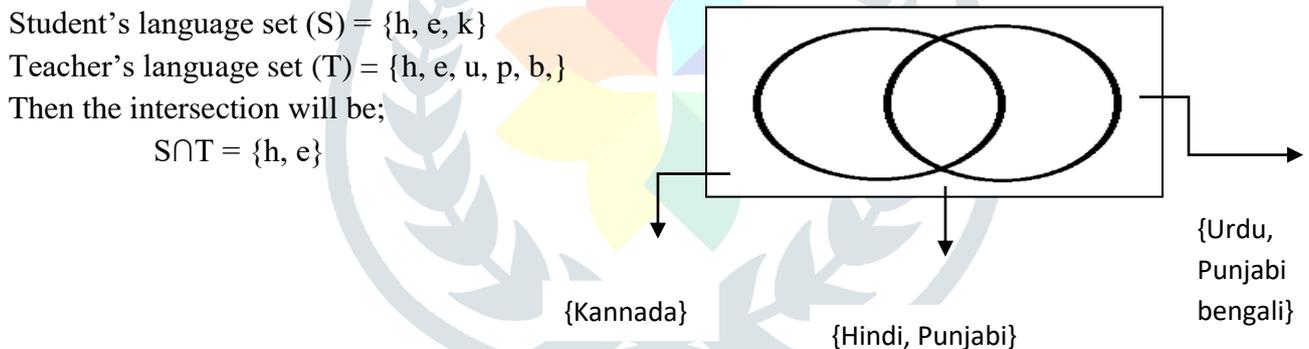
On the basis of different elements of school we can divide it in following 4 cases:

Case (1). Let us suppose a student have some language like Hindi, English and a mother tong Punjabi /Bengali / Urdu / Bhojpuri etc. and a teacher have only two as usual English and Bengali, then how the teacher communicate with this student? For this we can use rule of set theory as:



Thus it is obvious that English will be appropriate language of instruction between that student and teacher.

Case (2). Now let us suppose student have the languages Hindi, Kannada and English but teacher have many others like Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Tamil, including Hindi and English. Then, what's the way to communicate teacher with this student?



Thus we can say that Hindi and English both will be appropriate language of instruction between this student and teacher.

These are two cases discussed between particular teacher and a student but if we talk about all over the class then this is obvious that the no of students will very large in nos.

Case 3: let us suppose that the languages set of students as follows:

$S_1 = \{h,e,p\}, S_2 = \{h,e,u\}, S_3 = \{h,b\}, S_4 = \{h\}, \dots, S_n = \{h\}$

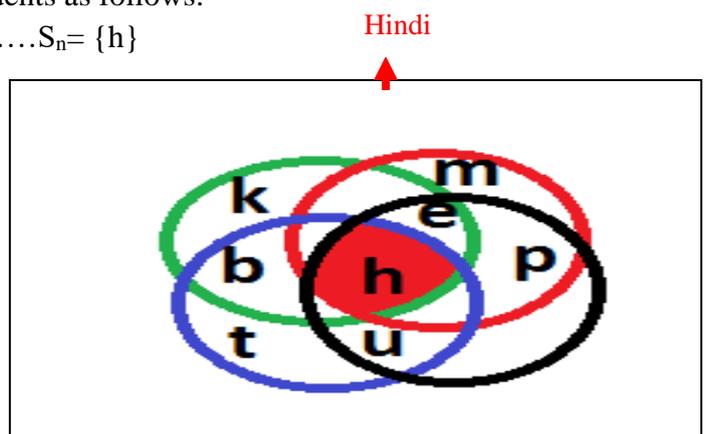
Thus after operating the law of intersection,

The common language set of class will be

$\cap C = \{h\}$

Now operating with teacher's collection;

If $T = \{h,e,p,u\}$



Then $C \cap T = \{h\}$

Thus Hindi should be the common way of communication with this class.

Apart of this there may be some exceptional cases but we have to take in mind that it is very difficult to stand an ideal multilinguistic class and a teacher towards it.

Case 4. Some issues may arise that, what happened when there exist a null set or Φ . Mince if no any language will common between class and teacher then what should be the way of communication?

To remove this it is very necessary to know non- verbal communication. And another way wills also that teachers/perspective teachers have greater linguistic corpus.

For example: If a teacher has knowledge of many other languages then their element of set will broad in nos. as

$T = \{h, e, b, u, p, t, g\}$ (it's only an example in real this is very difficult to adopt many language but not impossible)

$C = \{h, e, b\}$

$C \cap T = \{h, e, b\}$

Thus from above discussion this is obvious that teacher have a need to know many other Indian languages with own self. That's why he/she could communicate freely to the multilinguistic class rooms in India and apart of this they should have working competencies to work towards these class rooms.

The working competencies of teacher can be developed by:

- 1. Understanding of interrelationship between language and culture:** Language learning is "the means by which individuals become members of their primary speech communities" (Heath, 1986, p. 85) also language promotes group identity and individual membership. Since language is a function of culture, therefore it reflects the conventions and values of its speakers. Every group of individuals has some specific language that interlay related to their cultures. Thus for a teacher understanding competency of these relationships must be developed through keen observation.
- 2. Developing the language of self-reflection and self-representation:** It highlights the importance of communication and dialogue within and across cultural identities and regional boundaries. "Reflection provides opportunity to teachers and students to hypothesize the concept of perspective and difference and questions of privilege. This allows them to engage more deeply with their own identities and examine how we are all implicated in local and global matters. Thus suitable environment for self representation must develop the working competency of a teacher towards these types of class rooms" David Montemurro et al.(2014).
- 3. Developing the process of communicating nonverbally:** Cultures have different ways of communicating non-verbally and it is crucial for teachers to be aware of these differences. "In a class that is culturally and linguistically diverse, some of these might be observed in the classroom: children who will not make direct eye contact when talking to a teacher, because to do so, would show lack of respect in their culture" (Johnson, 2006). Children who smile not because they are happy but because they do not understand and are afraid to ask questions. Others who rarely smile, such as female students from Indian rural area. When teachers begin to recognize that different ways of communicating non-verbally, they will understand their linguistically ill students better and predict accurately interpreted nonverbal clues to emotional, cognitive, or attitudinal states.
- 4. Developing the process of communication through symbols:** In the multicultural school setting, symbols that are unique to various cultures should be correctly understood and interpreted. Otherwise, problems can arise. Many times seems that if teacher is in class suddenly a student standup and ask them to go out. This done not only with a sentence they also use some specific type of symbols to go out from the class for drinking water or may some refreshing. These are many examples are present in a class to communicate symbolically. "Teachers must listen actively and

carefully to their students, putting themselves in their students' places and learning to read between cultural lines. Teachers might also listen and understand to their students' conversations with their classmates. The things they talk about the symbols they use to communicate locally with peers and ask teachers to discuss and explain are the areas that concern them the most. Look for cultural interpreters in school or in the community who can serve as resources in assisting teachers to add to their cultural funds of knowledge” (Johnson, 2006). Teachers should to take advantage of available resources: books, articles, films, music, and a variety of material from the Internet that might aid teachers in learning more about their student’s communication through symbols, to develop appropriate competency.

5. **Development of national language:** Although Hindi has been recognized as the national language, it has caused bitter hostilities, particularly in the South. It will be unwise to impose Hindi on non-Hindi speaking people. Therefore, the propagation of Hindi as the national language requires lot most care and tact.
6. **Development of common script:** At present there are a number of scripts in India. But if a common script is evolved, it would break through the script barrier which separates one language area from another. M. N. Srinivas’s suggestion for the use of Roman Script may also be considered.
7. **Development of language corpus:** For the development of the knowledge of the different language there is the need to organize such a program that the teacher as well student can enrich the language corpus so that the competency of multi-linguistic ability can be developed. We can observe that by developing different languages the intersection elements increase as in the case of above proposed design. For example: Indian language centre provides the opportunity to learn different languages free of cost during pursuing other courses too, as a diploma/certificate course.

Conclusion: On the basis of above discussion we may come to this conclusion that culturally and linguistically diverse class room is a problem as well as opportunity in itself. In Indian class rooms no doubted about cultural and linguistic diversity among students, I present scenario, students are identified with their face or a specific roll no’s in the class room, just like upper surface of ice berg. The teacher creates the common root of environment without seeing the dipped part of the ice berg. For seeing merge part of the ice berg they may have to dive in the water, mince teacher have to understand the cultural span of the students. They should know students background, meaning of their name, their ethnicity, their religious diversity, language suitability etc. though to do this teachers may have to face some jolts, but these jolts will provide an opportunity to create common root of environment and impermeable preparation towards culturally and linguistically diverse class rooms. After that a teacher will be able to play a role of waver, who knits the beautiful cloths with different colorful threads. Then the real idea of India “unity in diversity” will takes place in Indian class rooms.

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