Culturally Designed Pedagogy in India
Need for Skill Development

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Abstract

Adequate education and skills can improve the employability of workers, the productivity of enterprises and the inclusiveness of economic growth. This realisation has led to redesign pedagogy introduced at the school level and has also increased interest in the formulation of skills development policies to drive the change necessary to meet development challenges. To visualise a functional relationship between culture and pedagogy in the labour market it is desirable to ascertain pedagogy ingrained in secondary school education system. Reform efforts based on an ideal model of rationality assume that teachers would be receptive to scientific knowledge about pedagogy. They would directly apply it to their teaching. This model is etic (universal) by nature and known as process product paradigm. The lack of acknowledgement and appropriation of universal best practices of instruction by teachers led to indigenous pedagogical approach which is more contextual and local. This conceptual paper attempts to capture cultural realities in the context of skill development programme.

Introduction

At the global level neo-liberal policies and neo-conservative values have reinforced the class character of education. The schools have witnessed dichotomy in pedagogy designed separately for the elite and non-elite children. The society has also experienced culture-fair not culture-specific pedagogy for children of marginalised group. Inequality in

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education is a reflection of power game the elite maintain in the society by restructuring the need for education in the labour market. Neo-liberal policies, indeed, do not convert learners into 'human capital'. It transforms learners into 'fixed assets'. Adequate education and skills can improve the employability of workers, the productivity of enterprises and the inclusiveness of economic growth. This realisation has led to redesign pedagogy introduced at the school level and has also increased interest in the formulation of skill development policies to drive the change necessary to meet development challenges. Many of these policies, increasingly broad in scope and outreach, are underpinned by efforts to bring the world of education and training and the world of work closer together. An ILO review of country experiences (ILO, 2008) shows that countries that have succeeded in linking skills development to improved employability, productivity and employment growth have directed their skills development policies towards meeting three objectives:

- matching demand and supply of skills;
- maintaining the employability of workers and the sustainability of enterprises; and
- sustaining a dynamic process of development.

The key message is that skills development should not be seen, or provided, in isolation. It is a means to promoting decent work, improving productivity, generating employment growth, and promoting economic and social development. Coordination with other policies and strategies (e.g. national development strategies, sector growth strategies) is therefore critical. Development strategy based on improved quality and availability of education and training can engender a virtuous circle in which skills development fuels innovation, productivity increase and enterprise development, technological change and competitiveness that are needed to sustain and accelerate the creation of more and better jobs (ILO, 2008).

India lags far behind in imparting skill training as compared to other countries. Only 10 per cent of the total workforce in the country receives some kind of skill training (2 per cent with formal training and 8 per cent with informal training). Further, 80 per cent of the entrants into the workforce do not have the opportunity for skill training. The accelerated economic growth has increased the demand for skilled manpower that has highlighted the shortage of skilled manpower in the country. India is among the top countries in which employers are facing difficulty in filling up the jobs. The problem to fill up the available jobs is 48 per cent in India which is above the global standard of 34 per cent in 2012. The lack of available applicants, shortage of hard skills and shortage of suitable employability, including soft skills, is some of the key reasons in finding a suitable candidate for available

jobs in the country. According to the NSSO survey (2004–05), only ~6 per cent of the total workforce (459 million) is in the organised sector. The World Economic Forum indicates that only 25 per cent of the total Indian professionals are considered employable by the organised sector. The unorganised sector is not supported by any structured skill development and training system of acquiring or upgrading skills.

The skill formation takes place through informal channels such as family occupations, on-the-job training under master craftsmen with no linkages to formal education training and certification. In India, about 12 million people join the workforce each year comprising highly skilled (constitute a minuscule part), skilled, semi-skilled and un-skilled work force. The last category constitutes the majority of the population entering the workforce. However, the current skill capacity of the country is about four million. It is therefore required to enhance skilling and technical education capacity to about 15 million (considering that even sections of the existing workforce would have to trained). The formal education at the school level hardly cover skill development programme. Some sporadic attempts are visible at the secondary school level which is not sufficient to cover a gap between demand and supply. To make the education system more viable it is necessary to rethink of the existing pedagogy that has no linkage to skill development programme.

Process Product Paradigm

Education is a commodity. Neo-liberal forces and neo-conservative values reinforce the branded *process product paradigm*. The branded *process product paradigm* attempts to identify pedagogical behaviour or isolated teaching skills across cultures. Neoliberal-neoconservative policies promote its corporatisation, directly link it to market needs, evolve elite institutions for the upper class, allocate resources to educate the mass and replace the project of equality with the pursuit of efficiency. They impose standardised measures guided by the trio: excellence, success and discipline. They foster competition between institutions, and widen the educational gap between the dominant and the subjugated. At the same time, they convert teachers into executive instruments for school management. Neoliberal-neoconservative policies in education are not simply an instrument for exercising power on the basis of the regulatory principles and the dogmas of the free market. They contribute to social reproduction in favour of the dominant classes and reinforce inequality, while simultaneously enhancing the role of school as an apparatus of disciplinary power and control. In particular, conservative teaching practices, the fragmented knowledge, technocratic curricula, the educational process and ultimately,

the entire school culture are traversed and reconfigured by the market logic. Neoliberal-neoconservative policies attempt to shape the personality of students and teachers, making them susceptible to the propaganda of the dominant social classes. Education is reduced to a traded object, a process akin to banking, whereby knowledge is deposited into students.

Indigenous Pedagogy

To visualise a functional relationship between culture and pedagogy in the labour market it is desirable to ascertain pedagogy ingrained in secondary school education system. Reform efforts based on an ideal model of rationality assume that teachers would be receptive to scientific knowledge about pedagogy. They would directly apply it to their teaching. This model is *etic (universal)* by nature and known as *process product paradigm* (Gage and Needels, 1989). The lack of acknowledgement and appropriation of universal *best practices* of instruction by teachers led to indigenous pedagogical approach which is more contextual and local. This model is *emic (culture-bound)* and termed *cognitive process product* (Ross, et al., 1992). *Cognitive process product* contradicts teacher thinking research which is primarily located in the *Anglo-European* world and rarely deals with how teachers from different cultures especially developing countries, structure their actions in the classroom and the related frameworks and worldviews that underlie these actions. Teacher education within the large contemporary Indian socio-political context speaks dualism of *etic* and *emic* cultural frame. Within the dominant culture *(Hindu culture)* a good number of satellite cultures exist. The strain prevails in the education system when the neoliberal economic and social engineering approach to education adopts branded *process product* and largely ignores *emic* pedagogy *(culture-specific education).*

Two parallel strands of thought can be discerned within the current policy discourse: the neo-liberal frame of standardisation, teacher accountability and learning outcomes that regards education as an enterprise of efficient delivery; and the academic-led perspective that emphasises radical change in the preparation of teachers as agents of social transformation. The agenda is to create knowledge workers for a *service system* not an active citizenry. In this frame the pedagogic enterprise is to prepare human capital for the labour market and the central thrust of pedagogic policy is to supply labour forces in the market for development (Batra, 2012, p.5). Pedagogy, which includes the way in which teachers think and act, differs across the world. Clarke's (1995) review of teacher thinking literature identifies variation between teachers located in different parts of the world. Variations exist in the way teachers relate to their student; in the goals that teachers have for student learning; in the way

teachers view the curriculum and the textbook; in the way knowledge is communicated to student and in the way teachers interact with their students. Alexander's (2000) study of classroom from five countries (USA, UK, Russia, India and France) reflects variation in culture. India had little in common with classroom of USA and UK. Knowledge communicated in the classroom was generally procedural and most tasks given in classrooms were characterised by revision, generating ritual understanding. The study further revealed that teachers used their lifelong experiences to construct their thinking and action in the classroom. Pedagogy that teachers hold is retained not only during the professional training but also through being a child, student and parent in a particular culture. In this socialization process, a teacher thus becomes both recipients and sustainers of culturally-defined model of pedagogy. Teacher thinking embodies several categories of cultural ingredients (Clarke, 2001). Elbaz's work (1990) highlights the tacit nature of teachers' thinking. Tabachnick and Zeichner (1986) place coherence and consistency in teachers' thought and action. Despite the use of cultural frame in teaching a large framework of meaning or symbolic systems (Lisovskaya and Karpov, 1999) of teacher thought and action is left unexamined. Teacher thinking research, while recognising the cultural construct gives rise to the differences in what occurs in classrooms. It rarely includes analyses of how culture shapes teachers' thought and action. The location of teacher thinking and teaching in a larger meaning system and the implication of this embeddedness for reform in instruction have received limited attention. At least five cultural constructs representing the broader meaning system underlie pedagogical practices in classroom in India (Clarke, 2003, p. 29; Mendonca and Kanungo, 1990). These constructs bear a relationship with instructional teaching and also have an impact on performance management process. The first construct is high uncertainty avoidance where a person is unwilling to take risks and accepts organizational change which is manifested in an individual's reluctance to take personal initiatives outside of the prescribed roles. As a result, individuals tend to be dependent and to develop an external locus of control (a belief that the external agency controls them). The second construct-relatively low individualism implies that family concerns and group attainments take precedence over the work concerns and attainment of the individual. Unlike in the western cultures, work to the individual is not an act of self fulfillment or self-expression, but to primarily a means to maintain his family to provide for the well being of aged parents, spouse and children. High Power distance reflects a vertical position in the organisational hierarchy. This power distance

makes an undisputed structural relationship between teachers and students in terms of *sneh-shradha* (affection-deference). Teachers give knowledge and students receive it. Teachers being more knowledgeable than their counterpart show cognitive dominance in the classroom. Hence, the process of feeding to the students continues without any resistance. Low masculinity is the fourth construct of culture in developing countries. Teacher orientation centres on personalised relationship rather than performance. Affiliation need takes precedence over satisfaction derived from achieving job objectives. Job performance can set aside in order to discharge socially approved duties in the interpersonal contexts. And finally, context sensitive thinking has led to an emphasis on the context determined rather than principle-dominant behaviour among teachers in India. Context thinking always decides the present which is constantly changing. Teachers show their unpredictable behavior with regard to performing uniformly. Further, Clarke (2003) has added one more construct to culture known as collectively accumulated knowledge that can be attested and transferred. An individual's decisions and choices made are often constructed by the community rather than by individual experience and perception. In this process an individual constructing his or her knowledge becomes less significant (Derne, 1995; Kurtz, 1992; Kakar, 1979).

Teacher Thinking

Teachers thinking and teaching as culturally constituted captures the

Table: Impact of Culture on Performance Management Process

Cultural Construct	Manifested behavioural Impact
High uncertainty avoidance	• Foster dependency • Discourage personal initiative • Inculcate external locus of control
Low individualism	• Job as means • Group concerns task accomplishment
High power distance	• Hierarchical authority structure • Acceptance of new ideas solving and personal initiative
Low masculinity	• High affiliation needs hinders task and goals • Personalised relationship and work action plan
High context thinking	• Context dominant not followed org. standards • Low principle-dominant behaviour and guidelines

unconscious but constructive nature of pedagogy. On the other hand, pedagogy alludes to the ingrained and implicit dimensions of culture. Teachers' underlying knowledge and belief on instructional teaching reflect preparation of teachers and action research in ongoing professional development (Griffiths, 2000; Rearick and Feldman, 1999). Both teachers' preparation for classroom teaching and action research for professional development and shooting out contextual problems focus on cultural construct that shapes teachers' mind set towards teaching. Teacher thinking is directed towards either reform or resistance to change in pedagogy. Getting a cue from the cultural constructs discussed earlier two cultural entities-teachers' openness to regulation and the perception of task as duty enable teachers to appropriate the new method of pedagogy (Clarke, 2003). High uncertainty avoidance leads to discourage personal initiative on one hand but allows acceptance of regulation for new ideas. When combined with low individualism job become a means to continue in the system. These features seem conducive to reform in pedagogy. Further, two cultural entities– the hierarchical structure as a regulative social framework (high power distance) and knowledge as discovered and attested collectively (low) individualism are barriers to teachers' appropriateness of a meaningful activity (Clarke, 2003).

The question of whether teachers perceive the new method of teaching and learning as different from the traditional method and the acceptance of the new method as viable are important, indicating initial conditions for teachers' appropriation of the reform in instruction. Previous studies in India (Singh, 2009) illustrate that in-service training and other short-term development programmes have supported the pedagogical reform process. Acceptance of authority, openness to regulation and job as a means to work with the system and possibly the vertical social framework allows teachers to be receptive to reform programmes. The impact of both in-service and professional development right from DPEP to SSA is evident in the fairly consistent use of instructional-aids and activities in the classroom. Teachers who formerly used only the textbook for instruction are now employing a variety of objects and activities to help their students learn. In fact, the use of teaching-aids and activity appears to dominate teachers' thinking and action almost to the point that teachers feel understanding can only be successfully brought about by performing an activity or by looking at a chart or object.

The other aspect of cultural impact on instructional teaching cannot be denied that teachers' use of instructional-aids, activities and demonstration during instruction have not integrally transformed teaching

and learning in the classroom. They have skillfully integrated 'activity and joyful learning' into their traditional rote method of instruction where knowledge is transferred *en bloc* and memorized. Knowledge continues to be given in demonstration and activity and learning continues to be based on repetition. During instruction, though transformed with activity and demonstration, teachers remain primary players in the classroom. They define parameters for participation as portrayed especially in their interrogation and enabling of student learning (Clarke, 2003; Singh, 2009). Teachers tended to begin the class by asking the whole class questions and then moved on to directing questions to individual students. Their questions were usually how, when and what. Teachers' interactions with students rarely contained why questions. They responded to students' answers by saying whether it was correct or incorrect. Hardly any teacher justified his or her answer for why he had said something incorrect. Teachers kept asking questions implying the importance of teachers' authority and command over all valid knowledge. Teachers sometimes used experience as an introduction to the lesson. However, appropriate students' knowledge as an integral part of instruction was missing (Clarke. 2003; Singh, 2009). Similar incorporation was evident in Osborn et al.'s (1997) study of teachers' belief and goals in France *(universalistic)* and in England *(differential).* French teachers tended to incorporate the importance given to the individual child into their framework of universalism while English teachers stressed on specific problems of child. Cohen's (1990) study revealed that teachers skillfully blended practices with traditional methodology in California. The limited impact of new ideas about teaching and learning can be attributed to the influence of culture on the teacher trainers and the training modules. Trainers appeared to select dimensions of the reform that they understood and could fit easily into their own worldviews. Hierarchy in the society of Indian culture caused trainers to adopt knowledge dominance communication to their recipients. The notion of collective decision led to a restrictive view of the students (Alexander, 2000). "Teacher trainers guided teachers with the contents of pedagogy using traditional instructional methods. Teachers rarely asked questions, nor did they engage trainers in discussion or argument. Most importantly, teachers' experiences in the classroom were not validated and unpacked with reference to the new instructional methodology. In a similar way to teachers' limited perception of children as learners, teachers' capacities and experiences were not considered during training" (Clarke, 2003, p. 38).

In short, teachers were able to reflect more effectively on their attempts at reforming practice.

The reflective dimension got rarely nurtured and strengthened during visits by coordinators to the schools or during teachers' monthly visit to the Cluster Resource Centers (CRC). Though a good number of researches in the west on reflection and action research (Griffiths, 2000; Rearick and Feldman, 1999; Zeichner, 1994) have been documented, reflective practices in developing countries need to be addressed under *emic* frame. Teaching and learning embody particular institutional cultures. Teachers also embody dimensions of local micro-culture in addition to institutional culture. Development of education in different countries follows a linear or cyclical linear pattern or parallel cyclical. Whether cyclical or linear, educational reform that deals with teaching and learning, must take into consideration the cultural patterning of how teachers teach and students learn. How does culture within teacher education institutions– contiguous and remote give rise to patterns of engagement in the teaching-learning enterprise that shapes pedagogy?

Duality in Education

Two assumptions need to be examined in the process. First, to consider educational practice from the viewpoint of culture and not from the perspective of the knowledge domain that is being taught. Second, the premise that curriculum changes alone cannot have a significant impact if cultural, social and political expectations are not challenged and alternative envisioned. Why learning is perceived as acquisition of knowledge rather than as understanding and conceptual change? Teacher education in the light of culture and pedagogy wraps itself in dualities, thus getting circumscribed and resistant to meaningful interrogation. The duality of acceptance and resistance reflects mind set of teachers in the education system. It is further argued that dualities around the child and the curriculum, the teacher and the curriculum, pedagogy and the curriculum, theory and practice are reinforced and even extended by the very processes that seek to train teachers to transact curriculum. Designing teacher training modules need to consider how the cultural dimensions of teacher thinking and teaching relate to the intended objectives of the training and to revise training accordingly. Future efforts are expected to embody cultural constructs into pedagogy and action research programmes. Drawing inspiration and principles from Paulo Freire's liberation pedagogy and the perspectives of critical pedagogy (insights of the Marxist tradition) critical educators need to struggle to preserve the free and public character of education, and advance holistic and humanistic contents that combine theoretical and practical learning. They should endeavor to establish their connections with alternative educational networks; recognise the value of the experienced

world of students coming from the oppressed and exploited social classes, understand its historical and social relevance and make use of it in their teaching, which, in turn, must inextricably interweave theoretical knowledge, knowledge of practice and critical understanding. In the context of counter-hegemonic pedagogy, which they advocate, critical educators humanise the pedagogical relationship and expose the normative discourse of the school embedded in the culture of the school apparatus.

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