

Literature the Transformative Learning for Value Based Education

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Abstract

The charm and fascination to the science stream has put a doubt on the necessity of humanitarian subjects. Even though our current education system provides humanitarian subjects like history and language in every stream of primary and secondary education the essence of learning these subjects is not always met. These subjects are considered as a medium to acquire proficiency in different languages to enhance memory by- hearing dates and events. Whereas, the true essence of humanitarian subjects is to enlarge the child's perspective of life, to enlighten thoughts and to have a more inclusive vision of future. This article is an enquiry to ascertain these values are being met in our learning system.

KEYWORDS: STEM subjects- science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

INTRODUCTION

Children spent their childhood years mostly in school. An average student spends five hours per day in school, which means a great sum of waking hour. They not only learn, but also unlearn there. The challenges they face, the habits they acquire, the philosophies they digest and the compassion they imbibe are all part of school education. It often turns as a place they live rather than learn and hence each student deserves attention and care. It is easy to mould when one is young and fresh in thoughts, when the society has not put irreversible concepts in mind and ideas in thoughts. Hence, school is the ground for their grounding. Every subject and hence should talk beyond the science of teaching and merits of grades. It should open their containers of humanity and kindle the joy of being human to children. A few subjects can in fact perform the task with ease only if they are viewed in the right sense and act.

Language subjects are not in the main stream often for the market demands a different work culture to serve the corporates only. Development in the thresholds of our households has turned us to demand less history and more science. Turning more and more to the direction of machines and services we are sometimes becoming robots, who work tirelessly and enjoys a rest when the owner switches us off. Yet we embrace the switch and the finger that turns it on. Humanitarian subjects on the other hand are trying to speak to us that we are not machines waiting for the creator to turn the switch on and that that we are alive and are on already. Both STEM subjects and humanitarian ones should share the ground for a better development, as Anne Jolly says in her article, *Education Teacher Week*, "A STEM program is just one part of a child's education, focusing on maths and science. But our children need a well-rounded, quality education that enables them to make informed decisions that will impact the world and the way they live".

KNOW WHAT AND WHY WE LEARN

The humanities are part of a web of related subjects, such as philosophy (aesthetics), critical thinking (judgements), history and literature (Anstead, 1993). These subjects connect us to the line of our existence; to what we were and what we

should be. History is not just his story, rather it speaks the battles we encountered as humans to reach where we live at present and what have we lost and gained in the journey. It gives us direction to think the possible consequences of many of our actions. These philosophies help us to “make connections to why things are the way they are, learning to think critically and develop a solid foundation for innovation” (Jones, 2017). Speaking of the humanitarian subjects the few ones that we still haven’t lost focus in schools are language and history. These subjects constitute stories, poems, and essays written in their respective languages. But are language subjects taught just to improve our language only and aren’t we teaching these subjects thinking about the language aspect only, are questions of concern. After learning the story students have a list of vocabularies to learn, questions to answer, names to remember and may be a few language activities, letter writing formats and the basic formats of language. With the tightly scheduled period and timely exam bells the teachers would often find it barely enough to complete the exercises and the workbooks to do a quick test paper to check whether they remember the fiction and its language elements. The child secures an average and passes on. If this is the current running practical state of our humanitarian subject learning, the worth is merely half the count.

Why should anyone learn fiction and the spontaneous overflows a person experiences in his solitary confinement? This question is often unaddressed. Language subjects through literature can widen our walls of containment. It’s not there just to recite and learn it is to understand, digest and reflect. It’s not just the language to be reflected through discourses that the new system demands but it should reflect the inner being of the child, the cooked-up emotions should be spilt and dealt with, the shaded queries on life should be lighted up and the confusions and fears should be touched. Studying humanities shall expand the view of children, it helps to connect different disciplines through language and culture. It often can function as a bridge between the individual and his global context. Humanities concern the growth of the emotional and social well being of students as well. Moreover, in a modern workplace that demands a sound thought and strong vision, your language skills, thinking capabilities and cultural, social inclusiveness also can defy the professional qualities.

THE VALUE SHOULD BE VALUED

Roberts Frost’s “The Road not Taken” taught me that choosing a different path is fine, it will just give me a different soil to thrive rather than the rhyming scheme it carried. The anecdote “Maternity” in Kerala Reader for class IXth should teach me to accept and understand cultural, ethnic and racial differences to give away my prejudices that I may have collected from my circumstances. If our children never realize this theory and practice of learning then the entire thing would reduce to half only. We need a change, a change in the pattern and system where the emotional and social development of children is valued more than academic scores and the growth should lean to becoming more and more human rather than more and more machine like.

LITERATURE IS A SUBJECT NOT A MEDIUM FOR LANGUAGE

In the part two of SCERT text book for class VIIIth English there is a chapter titled the “Merchant of Venice” by Shakespeare. If we go through the text, we can see questions and activities that ensure the learning of the story only, but no question to check whether the child has understood the essence of the story or has gained any

value, ideology or philosophy from it. The problem of the situation is that often literature is reduced as a medium for language learning, the essence of literature and hence is forgotten. The purpose of learning fiction should not be to learn the story only but to understand what the story intends to convey to the human race. The immense possibility of analysing different philosophies, stepping into different shoes, empathising with the less fortunate and caring for the humanity is neglected and least viewed. We must consider the fact that the essence of humanitarian subjects is not solely to be proficient in a language or to remember the dates and names of tremulous wars that shaped the country but to gain an insight to life and people, to understand the aftermath of disasters that we can sometimes cause not to happen. For instance, when we learn world wars in history, if the purpose is just to retain the names and years and events that happened then why should we learn them, these are readily available at our finger's disposal with technology. But when the focus shifts to the pathetic plight of people during the world wars, their ways of survival, their conditions of being are taught to young minds the generation would focus on constructing a better world for all rather than constructing big walls for own home. A few exceptions are there for sure but most of the time learning reduced to mugging up only.

ESSENCE NOT PAGES

Another side of the story is the time limit. Humanitarian subjects cannot be taught in its right essence if time becomes a constraint. One chapter of a humanitarian subject may or may not require more time than that of a science subject in school. Different from the science ones the idea should be conveyed and reproduced. The points and ideologies the children understood should be reflected, they need to think the philosophy the chapter intends to convey, chew it and digest it and then they should be able to reproduce it or construct something more fruitful from the same. Hence, the curriculum must focus on the quality rather than the quantity of learning with respect to these subjects. More periods or fewer pages might do the change.

CONCLUSION

We often consider school education as a system to achieve better academic growth and job prospects. The role it plays in the all-round development of a learner is not as much considered as that of the results. Contrary to the past few years, today both parents and educators do think about giving better atmosphere in schools through activities, games and creative programmes to ensure proper mental development. Yet the objective way of teaching remains often stagnant, especially in the case of humanitarian subjects.

The time has come for us to review the way we deal with humanitarian subjects. Schools are the places where children learn their basic thought that they carry forward. It should not be only the calculations and theories but rather it should contain in large volume the essence of being human and the values associated, “the purpose of education has always been to everyone, in essence, the same – to give the young, the things they need in order to develop in an orderly, sequential way into members of society”. (Roosevelt, 2017).

The current curriculum though provides space for humanitarian subjects the essence of learning it is not conveyed in the fullest sense. We can change the attitude of children if they get constantly exposed to human values and empathy. Essential for this to happen two things must be considered, one is the need of teaching these subjects. Teachers should focus on the need of teaching these subjects rather than the need of scoring by by-hearting. Literature is a great way to imbibe better thoughts in young minds and hence it should be used so rather than as a medium to learn

language. The problem of time is an issue as well. To teach the subject in depth and spirit more time is needed, or the pages and quantity should be reduced. If it is not possible least, we should understand that humanities should not be neglected to just a subject that scores better. It is rather the easiest way to nurture young minds.

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