Discourse of education in India: Toward Critique

Dr. Kumar Anand¹.

¹ Assistant professor, Department of Sociology, School of Humanities, Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar (Punjab).

This paper starts with NCERT focuses group reports, 2005, which grapples with question of values and articulate a stance that moves beyond the utilitarianism. This paper teases out some aspects of education that seems to be ambiguously placed upon in report, namely how the reconciliation, if it is face-off, could be made between societal demands that are on shoulder of young child and her own calling. In the sense, these well perceived arguments have paid far too little attention of second kind of argument that is education, if widely taken, presents intrinsic worthiness that might not get correspond to instrumentality. Thus, the paradoxical situation could be contained by taking education to be life of example in the context specificity rather sermonizing children with value education in pedagogy as usual practices has been so far in India; that, essentially, demands departure from what has become common tendency of education system(or even report) doesn’t allow to grant.

Keywords: critical autonomy, Institutionalized education, values, and economy.

1. Introduction

India represents, as earlier indicated, peculiar kind of educational history in which modern education was introduced by British colony that does invite the conflicting aim, purpose and nature of education. Yet, an institution of modern society, namely educational institution, as a centre of learning, contains similarity of function across the globe but it differs that established in the line of British’s framework. The education system of India were first established by the British to prepare Indians to be part of administration, that is to say solely concerned with utilitarian imperative- and were devoid of religious affiliation.

The beginning of twenty first century has been marked by changing nature and contours of market as well as state in which there seems to be constant attack on education as under performance. It has been passionately argued that education has been failing on the ground of democratic ethos and captured by the narrowness of market- in precise term education equating with employment- who lack the values that are essential to be human (Verma,2007 Pathak,2004).On the other hand, Some scholar like Raja(2008) does argue that education in India does not leverage with skills even at the level of universities(or college).Thus it could be inferred that even education that is guise of market does not increase skill formation thereby the chances of entering into job market is relatively weak(FICCI,2006). However, such argumentation is driven by deeply flaw presumption about the education wherein the core is attached to the single aim that is itself dependent upon other, namely significance of education by person herself, amid of multiple version of knowledge that has been one of the most revolutionised advancement through scientific spirit. Only the growing different disciplines over last century would reveal something startling change that has taken place. But the criticism is more pertinent from another direction that is whether education can be taken as sole responsible for what happens afterword in the term of collecting evidence in its effect that might (or might not) be significantly linked. For instance, Pathak (2007) laments by reflecting on education in India as

“all these skills which we value today-say, the skill of a doctors, an engineer, a scientist, a manager or historian-have to be operationalized and practices in concrete socio-historical settings, these skills may prove to be useless, or even utterly disastrous. For examples, how often we have skilled scientists allowing himself
to hijacked by the military establishment to further accelerate the growth of mass destruction; ...a doctor with his specialized skills taking active part in the unholy act of female infanticide!"(p.23).

Indeed it seems that education and skills it imparts are devoid of deeper moral and ethical urge of human being. Although, Pathak (2007) broader proposition is that education ought be more human and should have morally appropriate given the danger modern society faces like celebration of sheer individuality, Education as commodities to be sold so on and so forth. That raised very fundamental question about the present days education that has been institutionalized and having own procedure and norms, ritual of examination and grading entirely based upon curriculum, and promptly claimed to be connected with employment. Unearth is the question of width and depth of education that helps in going beyond utilitarianism.

However, before coming to the some crucial aspect of education, let order of paper is laid down. This paper hinges upon contextualizing the major argument that are presented in ‘Aim of Education’-2005. As institutionalized form of education spread over century across globe, is it feasible to envisage and workout educational discourse where imagination of drawing is equally treated as writing a essays on, say, India given the fact that quality is evaluated and monitored periodically. Hence, the order of paper is charted in following manner; it starts with some rivalry views about morality in educational context and then would discusses about education as preparation for division of labour in modern society in bureaucratic society in which education is itself mechanized and bureaucratize. To more perplex, does the penetration of market- its offset is competition, commoditification and individualism- leave room for such practices. Is education of modern format doesn’t promote these things as pictures are often painted by Aim of Education.

2.  Idealist view of education and its criticism

In somewhat nuanced ways national focus group (2006) on ‘Aim of Education’ points outs similar contradiction-one is aim of having scientific temper and other is having embracing all inclusive humanity. As this report goes on saying

“The lack of clarity about the idea of an individual and humanity as such is bound to create difficulties for us in thinking about the aims of education in our times. Thus, for instance, we have to find a way out of a seeming contradiction such as: We must encourage children to cultivate the ‘scientific temper’ (that is, the tendency to follow their reason beyond the dictates of culture, tradition, and community) and also teach them the unassailable values of humanity” (p.4).

It is not difficult to see the problem but what is most surprising is that the report leaves the probable solution in the hand of ‘We’. It is hard to find out that who are those ‘we’ (planner, pedagogical practitioners or someone else). Nevertheless, it also shows that the tension of philosophy of education and practice of education. Most interestingly, these contradictory values(or take the single values) have rarely been in practices of educational institution in India since Independence- given the fact that different sets of educational institutions is accessible to different children almost in hierarchical ways with diverse pedagogical practices. The indication is sufficient for here as it would be located in coming discussion differently.

Here it is not entirely true that the difficulty is confined to our understanding of society in single direction as this seemingly contradictory aim of modern society has, however, been in serious scrutiny since enlightenment and society has been tended to move from one to other; For instance, Goleman (2005) explaining modern individuality from Buber, an Austrian philosopher, that there is a difference between I-it and I-you as conversation in which former is connected casually and taken other as object to be used whereas later is communion and deeply emphatic.

As commission on ‘aim of education’(2006) note the major problem of education is that education has come to be perceived more and more as a means of ensuring the future ‘well-being’ of students (i.e., their place in society and their economic status which guarantees this place)—this has led to a neglect of children’s present abilities and difficulties. Which could deprive them of a quality of life much richer in content than that the
education system prepares them for. Given the age is of utilitarianism, armed with consequentialist morality, it is not peculiar to perceive their difficulty in pinning down how the reconciliation can be made between education as end itself and education as means to achieve something else. As report (2006) goes on

‘the means and the end must form a continuum such that, as it were, the means and the end make a wholesome unity. The distinction between the means and the end in this context, if there is one at all, is not the same as the distinction where the means is merely instrumental in producing the end, e.g., playing football as a means of keeping physically fit. Morality is not external to a virtuous life in the way football is external to physical fitness. (The position taken here is distinct from the utilitarian position epitomized in the dictum ‘honesty is the best policy’.) In the moral sphere, the process is integral to the product and the product is inalienable from the process. Here, there can be no such thing as finding the most efficient means of achieving a predetermined goal (as in, say, matters of management), for the means in the pursuit of a moral end is not replaceable’.

The closer look at this passage reveals that deontological position is taken to argue in favour of education as end in itself; somehow even Gandhi would have agreed to such proposition as he propounded upon means itself is end, but he would have gone further and asked from which comportment of educational institution it is articulated. However, it does miss something very crucial in the proposition that modern drive for education is, historically, not so much to do with eagerness to acquire wisdom (or cultivated man in weberian sense)

If this reality is accepted, one could argue that what could be aim of education in democratic society and which ways it could be at best achieved. As it is widely held that individual autonomy with critical rationality would be aim of education recognizing the fact the educational institution and pedagogy has both tendency of being subjective element (as teacher-student relation is certainly based on some subjective relation) as well as objective element\(^2\) (judgment of expert what should be taught and evaluation); even though it is highly contested terrain between what student might think of worth of itself and curriculum and pedagogues would think of. Education in its modern form is oriented toward universality and objectivity even though in its practise it carries significant amount of subjective elements in which the very relation between teacher-pupil are located. However, the modern technologies have made education to be virtual activity in which conventional understanding of learning is somehow missing and there is no face to face interaction as it is often the case of formal education. Such dramatic expansion can be easily found in the on-line learning.

3. Conclusion

As NCERT focus group try to paint a picture of aim of education in which there is compatibility between individual, humanity and nation, but this have left with many questions. Although it must be admitted that these are noble ideas and its nobleness essentially resides in taking education to be fulfilling in every sphere. Nevertheless, it has to be reminded by the fact that since Kant to all major thinkers some ways or other had not been at ease to take all encompassing in symmetry. Also, the very core of debate has entered on the specificity of increasing instrumental rationality within three in single schema and there bound to be profound perplexity; foremost, whom the priority ought to be paid in three of them; or if they are in symmetry how the differences in experiences of schooling would be taken in consideration to carry all three. This trinity aim of education seems to grossly simplify the inner tension between them or most probably the weight of these would not allow human being to breathe on the path of realizing herself. To take one general example of

\(^2\) For instance, the proliferation of on-line learning is dramatic expansion of objectified learning through which skills are acquired. Thus, one may consider the case of on-line learning say about, agriculture, in which one objectively learns something and might be perfectly okay if she does not have intimate (knowledge acquires through doing and relating with plantation, or plough). In fact, stehrer (1994/2004) ‘The Texture Of Knowledge Society’ points out that the modern learning and knowledge take place in objectified manner, e.g. books and so on (p.117). Hence, the conventional thinking about teaching-learning where fair amount of subjective dimension of pedagogy could be found is seriously missing at first instance.
schools in India, there has been sheer practices of the corporeal punishment in which many times child succumb to death. This illustration bring to closer to the question from which vantage point and location does one see these aims of education and how could it realizes if there are any practicality, who the ‘we’ are in the educational discourses and who would take to imitative on what first and foremost.

References


