The Importance of Metanarratives in International and Comparative Education

Reflections from the field Kolkata, India

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Abstract

In South Asia, the intersection of culture, class, gender, and access to education addresses the unique interpretations of disability related to the social environment that often plays a deterministic role in influencing inclusive education. It draws our critical attention to the fact that it is imperative to understand the nuanced way in which disability studies is constructed in South Asia including identifying alternative constructed realities (Rao & Kalyanpur, 2015). It is time to promote a different discourse and bring about a shift in thinking from ‘some’ and ‘most’ to everybody which is an intrinsic goal of inclusive education. In this study, we draw references from the social model of disability studies underpinning that culture plays an influential role. Cultures are partial explanations of a world where dualities such as domination/subordination, superiority/inferiority, normality/abnormality are relentlessly reinforced and legitimized (Shakespeare, 2006). The externally imposed restrictions constructed by society presents insurmountable challenges to those subjected to poverty, societal degradation, gender discrimination and economic deprivation. Children become the most vulnerable population in these circumstances. According to the United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime in South Asia with India occupying a central position is the fastest-growing and second-largest region for human trafficking in the world, after East Asia. The lack of accurate figures makes it difficult to put a number of people being trafficked within South Asia, but activists voice that there are probably thousands of women and children are trafficked within India and as well as from its poorer neighbors Nepal and Bangladesh. Most of them are sold as bonded laborers working in middle class homes or into marriage, in small shops and hotels or confined to brothels where they are repeatedly raped. In India alone, government data shows that 73,549 children went missing in 2014, of which 31,711 were untraceable compared to 90,654 missing in 2011, of which 34,406 were not found (Bhalla, 2016). However, the actual figure could be much higher as most of these cases are unreported.

The overall aim of the study is to examine the pivotal role of inclusive education that is transforming the lives of children living in the red light district of Kalighat, Kolkata. The narratives of key stakeholders underpinned global concerns and issues that often influence accessibility towards creating an inclusive education system. The glocal problems merge with the global dilemma in the realisation of inclusive education.

Keywords: intersection, class, culture, poverty, inclusive education, social justice

References

