

RELATIONS AS ORGANIC ACADEMIC ACT FOR 21st CENTURY SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Numerous agitations and social unrest, divisive politics, communal aggression, majoritarian rule, minority attacks etc. show the ground social fabric of our nation. What is the educational takeaway – how should these social realities be dealt with – what is political in it – what are the policy implications...

Constitution of India promotes 'fraternity assuring the rights of the individual'. Educational practices need to bring ways and methods to carry this aspect of constitution into the building of the nation. Educational interventions should focus on socialisation, inclusiveness, collaboration and building of social skills. Gandhian Basic Education and its social vision encompass wonderful social pedagogy that is very much an interpretation of this part of the Preamble of the Indian Constitution; gives a practical clarity and action plan. The educational plan and practices in Basic Education uphold and respect the necessities of life by relations with self, nature and society.

Effective and fruitful association with context, society and nature are rarely seen in educational practices. There is disconnection; getting away from socio-cultural context and real life issues. As exclusiveness and division are spreading in the society, it is the duty of the educational institutions to respond to it, to build a shared common history and society, with shared values and cooperation.

Gandhi found things in its integrity. He stood for simple, spiritual and communal life where there is a circle of relations that are happening among people, also with Nature. 'Ultimately, it is the individual who is the unit. This does not exclude dependence on and willing help from neighbours or from the world... In this structure composed of innumerable villages, there will be ever-widening, never-ascending circles'. Gandhi promoted practices leading towards relations and mutual respect. So, he directed the school activities to be, 'as far as possible every activity will be conducted on the co-operative bases'. 'Unfortunately the system of education has no connection

with our surroundings' (Harijan, 23-5-'36).

This research paper looks into the relational aspect of pedagogy that can be well knit in to the educational understanding and practices. The educational scenario, content and teaching-learning engagements, should promote students' relations with him/herself and with the outside world. Relations help in the formation of ideas and practice of thinking. This paves way for social understanding which should lead towards social development. Teacher's facilitation and assessment should follow students' ideas and thinking in their relation with the nature, other, society and self to mark the growth trajectory of each individual student.

Key words: relations in education, Gandhi on education, higher order thinking skills, social development skills, sociology of education, Indian education, and social education.

Introduction

The Preamble of the Indian Constitution says, "To promote among them all, Fraternity assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and integrity of the Nation" (Legislative Department, 2019). Fraternity is the soul of the Constitution. Fraternity is a value; it is promoted by assuring the dignity of the individual. Fraternity is a right; each individual is to be respected and protected. We constitute India by assuring the dignity of the individual which is fraternity. This is very much Indian in the evolution of our constitution.

As we evaluate the social behaviours and skills trained in the schooling process, it is found, respect for the dignity of the human person and the collaborative behaviour development are at risk. Systems and patterns used to evaluate the socialisation and inclusive behaviours of students within learning centres are not promising. Political and sectarian interventions divide society. It also affects the educational landscape and relations. Many of the educational institutions become exclusive centres of certain communities and groups. Progressive and critical interactions and socialisation don't happen at these places of meaning making engagements. Hatred and gaps between members of communities are widening.

Gandhi has introduced Nai Talim (Basic/New Education) which respects the person's developmental needs and needs of the society/fraternity. This educational proposal was an alternative to the Colonial systems of education. It was radical in responding to the needs of the Indian society. Gandhi considered interactive engagements in education for holistic growth. Gandhian concept of education is not just self-learning and self-oriented academic practices; it is learning engagements in mutual respect and collaboration. Individual person learns in relations with peer and others, individuals interact with the needs and necessities of the society, students build relations with elders, learner lives in the natural environment and builds communion with the environment to converse and respond to the needs and necessities etc. All these are part of the curriculum. Both individual and fraternal identities get respected and promoted in Basic Education.

This research paper looks into the relational aspect of learning. It is part of the sociology of education. Relations in education are meant in this paper, as communications and interactions that happen between the learner and the outside world. Also the interactions that happen within classroom participants in their social and cultural identities. The outside world can be elders, peers, environment, society and culture.

Objectives of the Study

This Research enquiry is motivated to understand the relevance of relations in education and social development. It is necessary to identify the ways in which the higher order thinking skills manifest itself relevant in the educational scenario. Higher order thinking skills should be skills that are cognitively understood, and that can be practiced in the context and social setting. It helps to focus on areas significant to the current social, political and educational picture of India. The objectives of the study are formulated based on the daily life necessities and interactions that are part of the educational context and pedagogy.

- Understanding the cognitive nature and relevance of relations in education.

- Identifying the ways by which relations help in thinking and building knowledge.
- Looking for the relational aspect of pedagogy.
- Analysing the characteristics of relations in the context of knowledge communication.

Need of the Study

Current educational practises, teaching engagements and students' learning involvements show education as something technical. It displays certain perverseness in its relations. Education is practiced as a relation with books and considered an unaccompanied solo exercise. Teachers and organic resources are not utilised in its dynamism to dialogue within educational space and practices. A teacher is not approached by students as a person and an individual, the environment is not considered for relations and dialogue, and peer members seldom support and travel in search of meaning within the educational processes. Children need pencils and electronic gadgets and they don't relate and explore nature. "The text books deal, not with things the boys and the girls have always to deal within their home... He is never taught to have any pride in his surroundings.... At the end of his education he becomes estranged from his surroundings" (Gandhi, 1953, p.31).

Here, the individual becomes selfish and self-oriented in the practice of learning; fail to follow and respect the uniqueness of the organic resources of the surroundings. These insensitive relations and technical learning practices make knowledge, ideas distinct from the life of people and the environment.

Non-stop agitations that are happening (anti-CAA, Farmers' protest, Riots, attacks on minorities) and the communal disharmony that are growing at dangerous proportions, majoritarian ideologies etc. show the ground realities of social behaviours and relations among different communities and faiths. This social fabric and its development are part of education. New Education policy is very much distancing from discussion of the true and real social condition of the nation.

The society also faces many troubles; the educated become foreigners to the needs of the poor, attention towards the development of the rural is not seen, there are communal tensions mounting, and the gap between people and nature is widening. There is social unrest. The gaps among different communities are widening. All these lead to dangerous conflicts and persecutions ...The social and communal gaps created among various communities and faiths, also through the educational institutions, will further accelerate into grave dangers. It is an urgent necessity to enhance the quality of relations and socialisation to build unity and togetherness. It is the duty and responsibility of the educational institutions to act in this regard.

These practices and aberrations lead the researcher to look into the organic dynamism of relations in learning that Gandhiji has highlighted. Gandhi brought about a system where every learner is in active interaction and relation with others, nature and society. The means and methods of interactive and relational teaching-learning are relevant to the current practices to improve the quality of human beings and to maintain and attain the objectives of education.

Gandhi, in *Young India* (1929) said, when admitted to schools, it is not pens and pencils they need. But let them relate and explore nature... Let them be silent revolutionaries.

Gandhi's Experience

Gandhi's ideas about education have a story of his experiment with truth. It did not suddenly occur. These ideas have been gradually perfected through his interactions with South African experiences and Indian socio-political scenarios. He developed it to fit into the real challenges, complexities and needs of India. He had travelled a lot, he met leaders, he interacted with people, and he visited villages and had a strong connection with nature. All these relations helped Gandhi to see the reality and to reject what others saw as progress. "Modernization in the form of industrialization, machinery, parliamentary government, the growth of the British Empire and all the things that most people regarded as progress, Gandhi rejected" (Burke, 2000).

Gandhi's values and vision of education was not separate from the socio-political necessities. People in their journey towards independence require having relations with others, this relations and reactions should enhance people to think and grow. "What better book can there be than the book of humanity? What better education can there be than to go, day in and day out, to Harijan quarters..." (Gandhi, 1953, p.35). So, his views on education were useful for the struggle of independence; he encouraged people to think and use education for realisation and struggle.

Gandhi wanted to change the society using education as the real tool of change. He was sure, 'knowledge of letters' was not sufficient for proper education. He asked to relate to the nature and fellow beings; to cooperate and to have community living. He wanted education to deal with 3 Hs: head, hand and heart. This would connect the learner with the outside in different ways, which is an active integrated approach (Shanti Foundation for Peaceful Co-existence, 2000).

Relations Not Just An Act With The Other And Outside, But Also A Reflection And Confrontation Of The Self

Gandhian understanding of the world, nature, society and people should be very well incorporated into this basic idea of the other. Gandhi sees nothing isolated and separated. Everything is connected and part of everything. Here, relations cannot be seen as a varied and distinct process of social life. In the process of relations, engaging people confront ideas and think. And it promotes one's own reflections and communications. This idea of communion and reflection is helpful to deal with the issues of the society.

The process of reflection and confrontation is a meaning making process that helps the individual to become a conscious person who considers the circumstances and context of life. This is an educational interaction. It develops into mutual respect and inclusiveness; peaceful co-existence happens. Education meant, to Gandhi, the improvement of the character of the educated. The productive works that are necessary for school life would benefit the learners to carry out education as significant to the whole person –

mind, body and spirit. In the process of education, the other, relations, and reflections are knitted as means for cognitive and behavioural progress.

Relevance Of Relations In Learning

Learning is not just reading, understanding and by-hearting. It is meaning making in the context. Relational aspects help to connect with the other. Knowledge has to be understood in the context and in relation to the necessities of the individual, Nature and society. Education is not to become foreigners to the local culture and to migrate; it is to connect with one's own society and its needs. Education is to deal with the current scenario.

Environmental studies deducted from nature and filled into the text books as information will not make learners experiencing the issues of nature. Relations and communications in learning help to experience the reality and originality of knowledge. Dealing with information and analytical engagements should be enhanced through relations in education. It should help to advance in higher order thinking skills. In the educational engagement and relations, the real experience of society, the relations among communities, the financial exchanges, agriculture etc. will challenge the teaching-learning community with the relevant issues of the ground. Hidden curriculum should also be analysed (Apple, 2004).

Relations in education is not just a collection of information about events, materials, findings, communities and persons. Educational relationships should help to connect to the identity and individuality of what is studied. It should lead to protection and collaboration. This relation also helps in reflection, respecting each other and processing of information in the context of relations and connectedness, rather than exclusiveness.

Gandhi stood for introducing handicrafts in the school curriculum. It was a radical restructuring of the sociology of school knowledge by which the monopoly of specific castes, their knowledge of the production processes are shared, discussed, challenged within a classroom. These learning relations help in building well informed,

socially networked people with beneficial knowledge. Here the social hierarchy is broken to make communion. Negotiations happen among communities and within structures. The relations within the classroom and educational setting were for social transformation through the communication among communities, castes and groups.

The Basic Education proposal was inclusive to the extent of including the least of social strata as important and participating in the process of education and attainment of systematic knowledge. This ideally favours the integration of the society. Education that is leading towards integration through mutual relations and communication would empower the local communities politically strong to fight the injustice and evil practices.

How To Observe Relations In Learning?

Relations are not just one to one or interactions among pupils. The nature of relations in the educational context should look into the meanings, dialogues, arguments, interpretations, understanding, respect and meaning making process that happens in understanding and communications.

Pedagogy has to be focused to integrate relations and its varied aspects into the teaching practices. Teaching should be made effective by practices of relations. Many a time, teaching is solitary activity; learners are listeners. Teaching should happen in relations by sharing the ideas each one has.

Colonial mandate interfered with the activities of the teacher and there were prescribed text books. But Gandhi valued the living context and word of the teacher. Gandhi believed, a teacher who teaches from textbooks does not impart originality to his pupils. Gandhi envisaged having societies with people self-respecting, generous individuals, living in a cooperative community. Peers, village, family, nature and work are all significant in the 'classroom of learning'.

True education must correspond to the surrounding circumstances, otherwise it is not a healthy growth. Basic education links the

children, whether of cities or the villages, to all that is best and lasting in India. This link is to be built through educational involvement and thinking into the context of education. This is a relationship. Considering and understanding the ways of this connection is the ways of reading the relations of education.

Policy Implications

Collaboration and mutual respect are part of skills that are required for success in future life. In order to help students to gain the skills it is necessary to build critically approaching the socialisations and relations within schools. It is an academic journey of understanding the uniqueness of believes, cultures and history of each community. It is recognising and respecting diversity. It is a practice of collaboration. The meaning making process of knowledge institutes should happen by allowing every participant to share the characteristics of their culture and community within the academic deliberation platform. It should lead towards respecting the diversity and collaboration with the other. Classroom behaviours have to identify and foster this kind of pedagogical interventions.

- It is necessary to plan pedagogical practices that involve relations and communications in real and original context with the learner. Integrating interactions into pedagogy should be fastened.
- The curriculum should consider integrating the living and natural settings of society and life. The institutions and social practices, nature and resources should be made approachable in the process of education.
- Academic facilitation should provide occasions to interact with others, nature and larger society. It should follow each child. Current system is more relaying on books and non-organic sources for information. It has to be challenged to incorporate the presence of organic sources of knowledge and interaction. Gandhi has promoted local craftsmen to be part of the classroom where knowledge is not just ideas, but it is socially and anthropologically connected.

- Assessment system should consider students' ideas, thinking and behaviour. Cognitive engagement of learners while having relations with others, nature and society should be mapped to analyse and evaluate the nature and characteristics of the cognitive engagements of the learner.
- In Indian multicultural scenario, social development through education should happen in the practical and real interactions. It should be the interactions between ideas, communications, human one-to-one relations and community exchanges. Occasions and deliberations on this should be incorporated in the educational content and syllabus.

Conclusion

Practices and academic engagements that endanger the spirit of unity and collaboration need to be confronted with inclusive and respectful behaviours. Different social participants try to malign the social fabric by exploiting it for selfish goals. Social exclusiveness and hatred are imposed into the educational practices. As migration and multicultural settings are fast growing, living only within the specificities of a certain community should not be forced for all. It is mandatory to develop higher order skills of collaboration and mutual respect through educational interventions.

The relevance of 'Fraternity, ensuring the dignity of individual' in the educational context should be interpreted into teaching-learning practices, curriculum and educational involvement of the individual. This is essential for the proper existence and advancement of the Nation. Schools should work to enhance the qualities for unity; socialisation, relations, critical thinking, collaboration etc. are to be taught to the students. Content, pedagogy and school culture should inculcate and motivate the qualities of every community and develop improved practices of mutual respect and association.

Educational involvement should not be made exclusive lonely activity; it should have the relational approach. Pedagogy, content and evaluation should work with the relational aspect of knowledge. Building educational relations is not just about peer and friendship circles, or love and motivation; it is about reflection, building a connection with what is learned and collaborative progress for future professional growth with the learned knowledge. It is a relation that is built between the learner and knowledge within the mind and heart of the learner.

Gandhian vision on education helps in diligently interpreting the soul value of the Preamble of the Indian Constitution, which is Fraternity, in the Indian educational context. This understanding helps the educationalists, teachers and parents to envisage practical and future course of action in education for individual and national development and integration.

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