UNESCO’s Four Pillars of Education, Implications for Schools

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Introduction

If education is to succeed in its onerous task, it must be organized around the four fundamental types of learning which throughout a person's life, will in a way be the pillars of knowledge: Learning to Know – that is acquiring the instruments of understanding, Learning to Do – so as to act creatively in one's environment, Learning to Live Together – so as to participate and cooperate with other people in all human activities; Learning to Be – an essential progression which proceeds from the previous three culminating in the development of every child's personality so that he/she is able to act with greater autonomy, judgment and personal responsibility.

The school curriculum in the light of future challenges of the twenty first Century is expected to address these issues seriously. How far have our schools been able to equip themselves in the light of the guidelines and issues highlighted by various National and International reports on Education like Unesco’s Delor's Report, National Policy on Education, Curriculum frameworks drawn up by NCERT etc.? How far have the schools made provision in their curriculum with respect to these Four Pillars? Are the different education Boards weaving their curriculum and scope of syllabus around these Four Pillars? Are the guidelines recommended by this seminal document being implemented in the school practices? These are some of the questions which motivated the researcher to undertake this research work.

In a nutshell, the concept of learning throughout life, personality building and community living emerge as the keys to success in the 21st Century.
Education has to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing world and at the same time reflect on some of the major issues facing the world today. It will have to make the pupils aware of the concept of the world as a family of nations, nurture respect for the distinct culture of each nation and develop an understanding of the interdependence of nations in different spheres.

All the above questions and issues were addressed in the present research entitled as "Education for Learning to Know, Learning to Do, Learning to Live Together, Learning to Be – implications for secondary schools."

**Objectives of the Study**

The specific objectives determined for the present research were as follows:

1. To study the main education policies at the International and National Level in the light of
   (a) Education for learning to know
   (b) Education for learning to do
   (c) Education for learning to live together
   (d) Education for learning to be

2. To analyze the existing programs of the schools in the light of
   (a) Education for learning to know
   (b) Education for learning to do
   (c) Education for learning to live together
   (d) Education for learning to be

3. To study the opinion of the Teachers/Educational Administrator and Educational planners with regards to the provisions, practices and prospects related to the above four pillars of education.
4. To give suggestions for further modifications of school programme for effective realization of education related to the four pillars

**Methods, Tools and Techniques**

The UNESCO's report of the Delor's Commission on Education has been in the background of this work of research. The major features of this report with specific emphasis on the four pillars of education formed the base of this research. Besides policy documents like National Policy of Education 86, NCF, 2005 were also analyzed in the light of education of four pillars. Since the present study was intended to study the existing status of the Four Pillars in the light of the various policy documents and school curriculum, the investigator chose the survey method of research. This study was limited to the six different types of schools located in Udaipur city and adjoins area. Stratified sampling procedure was used under which 60 teacher and 6 principals were selected through purposive sampling. Details are given in the Table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Principal</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Kendriya Vidyalay</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rajasthan Board of Secondary Education</td>
<td>Govt. School</td>
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<td>Grant in aid School</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
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The researcher used self made opinionnaire as interview schedule for studying the opinion of teachers and principals. Besides, detailed analysis of important Education Policy documents school calendar and curriculum was also done in the light of Education of four pillars. The data was analyzed by employing both simple quantitative as well as qualitative techniques.

**Findings of the Research Study**

The major findings of the study were as follows. Almost all the Policy documents were of the view that the present school curriculum lays undue emphasis on bookish learning and memorization without comprehension. The books and syllabi place undue stress on children to become aggressively competitive and exhibit precocity. Although memory is regarded important, it has to be associative memory and not just a mechanical process...

The documents analyzed in this research, were strongly of the view that the curriculum content at present was far removed from the real world with a wide gap between classroom teaching and it’s connect with day to day life and experience. Obsolete, redundant and overlapping content in the curriculum had to be weeded out and upgraded to keep pace with the current knowledge driven society. Thus, if education has to succeed in its tasks, curriculum in its core should be redesigned and restructured around the four pillars of learning.

Learning had to imbibe in the students a mind set of pursuing lifelong education and at the same time equip them with competencies and skills needed for employment opportunities in the future. There is a wide gap between the world of work and the world of study since our system of education alienates the students from real life situations thus
making them unfit for gainful employment. The classroom had to replicate the community outside and adopt a holistic approach catering to the intellectual, moral, cultural and physical dimensions of the personality.

A paradigm shift in the approach to education is required in order to make it productive and socially relevant. Delors report considers education as an agent of positive change, which needs to nurture and build an attitude of open mindedness and flexibility in the students so that they can effortlessly adapt to the demands of a cut throat competitive world. It states that learning needs to be interactive, experiential, and participatory and be based on emotion and experience; only then will it cater to the all rounded development of the ‘complete being’. The documents studied define the aim and objective of education to be the dissemination of academic excellence and not ‘academic adequacy’. The individual is envisaged as a global citizen by all Policy documents studied.

Creating a shift in the mind sets of the students from the micro to the macro, from individual to collective goals is thus imperative. The programmes in the schools require laying more stress on cooperative living, sense of mutual understanding and creating awareness about the interdependence of all humans in the present global scenario which is becoming increasingly multicultural.

Analysis of the calendar of activities of Schools inferred that all the schools had their own calendar of activities for the complete year encompassing both curricular and co-curricular activities pertaining to the
overall development of the learners. However it appeared that appropriate weight age had not been given to all the components of the Four Pillars of learning with more emphasis being given to sports and cultural activities, while components like work ethics, motivational seminars, life skill development etc. are not mentioned in the annual school schedules.

The calendars also revealed that most of the schools had a comprehensive programme of sports and games, intra and interschool competitions, club activities, cultural activities, literary activities, outdoor visits and field trips. However, activities which impart respect for work and dignity of labour also need to include in the school calendar.

Encouraging students to become curious and lifelong learners was felt to be one of the most pressing needs of the present school scenario according to the school Principals. According to them adequate opportunities are given to students to unleash their creativity and develop their imagination and thinking ability through specifically designed programmes. Life skill and value education programmes have also been devised by the schools to develop in the students traits like respect, integrity, honesty, truthfulness, independent and critical thinking.

The common goal which all schools were striving to achieve was to nurture students to become dynamic and enterprising in action, innovative in their approach, good problem solvers and excellent team players in life.

In the opinion of the teachers, most of the schools were over emphasizing rote learning and bookish knowledge rather than behavioral
skills like effective communication, right attitudes, language proficiency etc.

The teachers suggested that the components related to ‘Learning to Live Together’ were not adequately reflected in the school curriculum. There is a need to instill in students a spirit of mutual coordination and peer solidarity, Inculcate qualities of mutual respect, understanding, empathy, sharing and caring, and collaborative skills in students. The components of the Pillar ‘Learning to Be’ need to be given prime importance in schools and new types of skills like interpersonal, emotional and attitudinal skills need to be imbibed in the students to augment their personality.

The teachers felt that there was a need to give greater emphasis to conducting community service and honing vocational skills in schools

Suggestions

On the basis of the study conducted the following suggestions may be made:

- There needs to be a shift in the focus of the current discipline – based bookish learning and rote method to concept learning whereby students can construct their own knowledge and learn by association.
- According to the UNESCO (2004) “in the changing educational scenario, curriculum has to be a dynamic process of actual learning acquisition and inquiry of the unknown through teacher – learner interaction and cooperation” Thus the curriculum should have a linkage between education and the real world in its content so that students can relate with it. The present disconnect and the yawning
gap between real life and education needs to be bridged and learning needs to extend beyond the classroom and school.

- Curriculum has to be made more dynamic and vibrant and include more contemporary issues and contexts, weeding out obsolete and outdated topics and content. It needs to have an integrated and interdisciplinary approach and flavor.

Implications

**Implications for curriculum planners and Policy Makers**

- The present curriculum needs to be revised and reviewed so as to become more relevant and related to the present global scenario. A more balanced approach is required when planning the activities in the school programme so that aspects like creativity, imagination and talent are brought to the fore and nurtured.
- The curriculum planners may also take into consideration the gaps at the prescribed level and the transactional level so that education can become more effective and meaningful.
- Curriculum planners will be able to redesign the secondary school curriculum by incorporating the important elements as reflected in the four pillars of education. They may also get guidelines for planning orientation programmes for teachers for enabling them to handle school programmes for realizing the objectives of education as reflected in the Four Pillars of the learning.

**Implications for Teachers and Teacher educator**

- Teachers will be able to understand their changing role in the light of the Four Pillars, giving them a new direction and vision. Also, this
will help them in identifying appropriate teaching learning strategies for realizing the goals related to the Four Pillars of Education.

- Appropriate transactional strategies in relation to the Four Pillars of Education need to be identified and used by the teachers so that the desired objectives are achieved.

- The insight gained by the teachers will enable them to focus upon the components related to the Four Pillars of Education while transacting the curriculum in the school.

- The research finding will be useful for teacher educators and teachers from the point of view of incorporating the strategies related to education of Four Pillars so that the future teachers are sensitized and equipped for addressing these issues.

- Teacher Training programmes need to be reorganized in the light of Education for four pillars. NCT and NCERT may also take appropriate steps to revamp the secondary school teacher education Programme, Training programmes need to be developed to empower and enrich the professional competencies and skills of teachers.

Reference:

Websites:
1. WWW.independent.co.uk/the-four-pillars-of-firstrate-education-1166851.html
2. www.flipkart.com/educational+research