

Role of Education: Harnessing the Potential of Learners for Social Development

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Abstract: Educational institutions play crucial role in lifelong learning and in the development of a cohesive society. In order to enable learners to act as a catalyst for social transformation, the current paper attempts to explain the role of education in preparing the learners for social development. The proposed 4E's model is suggested based on literature review. The dimensions of the proposed 4 E's model are 1) equal opportunities for education to everyone 2) embracing of diverse cultural backgrounds 3) enhancing learners' skills 4) expediting teachers training and development. The 4 E's approach emphasizes on the importance of education in fostering learners' empowerment and integration in order to build a sustainable future. It is argued that the aim of learning should not just be about getting the degree or finding a job rather it should be about the learner's overall development. To achieve this, the formal education must implement concrete strategies that focus attention on the self growth along with contribution towards building a cohesive society.

1 INTRODUCTION

"If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people." – Confucius

In today's scenario, the fast pace of changes are resulting into challenges which are beyond human predictions. In these times of uncertainties, the role of education becomes important in developing the future oriented knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that enables learners to become active, responsible and engaged citizen. The younger generation is the foundation of world's future as they consist of one quarter of the total world's population. In India the young generation is one of the most vulnerable groups (Arora, et al., 2015). The youngsters are seen as the leader of tomorrow but they are frustrated and angry due to lack of proper education, guidance and mentoring. The tension faced by them leads to the depression which further results into feeling of sadness and hopelessness, moodiness, eating disturbances, sleep disturbance, substance abuse, and lack of participation in social life, lack of enthusiasm, energy or motivation. As a result, they overreact to criticism, lack of concentration, restlessness, agitation, suicidal thoughts, indulge in abusive behavior, and increase in self criticism and conflicts.

Education acts as a tool to fight this negativity as it develops a learner in terms of his/her self awareness thus enlightening him/her spiritually. Certainly well planned education system can help our younger generation to deal these problems in constructive way and to remain focused on living a meaningful life (UNESCO, 2021).

2 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective is to explore and comprehend the impact of education on social development while also evaluating its role in empowering the younger generation. The aim extends to proposing comprehensive strategies that facilitate the overall development of learners, encompassing various aspects crucial to their growth and well-being.

2.1 Methodology

In order to develop the proposed 4E's model 120 published articles related to the research area from various databases like SCOPUS, Researchgate and Google scholar were reviewed and out these reviewed papers ten articles were selected. Based on the

findings of these selected articles the concept of the 4E's model has been developed.

2.2 Proposed Model: 4E's

India can become global superpower by educating its younger generation in constructive way. Educational institutions play important role in the lifelong learning process and in building a cohesive society in which the different perspectives of fellow human beings are valued thus ensuring inclusive and sustainable future for the humankind. The present paper focuses on the role of education in integrating and empowering the younger generation to play active role in social development and promoting a sustainable future.

E =Equal Opportunities for Education to Everyone
E = Embracing of Diverse Cultural Backgrounds
E= Enhancing Learners' Skills
E =Expediting Teachers Training and Development

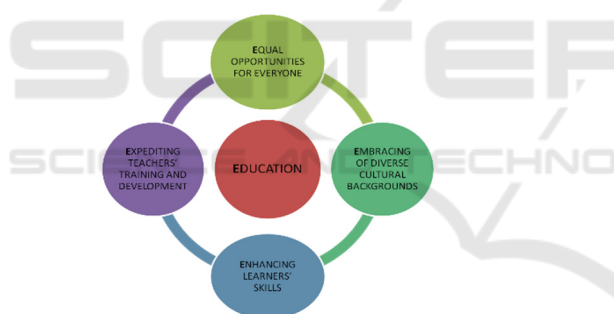


Figure 1: Proposed 4E's Model.

Education helps learner in framing the futuristic vision as well as develops understanding about values and ethics which are considered to be the strong foundation of sustainable social development. As rightly said by Yousafzai (2013) "One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world." The education empowers the learners to actively participate in self-development as well as to play active role in social transformation for accomplishing the goal of social development. According to Mann (1855), "Education, then, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery." It strengthens learners' abilities to be resilient and to survive the unpredicted challenges by harnessing the opportunities. No doubt, the learners of today are the

key agents of social development and the future of our society. Therefore, it is essential that the learners need to be equipped with the competencies to contribute for the future as change agents.

3 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION TO EVERYONE

The younger generation is the most valuable asset of the society. It is necessary to empower them by building their capabilities and making opportunities accessible to them. Nelson Mandela stated that "Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world." It is essential to provide educational opportunities to everyone especially people surviving in vulnerable situations. These vulnerable situations can be due to social conflicts, discrimination, poverty, and lack of awareness or the emergencies created by pandemics or natural disasters. The government needs to ensure to facilitate the administrative policies so that the citizens can have access to the educational opportunities. The educational institutions should make their admission process more socially integrative and need to act as mentors rather than merely playing the role of service provider and should refrain from branding the education as a product accessible to only well to do segment of the society. The provision of accessible learning resources is essential. It enables marginalized and disadvantaged learner to access quality education and thus empowering them to overcome systemic challenges.

In Indian society it is a harsh reality that gender discrimination still continues to be a big social problem. The irony lies in the fact that patriarchal social norms act as a barrier for women to progress. This had negative impact on women's financial status, education, health and access to opportunities. Women are deprived of economic decision making and are dependent on men. For the development of society provision of equal opportunities for each individual is essential irrespective of their gender, caste and creed. Many initiatives have been taken by government but yet a lot needs to be done. Equal access to all the resources for everyone need to be ensured. The attitudinal changes need to be undertaken to overcome gender discrimination. The education should promote democracy, respect for human rights and social justice in an accessible learning environment to cater the learning and social needs of every one (NEP, 2020).

4 EMBRACING OF DIVERSE CULTURAL BACKGROUNDS

The main role of education is to build inclusive societies. Education should not be promoted only to create professionals for fulfilling the demand of labor market but education can act as a base to cultivate the values for social cohesion and can harness the potential of young citizens to construct inclusive societies. The pedagogies and learning materials need to be inclusive and should promote diversity. To avoid marginalization the stereotypes need to be avoided by including different narratives and perspectives. There are various social changes happening at a fast pace in the contemporary society, the cause of these changes varies like technology, social media, globalization, migration, etc. From individualism the societies are transforming towards pluralism (Sciortino, 2021) thus inculcating the sense of universal belongingness impacting the perceptions, attitudes and behaviors of the learners by challenging the prejudices and fears is essential.

The educational institutions need to be careful in their planning and implementation of educational programs and policies to foster respect and mutual understanding among learners. In educational institutions proper career guidance should be provided, the cultural barriers need to be removed and the cases of harassment need to be dealt strictly. It is essential to integrate democratic competencies in the curriculum so as to promote democratic values and active citizenship. By facilitating interaction and developing relationships, the learners understand their role in the society. Inclusive education also fosters understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures, promoting social cohesion and harmony within communities. Education can act as a tool for empowering the learners to transform the society (Broom, 2015). By instilling principles such as empathy, compassion, tolerance and respect for diversity, education nurtures a sense of social responsibility. When educated learners are involved in consistent interactions and channels of communication then the probability of enhancing adaptive capacities increases ultimately shaping a more equitable and democratic society.

Education helps in fulfilling professional requirements although the tangible results may or may not be instant. The education should equip the learners with the skills to become responsible and active citizens. It should make them competent not only to face the global competition but also to discover untapped opportunities and find solutions to the problems thus engaging in playing active role to

create sustainable future. Employability is a key outcome of education and training to instill skills, knowledge and competencies of workers. In India extensive employability skill training initiatives have started. These need to be framed to tackle the problem of unemployment and to meet the changing market demands. The employment strategy needs to take care of institutional support for learner employment. It should be focused on reshaping or transforming the human capabilities, life skills, attitudes and mindset. The entrepreneurial spirit should be nurtured to empower the learners to develop innovative solutions and to create employment opportunities. If undertaken in a planned and systematic way it will have far reaching impact on social development. The education provided should enhance employability skills among the learner but at the same time the education programs should not be limited only to the enhancement of employability skills but articulation of theory and practice is required for nurturing learner's cognitive, meta-cognitive, social, emotional and technical skills to form the foundation upon which they can engage in shaping communities for social development. The development of competencies needs to be based on the combination of knowledge, skills and values to empower the learners to promote social cohesion, human values and sustainability.

The training and development need not only be limited to the enhancement of professional knowledge, skills and expertise for effective curriculum delivery but also teachers need to be sensitized towards the diverse cultural backgrounds of learner so as to make the learning in the classrooms more impactful. The teachers need to go through self analysis so as to understand and be aware of their own biases and stereotypes, this analysis is important to keep a check for not transferring these to the learners. The flexibility should be given to teachers to align the curriculum as per the present times requirement and adapt to the individual learning needs. The teachers need to be technologically trained (OECD, 2016) to use participatory methodologies while imparting education so that the learners' voices and concerns are heard and addressed appropriately. As quoted by William Arthur Ward cited in Fred (2010) "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."

The teachers need to be aware of the teaching pedagogies should not merely focus on the transmission of knowledge but it should aim to create learning environment in which learners can develop their self learning skills. The learners need to be at the

centre of their own learning process and responsibly involved in their own learning. As stated by Greek writer Kazantzakis: “True teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their learners to cross; then, having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create their own.” The training of innovative pedagogical approaches is essential to promote the effective learning taking place in and beyond classrooms. In addition to discipline based knowledge the focus should be on interdisciplinary, collaborative learning, leveraging technology-enabled learning and fostering peer collaboration and mentoring. The learning process need to support each and every learner to nurture his/her competencies in collaboration with teachers in a supportive learning environment. The learner needs to be involved in the development of the curriculum so as to have the sense of ownership and responsibility during the implementation process. The teachers should be trained to support learners to be an independent thinker, lifelong learner and communicate with others in meaningful ways. The interaction between teacher and learner should equip learners with knowledge, skills, cooperative attitude to play active role in social development. The teachers need to be motivated and supported for doing their assigned role responsibly and also it should be ensured that their rights are protected.

To make 4E's model effective monitoring and evaluation of educational programs is essential. A robust mechanism of monitoring and evaluation is required so as to measure the impact of educational programs. The assessment of impact should look deeply into the efforts integrating the holistic interventions for successfully accomplishing the learning outcomes. The educational goals cannot be achieved if the involvement of family and community is not made mandatory. The evidence based programs need to be increased so as to monitor and evaluate effectively the engagement and involvement of the learners. This will result in improved learner learning outcomes and contribute to the overall advancement of the education system.

5 CONCLUSION

Education plays important role in today's volatile and complex world in harnessing the potential of learner for social development. It empowers the learners by enhancing their capabilities and opening the door for opportunities. The purpose of education is to provide learners with the necessary knowledge and skills to

actively participate in their own personal growth as well as achieving social development through societal transformation. Educated citizens contribute meaningfully to the society and also act as catalyst in initiating positive social change and paving way for social development (UNESCO, 2020). It is clearly evident that there are many challenges which need to overcome so as to enable the social transformation for creating a positive impact in the society. In this transformative process education acts as a catalyst in unlocking the potential of learners by equipping them with necessary skills, knowledge and values. The active engagement of learner in the rapidly changing complex societies is possible only when the learners are educated. The illiteracy leads to various social problems like population explosion, poverty, crime, etc. The prevailing negative forces needs to be dealt to give access to the right to education so that the learner can effectively craft their own opportunities for self growth and social development. A viable strategy to eradicate social problems is through the provision of access to educational opportunities enabling the learners to play key role as social change agents. The learning process should focus on the development of employability and life skills. Public and private institutions should initiate technical and skill oriented educational programs. By streamlining teachers' training and development programs the growth and effectiveness of teachers can be expedited. The mechanism needs to be developed so as to ensure accountability and developing each learner as an engaged citizen shaping the future of society. The education should enable learners to apply knowledge, skills and empathy to real-life problems and situations and should have the confidence to transform the society to ensure a sustainable future for humanity. Policy makers should ensure that effective policies are framed and are implemented for the promotion of education in all the segments of the society so that each person can develop existing competencies and acquire new skills to face the future challenges in social development. The research article highlights the necessity to make efforts to maximize the potential of the learners so they can become active agents of positive change for fostering inclusive and sustainable society. It is through the transformative power of education that we can unlock the full potential of learner and shape a bright future for all.

The limitation in the current study is that the 4E's are developed in a continuous process of reading and reflection but the qualitative analysis of text material is not done. The future studies should perform

qualitative coding of the text material so as to explore new findings.

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