

A Humane Reflective Teacher: Valuable asset for the Education System

*Harish Pandey

*Poonam Tiwari

*Suryakant Kushwaha

**Dr. Anjali Bajpai

*Research Scholar, Faculty of Education, BHU (K), Varanasi.

**Professor, Faculty of Education, BHU (K), Varanasi.

Abstract

Teachers are an extremely important asset for any society as they are the ones who educate youth of the society. They create leaders for the next generation and play important role in developing the nation. In present there are lot of flaws in our educational system; it promotes rat race only, children are not competent enough to do critical analysis of tasks, they are not innovative and teachers themselves are not trained and efficient enough to develop the persona of child. To reconstruct our education system, their needs to be a paradigm shift in education system to move from creating Teachers to creating Humane Reflective Teachers. In our society there is difference in ideas, believes, languages, cultures and religions which is visible in our classrooms too. To perfectly deal with these challenges in classroom a teacher must be of Humane in nature and have Reflective thinking. A good humane teacher is one, who understands the problems and needs of diverse group of students and a reflective teacher is one who encompasses both the capacity for critical inquiry and self-reflection. To be a Humane reflective Teacher involves the conscious consideration of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of classroom practices on students. The present problem with our education system is that it is not able to produce such Teachers. While it is not possible to prescribe a linear process or define a step-by-step procedure to develop a Humane Reflective Teacher, there are still actions and practices that are fundamental to developing one as a reflective practitioner. The role of Teacher Education institutions can't be ignored in following and implementing these fundamentals for producing a Humane Reflective Teacher. The Humane Reflective Teacher will be an asset to our education system as a Humane Reflective Teacher can eradicate most of the present challenges in our Education System. This paper will discuss about the characteristics of Humane Reflective Teacher, how the Teacher Education Institutes can inculcate these characteristics in a prospective as well as In-Service Teacher, and how they can be a valuable asset for our Education system.

Keywords: Reflection, Reflective Teaching, Reflective Learning, Humane Reflective Teacher.

Introduction:

National Policy on Education 1986 emphasize: "The status of the teacher reflects the socio-cultural ethos of the society; it is said that no people can rise above the level of its teachers". Such exhortations are indeed an expression of the important role played by the teachers as transmitters, inspirers and promoters of man's eternal quest for knowledge.

Donald Schön's, 1983 book *The Reflective Practitioner* introduced concepts such as reflection-on-action and reflection-in-action which explain how professionals meet the challenges of their work with a kind of improvisation that is improved through practice. However, the concepts underlying reflective practice are much older. Earlier in the 20th century, John Dewey was among the first to write about reflective practice with his exploration of experience, interaction and reflection. Soon thereafter, other researchers such as Kurt Lewin and Jean Piaget were developing relevant theories of human learning and development. Some scholars have claimed to find precursors of reflective practice in ancient texts such as Buddhist teachings and the Meditations of Stoic philosopher Marcus Aurelius. Central to the development of reflective theory was

interest in the integration of theory and practice, the cyclic pattern of experience and the conscious application of lessons learned from experience.

Becoming an effective teacher involves considerably more than accumulating skills and strategies. Without tying teaching and management decisions to personal beliefs about teaching, learning, and development, a teacher will have only the bricks. The real 'stuff' of teaching is the mortar what holds the bricks in place and provides a foundation. Being successful in today's classroom environment goes beyond taking on fragmented techniques for managing instruction, keeping students on-task, and handling student behaviour. It requires that the teacher remain fluid and able to move in many directions, rather than stuck only being able to move in one direction as situations occur. Effective teaching is much more than a compilation of skills and strategies. It is a deliberate philosophical and ethical code of conduct. (Larrivee, 2000)

According to Dewey, reflective thinking requires continual evaluation of beliefs, assumptions, and hypotheses against existing data, and against other plausible interpretations of the data. Resulting decisions remain open to further scrutiny and reformulation. Similarly, King & Kitchener (1994) posited that one operating at the highest stage of reflective judgment knows that a solution is only a hypothetical conjecture of what is, recognizing the temporary nature of any solution. These definitions of critical or reflective thinking seem to suggest that it is primarily cognitive problem solving.

Critical reflection involves a deep exploration process that exposes unexamined beliefs, assumptions, and expectations and makes visible our personal reflexive loops. Becoming a reflective practitioner calls teachers to the task of facing deeply rooted personal attitudes concerning human nature, human potential, and human learning. Reflective practitioners challenge assumptions and question existing practices, thereby continuously accessing new lens to view their practice and alter their perspectives.

Reflection : According to Jack Richards, reflection or "critical reflection, refers to an activity or process in which an experience is recalled, considered, and evaluated, usually in relation to a broader purpose. It is a response to past experience and involves conscious recall and examination of the experience as a basis for evaluation and decision-making and as a source for planning and action. (Richard 1990)

Typically, the terms reflective thinking, critical thinking, reflective judgment as well as critical reflection have each been used to define a way of thinking that accepts uncertainty and acknowledges dilemmas, while ascribing less significance to the role of self in the reflective process (e.g., Dewey, 1938; King & Kitchener, 1994; Sparks-Langer & Colton, 1991; Zehm & Kottler, 1993). In Dewey's (1933, 1938) writings, he asserted that the capacity to reflect is initiated only after recognition of a problem or dilemma and the acceptance of uncertainty.

Reflective Teaching and Learning: Reflective teaching is about more than just summarizing what happened in the classroom. If you spend all your time discussing the events of the lesson, it's possible to jump to abrupt conclusions about why things happened as they did. Reflective teaching is a quieter and more systemic approach to looking at what happened. It requires patience, and careful observation of the entire lesson's experience.

Reflective learning is a way of allowing students to step back from their learning experience to help them develop critical thinking skills and improve on future performance by analysing their experience. This type of learning, which helps move the student from surface to deep learning, can include a range of activities. According to Wikipedia Reflective learning is a form of education in which the student reflects upon their learning experiences. This is a development of the concept of experiential learning as propounded by John Dewey, who wrote *Experience and Education* in 1938. Later theorists include David Kolb, David Boud and Donald Schön. In a professional context, this is known as reflective practice.

Humane Reflective Teacher: A good humane teacher is one, who understands the problems and needs of diverse group of students and a reflective teacher is one who encompasses both the capacity for critical

inquiry and self-reflection. To be a Humane reflective Teacher involves the conscious consideration of the moral and ethical implications and consequences of classroom practices on students.

To make Teacher education more sensitive to the emerging demands from the school system, position paper of national focus group on teacher education (NFGTE, 2010) for curriculum renewal highlights the following changes to be implemented in TEI to prepare teachers for a dual role of humane and of reflective practitioner

- Encouraging, supportive and humane facilitator in teaching-learning situations who enables learners (students) to discover their talents, to realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, to develop character and desirable social and human values to function as responsible citizens; and,
- An active member of the group of persons who make conscious effort to contribute towards the process of renewal of school curriculum to maintain its relevance to the changing societal needs and personal needs of learners, keeping in view the experience gained in the past and the concerns and imperatives that have emerged in the light of changing national development goals and educational priorities.

Characteristics of Reflective Teacher:

Dewey defines three attitudes as prerequisite for Reflective teacher-

1. **Open-mindedness-** It refers to an active desire to listen to more sides than one, to give full attention to alternate possibilities, and to recognize the possibility of error even in the beliefs that are dearest to us. A reflective teacher explores alternative ways of looking at existing teaching practices. He/ She always ready to reevaluate about the different beliefs and opinion of students regarding certain topics. He always ready to test the prevailing beliefs, methods and thought on the line of present need and circumstances. He/ She not only ask why the things are the way that they are, but also how they can be made better. The reflective teacher understands that school practices are not accepted because they are clothed in tradition. If for example, most of the girls are assigned with the subject home science & sociology while most of the boys are assigned with the subject mathematics and computer science in the class, a reflective teacher should enquire as to why this is happening. He/she should begin to formulate teaching and counselling plans that would allow students regardless of gender to choose from the subjects that are available in their school.
2. **Responsibility-** An attitude of responsibility involves careful consideration of the consequences to which an action leads. Responsible teacher asks themselves why they are doing, what they are doing in the classroom in a way that transcends questions of immediate utility and in light of educational purposes of which they are aware. A reflective teacher is aware of his/her actions and their consequences. He/she should aware that his/her teaching behaviour should not be conditioned merely by the immediate utility of an action. For example it is much easier for a teacher to come and dictates theory and concepts in science class rather than demonstrates it by activities and practical involving students in the class. A reflective teacher not lean towards his/her comfort rather he/she takes the responsibility to teach the concerned topic with proper and effective methods.
3. **Wholeheartedness-** A reflective teacher is wholehearted in accepting all students and is willing to learn about and affirm the uniqueness of each student for whom he/she accepts responsibility. The behaviour of reflective teacher is manifestation of his/her teaching philosophy. A reflective teacher is not open- minded and responsible merely when it is convenient. For example, we have seen teachers publicly advocate a belief in integrating handicapped students into the regular class; however when observing in their classrooms, we saw the handicapped students treated in isolation because the curriculum and the instructional strategies had not been modified to capitalise upon the student's strength or to acknowledge the students' individual differences. A reflective teacher does not hesitate or forget to fight for his beliefs and a quality education for all.

Challenges in creating Humane Reflective Teacher:

Lack in coherence between policy and its implementation- A policy for any program provides a backbone to existing system. It depends on many aspects like need of society, people, institution and contemporary issues. In our country many policies has been stabilised to enhance our education system and teacher education programs. The process of policy making is very complex at its every stage. With its all complexity policy should be flexible. But now in this era the paradigm of teacher education program are shifting due to need of its quality aspect. The institutions are intended to prepare only teacher so called perspective teacher, no any practices are intended to be a reflective. Some institutions like DEI, BHU, JNU, NUEPA etc. are practices to prepare a reflective teacher. NCTE, to enhance these aspects prepared a framework and named it, 'National Curriculum Framework for Teacher Education' with suffix towards preparing professional and Humane Teacher. This framework reflects many concerns regarding current education system among them following are the main concerns regarding humane reflective teacher-

- There is no opportunity for teachers to examine their own biases and beliefs and reflect on their own experiences as part of classroom discourse and enquiry.
- Theory courses have no clear link with practical work and ground realities.
- The evaluation system followed in teacher education programmes is too information-oriented, excessively quantitative and lacks comprehensiveness.
- Apart from conceptual and pedagogical aspects, existing programmes need to develop certain attitudes, dispositions, habits and interests in a teacher. The present evaluation protocol has no place for evaluating these aspects.

At Institutional Level- Teacher education institutions are just like womb of mother for creating humane reflective teachers. As a zygote get nourished in the womb and born after becoming a child. Similarly a graduate enters in the teacher education institution and comes out after becoming a skilled teacher. Now it's depends on the teacher education institution how will they nourished him trained him to make a simple teacher or a humane reflective teacher. Many institutions of our country committed to perfume their duty instead of many hurdles in their path but some of them are lacking behind in fulfilling their assigned role. The prominent challenges which they facing are as-

- Improper understanding of teacher education paradigm and framework,
- Lack of active and committed teacher educator,
- Creating mechanised teacher, and
- Taking course as a mean of attaining degree,

The Attitude of a Teacher-

We all have heard this old maxims and thought that, "good teachers are borne not made" the main problem with this saying is that it's wrong. True, there are those who exhibit confidence and an ability to inspire and motivate groups of people. Such people, how eve are not necessarily good teachers they may struggle to plan classes, to explain properly to asses and are deficient in a whole range of other necessary skills. Teaching in lifelong learning is a profession and require you to behave like a professional by learning and developing the necessary skills and practice.

Similarly we can say that humane reflective teachers are not borne rather they can be made by providing proper knowledge and training which are the responsibility of teacher education institutions. In addition to this the determination and intention of teacher plays a major role in making him a humane reflective teacher. Apart from these there are certain things which are stick to our education system just like dawn and dusk. These are just as take it for granted in our system.

- Students are coming to become teacher just by accident; they are not intended to become teacher they just enrolled in the concerned program as they didn't get any opportunity elsewhere. In such circumstances how one can expect from them to become a humane reflective teacher.

- In-service teachers are so much accustomed to their methods of teaching and approach of dealing with students that they are not interested to change themselves or think any other new ways to introduce in their profession.
- In-service teachers are so burdened with their task of teaching as well as other non teaching tasks such as election, censes, polio etc duties due to which they remain with no interest and stamina to think anything creative or reflective.

Humane Reflective Teacher as a Valuable Asset:

The only factor that increased student personality is the effectiveness of a teacher. Teachers are probably the most important agents in the educational process because they directly organize students learning experiences. However, in general education policies are not informed by a solid body of evidence on teachers and on the impact of their professional practices on the learning experiences of students. A teacher with well subject knowledge, personal qualities and professional skills perform reflectively in the class and contribute excellently for educational system and its development, so reflective teacher can be the greatest asset of the society.

On the basis of above discussions we can point out some following statements that shows/reflects a valuable asset of humane reflective teacher for education system as follows:

- The school is a subunit of the society, a minor positive change in its any component must reflect in society too.
- By eradicating all the obstacles found at policy and its implementations.
- By balancing the hurdles at the institutional level.
- By attaining self realization and eliminating negative attitude in teaching learning process.
- Student posses many social, personal, psychological and educational problems, the humane reflective teacher keenly observe these problems and rectify them reflectively.

Conclusion:

After Independence India has worked so much to improve it education system keeping this aim in its view we have created no of commissions and committees which have suggested many solutions to eradicate our educational problems . but our country have so much diversities that no single solution can solve all the problems. Many of the solutions lie in the enhancement of the characteristics and quality of our teachers. In this regard many works has been done by NCTE, NCERT, SCERT, DEIT etc. but still some where we lack our focus in making our teachers humane in nature and of reflective thinking. Recently NCTE has realized this audacity and published curriculum a framework for teacher education with special focus on preparing professional and humane teacher. It has taken this step after realizing the value of a humane reflective teacher in any school or education system.

A humane reflective teacher in a class inculcate critical thinking creative thinking, self reflection in his students. He understands the problems and needs of diverse group of students. These all above reflections and suggestions enhance strongly our understanding and provide a roadmap to run quickly to achieve the characteristics of humane reflective teacher.

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