MULTIDISCIPLINARY EDUCATION: DISMANTALING THE BARRIERS

Author's Name: Ms. Sana Nahid[1], Mr. Deepak Gupta[2]

Affiliation: [1]Student of M.Ed., Deptt. of Education, University of Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, India

[2]Student of M.Ed., Deptt. of Education, University of Lucknow. University of Lucknow, Lucknow. Uttar Pradesh, India.

E-Mail: sananahid16@gmail.com

Abstract

Almost three years ago, the Government of India has decided to make some revolutionary changes in the running education system of the nation and for this they constituted a committee under the chairmanship of former ISRO Chief Kasturirangan in June 2017 and in July 2020 the government approved the recommendations made by the committee as National Education Policy - 2020. The prime aim of the policy is to upgrade the quality of Indian education system from primary level to the higher standards. To achieve this aim it has recommended many sweeping reforms in school education as well as in higher education. Among them, one of the most important is introducing the multidisciplinary education model that is based on removal of the barriers between the disciplines that allows students to choose subjects across the disciplines according to their interest and need. This paper is based on the qualitative assessment of multidisciplinary education model that highlights the concept of multidisciplinary education system along with its pros and cons in Indian perspectives. It discusses the everlasting benefits that the approach will bring forth once it's executed as well as the pitfalls that might emerge and create some problems in the ongoing process of teaching and learning. Conclusion of this paper welcomes the recommendation of education policy regarding the implication of multidisciplinary education model in Indian scenario and expects this development to be path-breaking that will bring a revolution in practice of imparting education.

Keywords: Global Competition, Holistic Development, Multidisciplinary Education, National Education Policy, Learning Goals.

INTRODUCTION

Every country has some beliefs and principles related to education that play an important role in the progress and qualitative development of education in a country and assures the accessibility, affordability of education along with accountability. These beliefs and principles are collectively known as education policy. India formulated its first National Education Policy in 1968 that laid emphasis on training of teachers, equalization of educational opportunities, development of languages and inculcation of sense of social responsibility among potential and responsible citizens. Due to shortage of funds and lack of program of action, India's first education policy was not very successful in execution and implementation. After the passage of 18 years, in 1986 India formulated its second Education Policy i.e. NEP-1986, in which many new and dynamic initiatives were taken to promote education such as Operation Blackboard, Introduction of Non-formal education systems, opening of NavodayaVidyalayas, establishment of District Institute of Education and Training (DIET) and many more. Since then, India has been following all these ideas proposed in NPE-1986 but in the era of science and technology where the things are changing rapidly, a nation cannot assure its place amidst global competitiveness

with a 34- year old educational policy. To ensure the socio-economic development of the country and to raise the living standard of the citizens, India has recently announced some drastic and innovative changes in Indian education system by introducing its third National Education Policy- 2020, approved by the Union Cabinet on July 29, 2020.Aiming to make India "A global knowledge superpower", the NEP-2020 has recommended changes in all the perspectives of education i.e. school education, higher education, teacher education, vocational and professional education etc. Bringing the uncovered age group of 3-6 years in the structure of school as the part of initial 5years of foundational stage, making the class 10 and 12 board exams competency based rather than memorization of facts and theories, emphasis on foundational literacy and numeracy, establishment of National Assessment Center – 'PARAKH', single regulatory body for higher education, emphasis on setting up National Research Foundation (NRF), National Education Technology Forum (NETF), Gender Inclusion Fund and Special Education Zones (SEZs) are few among its many path-breaking ideas. NEP- 2020 aims to bring more scientific approach in Indian education system and make it more inclusive, participatory and holistic.

Apart from its various brainstorming ideas, the most promising development is to dismantle the boundaries among different disciplines and to move towards multidisciplinary education system. Removal of the boundaries between science and humanities provides the students a flexibility to choose subjects according to their ability and interest. Learning has no boundaries but when we talk about Indian traditional education system the concept of 'learning' becomes limited to the curriculum, discipline and syllabus of the subject. It results into the aim of education getting compromised. NEP-2020 recommends a multidisciplinary approach for limitless learning to prepare India for global competitiveness and making its citizens capable of facing the modern compititative world. It has announced to open one large multidisciplinary college in every district of the country by 2030. Making Indian education system multidisciplinary will benefit the students in short term and will have far reaching effect. Multidisciplinary education system makes the difference in the life of students, helps them in getting jobs and better employment opportunities and in turn it will exert a great positive impact on the future of our country.

Multidisciplinary Education –A Change that Builds the Future
Our traditional way of learning follows a hardcore rigidity that separates a specific group of learning disciplines and categorises them into some streams such as humanities, arts, commerce, social sciences, and science etc. This fragmentation on the basis of streams prevents a learner to opt for subjects that do not come under the same stream for example if a student wants to study literature along with science and mathematics, or another wishes to learn language in combination with business management, he wouldn't be able to pursue but with multidisciplinary approach in education at the helm, a learner is free to choose the learning disciplines as per his need, area of interest and aspirations. The barriers of choosing subjects across the streams have been blown away extending full freedom and liberty to learners of choosing learning disciplines. This provision has made the teaching learning process more learners' centric and learners' friendly. This provision will certainly enable the learners to select the subjects freely and improve the level of their creativity, critical thinking, understanding and open new horizons to be explored. The top most universities and the world renowned educational institutions in the globe follow multidisciplinary approach in education.

Demolishing the boundaries among the learning disciplines and getting away with the rigidity and narrow mindedness in terms of subject selection will create an environment where multidisciplinary education flourishes and blossoms. This not only exposes the students to new and diverse disciplines, concepts, thoughts or perspectives, but also helps them to discover their area of interest, and to link their specialised areas of study to other domains.

Higher education is not only about gaining advanced knowledge of disciplines, but also learning more about yourself, discovering your interests, nurturing your passions, channeling your talents, challenging yourself and growing as a student, learner, individual, and member of society. Multidisciplinary education nurtures and fosters critical thinking, reasoning and problem-solving skills in the learners. It gives them a realistic perception of the world around that prepares them to face the real life challenges with a strong determination and capabilities.

Benefits of Multidisciplinary Education Model

Many of us believed that it is next to impossible to change the old methodologies and traditions prevalent in Indian scenario but NEP-2020, by recommending multidisciplinary education system, has taken an initiative to push the India towards breaking down the barriers of the old traditions and to enter into the new progressive world.

1. **Creates Conducive Environment for Healthy Learning**

Multidisciplinary approach in education creates a conducive environment for quality learning of the learners. Liberty to choose the learning disciplines that they are interested into study is outstanding and path-breaking. Freedom to study enhances the learner's interest, motivation and creativity. Multidisciplinary education contributes in building a conducive environment to healthy and quality learning.

2. **Inculcates Problem-Solving Skills in Learners**

Multidisciplinary approach in education provides full freedom and liberty to the learners to select the domains of learning considering their need and aspirations. Choosing the subjects belonging to different streams will develop the much needed skills such as management, adjustment, collaboration, commitment, right approach and adaptability in adverse circumstances. These skills are a must for an individual to grow personally and professionally. Multidisciplinary approach prepares the learners to face the upcoming challenges in future and builds the learners' personality. The approach inculcates problem-solving skills in the learners and prepares them for a better future.

3. **Democratic and Learner's Centric Approach**

Multidisciplinary approach in education is a democratic way of learning in approach and nature as well. It breaks the barriers of rigidity that prevent the learners from choosing the subjects of their interest and extends them their right to choose the domains of learning. This approach is based upon democratic principles and learner's autonomy. Multidisciplinary approach is one of the best approaches that ensures quality learning experience, effective practices and training to solve real-life problems.

4. **Transforms Our Young Learners into the Employable Youth Community**

The multidisciplinary approach in education increases the level of employability by developing the mandatory skills in the learners. It aims to inculcate the qualities and skills that are

important for their professional growth. It develops expertise to be well utilized for earning a decent and dignified livelihood. The beauty of multidisciplinary education lies in enabling the young learners and transforming them from job-seekers into job-providers.

5. Promotes Self Discipline and Builds Confidence

Multidisciplinary approach in education allows liberty to the learners and provides full autonomy. The learners are free to choose the combination of the learning disciplines they want to study. This approach is democratic and learner's centric hence choosing the subjects of their interest and aspirations builds self guidance, responsibility, self esteem, self confidence and makes them disciplined.

Pitfalls of Multidisciplinary Education Model

'There are always some thorns attached to the roses.' Undoubtedly, allowing students to study according to their choice and interest is a great idea that motivates them to do something new and innovative, but we cannot ignore the drawbacks of the multidisciplinary education that might pop up.

1. Students May Get Distracted from their Learning Goal

One of the most innovative opportunities multidisciplinary education provides to the students is to understand something from point of views of more thanone discipline but the students may feel totally lost if they fail to integrate all view points. Multidisciplinary education may distract the students from their learning goal as they have to deal with variety of contents, subjects and courses.

2. Students May Fall Short to Develop Expertise

'Jack of all trades, Master of none.' This idiomatic expression can be best explained by multidisciplinary education model where students will get the knowledge about variety of subjects and remain isolated from the core of the field. Some professions require the expertise and specialization in the subject but multidisciplinary education system fails at this point as students may not achieve in depth knowledge over the content of a particular learning discipline.

3. May Pose a Challenge to Attitude Development

The main objective of science teaching is to develop the scientific temperament among the students and teaching humanities aims towards the development of aesthetic sense, appreciation for beauty, along with inculcation of social and moral values in the learners. Multidisciplinary education model dismantles the boundary between science and humanities, may create hindrances in attitude development as it is expected from the students to be logical (scientific), rational and humane at the same time.

4. Less Scope for Positive Transfer of Learning

Concept of positive transfer of learning explains how learning in one subject helps the learning in another subject. When students learn mathematics along with physics, mathematics facilitates the learning of physics in a better way. This positive transfer of learning makes the learning process more effective, optimum and long lasting but when student leaves mathematics due to fear and opts for any other subject of humanities like history or geography along with physics, there will be less scope available for positive transfer of learning and also they may not get the in depth understanding of physics.

5. Demands Great Devotion from Students

Studying totally different subjects at one time requires a great deal of intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm from the students as they have to deal with diverse content. To gain the knowledge and to ensure the success, students have to put forth rigorous devotion and work hard with effective planning. But we are aware of the fact that in adolescence, every student is not mature enough to understand the importance of planning and devotion. It may generate inequality in educational achievements as students with greater cognitive abilities enjoy the success and average students may suffer.

CONCLUSION

Modern world is a world of versatility, to survive and to win the global competition Indian students must have versatility. Professions and occupations of 21stcentuay do not require mere subject knowledge instead they require ability to analyse and think critically, to communicate effectively, to deal with the problems efficiently, to adapt to the situation easily and to do innovations extensively. Studying subjects from two different disciplines provides students opportunity to face wide range of experiences they encounter during their education. These experiences help students in developing a wide range of competencies, which they require to get the better employment opportunities and for upliftment of their life standard.Of course, there are some draw backs of multidisciplinary education but no one can ignore its benefits as they are much more than its pitfalls. Multidisciplinary education system makes student capable to think across the disciplinary boundaries, consider view point of others and develop their evaluation skills so that they can compare the different ideas and can choose the best one as the solution of the problem. Environmental, social and economical problems of modern world cannot be solved by viewing and thinking from a single view point. Multidisciplinary education model helps the students in building connections between the ideas of different disciplines and that innovative cluster of thoughts plays a very important role in finding the solutions of real life problems. Multidisciplinary education model also brings the students towards holistic development of the personality. It exerts a great positive impact on the communication skills of the students as they have to use different written and verbal communication styles in different areas of the domain which inturn affects the cognitive, social, moral and emotional development and facilitate holistic development of the personality of students. Undoubtedly, the new National Education Policy of India has taken a remarkable step towards making the education system one of the most efficient education systems of the world.

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