

Anita Rao Mysore

We tend to assume that, by virtue of being born or raised in a multicultural and multi-lingual country like India, we are automatically multicultural educators; whether in school or in higher education. While the corporate sector or students at business schools go through diversity training, we assume that the training is needed for them only to interact with "international" customers.

The call for inclusive education cannot be divorced from the call for inclusive multicultural education. The culture of the class is made up of diverse groups such as races, socio-economic classes, genders, regions, languages, religions, castes, abilities, and affective dimensions. When an educator meets their learners for the first time, do they notice a learner beyond their physical appearance (not to mention one's personal judgements and labels)? Do the personal judgements about the student's appearance get unconsciously carried over to classroom transactions and assessments? The unconscious bias and socialisation received from family, education, media, and the like, make several educators products of condition rather than thought and action.

Like there are only a

few born teachers, and most are trained, educators also need to be trained or prepared to become culturally responsive. They must reflect upon the kinds of learners they facilitate, validate, and empower; with whom they are patient and persistent; with what kinds of learners, they are impatient and intolerant, whom they dictate, and control; and, what kinds of learners they easily like, find hard to like, feel sorry for, feel threatened by, identify with, gravitate toward, feel inadeq-

uate around, and don't even notice. This can apply to educators at all levels.

Blurring lines

While most of us like to think that we believe in the maxim, *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, we must indeed pause to think whether we practise this. Our personal beliefs can sneak into the professional sphere, our workspaces and classrooms. For example, each student in the class – despite their socio-economic level – needs to be included in

learning. Some educators may possess subtle preferences towards parents and students from the upper socio-economic classes or hold unconscious biases in favour of fair-skinned persons, whether Indians or foreigners. Also, educators need more than being sensitised about the genders. Often girls are asked to choose "caring" and serving courses and occupations, even though their interests lie elsewhere.

The "standard" native language used in PK-12 textbooks, different from

the spoken language, can keep several marginalised groups uncomfortable in the classroom. In certain higher educational institutions, where students come from all over India, seating preferences tend to be regional. In professional settings, when people from various languages are present, communicating with a set of persons or learners in one's native language can be noticed.

With exclusive schools for learners with special needs still around and special education re-

source rooms still existing, inclusive education is still elusive. The effects of the pandemic on the emotional well-being of Generation Z and Generation Alpha is of concern. Yet, how many educators hold traditional views on "mental health?" To this list of biases, we can add ageism as well.

The "inclusive" knowledge part of the curriculum is worth examining. Who is represented in the textbooks and who is not, and how one is represented in the textbooks is another topic for discussion. This is not confined to the teaching of literature or history. The discussion spans the Sciences and Maths too, begging for the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems, alongside Western Science. The subject matter of multicultural education extends to pedagogical and assessment strategies that will create inclusion for several diverse groups in the classroom.

Until we deliberately teach multicultural education, we cannot have truly inclusive classes, teaching for equity. Educators must be transformed to become culturally responsive through professional development workshops and teacher education programmes on diversity, equity, and inclusion (#dei).

The writer is Associate Professor, School of Education, Christ Deemed-to-be University, Bengaluru.

Classrooms of connection

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