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RESEARCH ARTICLE

INTERLINKAGES BETWEEN GEOGRAPHICAL COMPETENCIES AND VALUE EDUCATION: IMPLICATIONS IN THE CLASSROOMS

***Agnihotri Seema**

Amity Institute of Education, Amity University, Noida, U.P, India

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ABSTRACT

The current century can be easily marked by dichotomies where on the one hand humanity is experiencing dense connectivity through advance technology and on the other feeling isolated and alone at the individual level. Due to all these, our value system is on hold. Many disciplines are addressing these issues according to their expertise and nature but no discipline can help us better than the geography which over the two centuries has tried to understand the intricacies of the physical and human relation through different approaches in a scientific manner. Geographical competencies not only enable us to remove our spatial biases but also curtail down the existence of stereotypes, prejudices and biases, emanating from spatial ignorance. Further, it also holds the key to transform our perception about the resources which under the materialistic outlook seems to be infinite. With this background, this paper is attempting at the theoretical level with slight empirical evidences to inter relate geography with the value education. The main objective of this paper is to signify the geographical competencies as value laden software to promote the peaceful and harmonious world by minimizing the negativity prevailing while interacting with the spatial environment. In order to vindicate the objective, data was collected from the pre-service teachers to observe their geographical competencies regarding different places of the earth by abiding the norms of standard geographical competencies in mind. The paper concludes by evolving the framework where geographical competencies will be interlinked with the specific values, to be used in the classroom transaction to promote peaceful world

INTRODUCTION

The current century can be easily marked by dichotomies where on the one hand humanity is experiencing dense connectivity through advance technology and on the other feeling isolated and alone at the individual level. Due to all these, our value system is on hold. The very value system which has sustained the humanity through its thrust on cooperation, empathy, sympathy, love, affection, conservation and live life on some broader principles are receding and got replaced by the opposites. The situation is so much alarming that value education as a separate discipline has emerged in the last decades and seeking to prolong the survival of the humanity by providing training and orientation in a systematic manner. But despite this intervention, nothing concrete is apparent. With each passing day, the problems at the physical and individual level are accelerating with an unprecedented manner. Many disciplines are addressing these issues according to their expertise and nature but no discipline can help us better than the geography which over the two centuries has tried to understand the intricacies of the physical and human relation through different approaches in a scientific manner.

Geographical competencies not only enable us to remove our spatial biases but also curtail down the existence of stereotypes, prejudices and biases, emanating from spatial ignorance. Further, it also holds the key to transform our perception about the resources which under the materialistic outlook seems to be infinite.

METHODS

In order to prove the aforesaid problem, a small study was conducted in different phases in different pre-service teachers' institutions of North India. The subjects were asked to write down their first impression of the given countries (Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, U.K, Russia, Saudi Arabia, China, Brazil, Iraq, Malaysia, Denmark, Nigeria, South Africa, U.S.A,) once they hear their names. The countries were randomly selected from different continents of the world ranging from neighboring countries to the remotest countries of the earth. Around 100 pre-service teachers who were pursuing graduation in education were selected for the task. After collecting the data, it was divided into six categories namely geographical, Political, Socio-cultural, Economic, Miscellaneous and non- participant category. The words given by the subjects were categorized into the given categories. Their frequencies were counted followed by converting into percentage.

***Corresponding author: Agnihotri Seema,**
Amity Institute of Education, Amity University, Noida, U.P, India.

RESULTS

Interpretation and Analysis: While interpreting the data, it emerged that subject were carrying skewed images of the countries. For some countries, they are aware only about their geographical peculiarities like Maldives, Bangladesh and Saudi Arabia. On the other hand, for the countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan, the pre-service teachers have given their images revolving around the political aspect only.. In the case of Pakistan, it became more interesting to note that around 50% have shared the images related only with the political aspect of this country. It clearly means that knowledge about the other aspects of Pakistan is lacking amongst the participants. For China and U.K, the maximum coverage was around the economic aspect of the country where the subject have used the words like 'Developed', 'Rich', 'Exporter' etc. Nigeria, Denmark and Iran emerged as those countries where they were almost ignorant about any aspect of these countries.. This small study conducted among the pre-service teachers gravely highlighted the lack of geographical competencies as specified in the above lines. The lack of geographical competencies backed by inaccurate knowledge of the places might be taken as the main factors responsible for sustaining turmoil in the world in one way or the other. The skewed images and ignorance about the places boosts stereotypes and prejudices. Further this spatial ignorance also might be held responsible for weakening the concept of sustainable development also because hinders the prospect of developing insights about the spatial nature of different places of the Earth bounded by the limitations of locational grid .The preceding lines are giving us vivid picture about the significance of geographical competencies and their appropriate insertion in the study of Value Education. But prior proceeding further, it is better to know about geographical competencies and value education in brief.

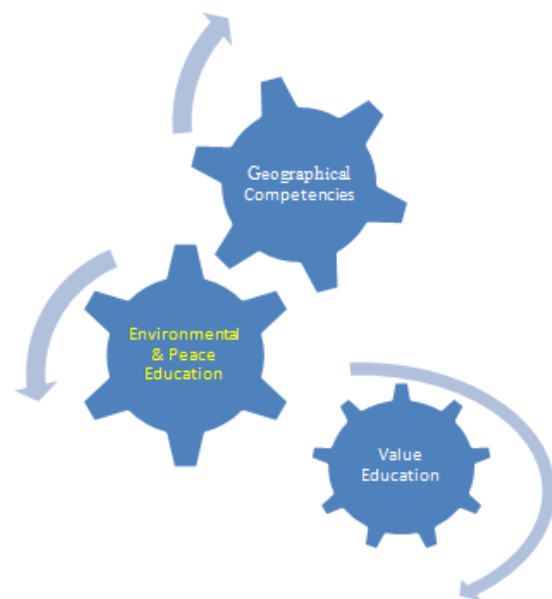
Geographical Competencies

- To develop in young people a knowledge and understanding of the place they live in, of other people and places, and of how people and places inter-relate and inter-connect
- To develop the skills needed to carry out geographical study (e.g. geographical enquiry, map work and fieldwork);
- To stimulate an interest in, and encourage an appreciation of the world around us; and
- To develop an informed concern for the world around us and an ability and willingness to take positive action, both locally and globally

What is Value Education?

“Value education is a process of education. This means that it is a process of inducing learning. Learning is not a passive process of absorption. It involves thinking, reflecting, questioning, feeling, doing, caring, experiencing. Value education, accordingly, is not a process of authoritarian indoctrination of dogmas, exhortation or propaganda. Nor is it the direct inculcation of a body of pre-determined 'right' values in the learners through didactic approaches. The goal is not to promote passive conformity and blind obedience to whatever values are passed on, but to encourage critical and reflective thinking, rational choice and responsible behaviour, respecting the autonomy of the learner.”

Quite often the question is asked: ‘What values are to be emphasized in education?’? Compendia of values are produced as claimants for curricular space. Identification of values and their classification has become an obsession and a great deal of time is spent on this aspect alone. As stated, value education is not to be viewed as authoritarian indoctrination in the 'right' values chosen a priori. The point to be noted is that the model of values to be adopted in public education should be derived from our national goals and aspirations, universal perceptions and ethical considerations bearing on character building, keeping in focus our commitment to a democratic, socialist and secular social order. The essence of value education is to enable children to be aware, to think and to reflect, to question and to criticize, to care and feel concern, to will and act on one's convictions on all that critically concern the welfare of the human kind. The value education literature classifies the values into several categories like social, political, economical, geographical etc. Within each category the priority has been set as per the required category of the object. Apart from these, values can also be seen as in terms of their relativeness and absolute nature. This study not only enables the researcher to gain glimpse about the poor status of geography but caused further to associate it with the degrading human values in the society also. The negligence of geography in the schools is responsible for creating rift between the degrading value system and its subsequent repercussion on the global earth in the form of depletion of resources, conflict, war, terrorism and acceleration of disasters. Geography has been seen to understand two dimensions of life i.e space and place (Walford 2000).



The ignorance about these two key elements creates hinder to be fully educated. ‘Thus Walford considers the gaining of world knowledge through geography as a kind of ‘coat-hook’ on which to hang other learning, where the combination of geographical knowledge and conceptual understanding can lead to an appreciation, explanation and analysis of the real world. From these foundations, other aspects of education can either be enhanced or uniquely provided by geography and geographers- for example, the development of the skills necessary to understand, interpret and use maps.” With this background, the paper is attempting at its core point to develop interlink age between geographical competencies and value education by including the combined aspirations of the peace as well as environmental studies.

Geographical competencies in the nutshell expect the familiarity with the spatial phenomena as per its location, distribution of resources and adaptability of the human being accordingly. Vicariously it is paving the way to be tolerant and empathetic towards the other due to the caricature attached with anybody related to his/her geographical specialty. But this latent motive of geography as a discipline has not been communicated successfully to the recipient due to lack of understanding of the discipline and the application of the related pedagogies. Similarly during the last few years the thrust on value education has increased but due to subjective interpretations and vested interest, the prime values required for the survival of the humanity are being kept aside. Therefore, value education has emerged as the upcoming subject in the school curriculum. In order to generate interest and to ensure healthy participation it is required to sort out its thrust and goals as per the contemporary needs. In this way pruning of geographical competencies and sorting out prime values can be done effectively if environmental and peace education remoulds its curriculum to achieve the target successfully.. If both environmental and peace education programme accommodate geographical content related with location and distribution followed by validating through value education, then the model of peaceful coexistence can be implemented without any hurdle. The reason for selecting environmental and peace education as interlinkages lie behind their similar motive as aspired by geography. For example peace education has been defined as

[Peace education is a] planned and guided learning that attempts to comprehend and reduce the multiple forms of violence (physical, structural, institutional and cultural) used as instruments for the advancement or maintenance of cultural, social or religious beliefs and practices or of political, economic or ideological institutions or practices” (Betty Reardon, 2000). Similarly the IUCN defines Environmental Education as ‘the process of recognizing values and clarifying concepts in order to develop skills and attitudes necessary to understand and appreciate the inter-relatedness among man, his culture, and his surroundings. Environmental education also entails practice in decision-making and self –formulation of a code of behavior about issues concerning environmental quality.’(IUCN,1970). The above mentioned definitions for both peace as well as for Environmental Education seek balanced and harmonious lifestyles which is not possible to have without geographical competencies. The preparation of the learners in this regard can ensure the concept of ‘peaceful co-existence’ in its literal sense.

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