

Education as an instrument of social change

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Abstract

The role of education as an agent or instrument of social change and social development is widely recognized in present times. Social change may take place – when humans need change when the existing social system or network of social institutions fails to meet the existing human needs and when new materials suggest better ways of meeting human needs. Education has been chiefly instrumental in preparing the way for the development of science and technology. Education has brought about phenomenal changes in every aspect of men's life. Education is a process which brings about changes in the behaviour of society. It is a process which enables every individual to effectively participate in the activities of society and to make positive contribution to the progress of society. Education is seen as a major factor in society, but that it is largely allocated a conservative role, since its main function is in the socialization of the young and the maintenance of the social order. During times of rapid social change, such as the second half of the 20th century, the role of education in the service of the nation is emphasized. When things are going well, especially economically, more experimentation with education is supported, and more idealistic goals are pursued, such as equity of educational opportunity. It is in the ideological and moral spheres, however, that education is most clearly expected to play a leading role. Social change takes place as a response to many types of changes that take place in the social and non-social environment. Education can initiate social changes by bringing about a change in outlook it may cause social changes.

KEYWORDS: role of education, social change, socialization, human needs, social order

Introduction

Education is one of the most important means to improve personal endowments, build capabilities, overcome constraints and in the process, enlarge available set of opportunities and choices for a sustained and attitude of man. It can bring about a change in the pattern of social relationships and thereby improvement in well-being. The process of education and attainments thereof has an impact on all aspects of life. It is a critical invasive instrument for bringing about social, economic and political inclusion of people. Education can be used as a tool to empower the individual. Through child centered learning, students are able to see their own role in transformation. Societal change comes from the collective transformation of the individuals within that society. Francis J. Brown remarks that Education is a process which brings about changes in the behaviour of society. It is a process which enables every individual to effectively participate in the activities of society and to make positive contribution to the progress of society.

Education in the Present era

Education today is oriented to promoting values of an urban, competitive consumer society. Through the existing education system, India has produced in the last five decades number of scientists, professionals and technocrats who have excelled in their fields and made a mark at the national and international levels. The top scientists, doctors, engineers, researchers, professors, etc. not those who were educated abroad, but had got their entire education in India.

It is not a question of the extent to which education provides or fails to provide employment to people, but it is a question of education, providing modern technology for the benefit of the poor and deprived people. It is a question of the quality of education. Instead of merely viewing the growing population as a liability, we should change the population into an asset and strength along with trying to control its growth. This can be done only by education and human development. The three main deficiencies in the present education system may be described as follows:

- (1) The present education does not generate or fortify the type of knowledge that is relevant to our changed society.
- (2) Technology associated with a particular body of knowledge is inappropriate to our stage of development in terms of its employment potential or investment demands.
- (3) Education has failed to provide a value framework which may prepare committed politicians, bureaucrats, technocrats, and professionals on whom our nation can depend for sophisticated system of support services to be useful in taking the country to the highest level.

Though education does not guarantee high status and higher positions to all people, yet without education, an individual is unlikely to achieve social mobility. Gore avers that education plays a role in equalizing opportunities in three ways.

- (1) By making it possible for all those who have the desire to be educated and the ability to benefit by that facility;
- (2) By developing a content of education which will promote the development of a scientific and objective outlook.
- (3) By creating a social environment of mutual tolerance based on religion, language, caste, class, etc. for providing equal opportunities of social mobility to all individuals in society, and for providing equal opportunity to secure good education is crucial.

Education and Modernization

Modernization is a process of socio-cultural transformation. It is a thorough going process of change involving values, norms, institutions and structures. Political dimensions of modernization involves creation of a modern nation state and the development of key institutions –political parties, bureaucratic structures, legislative bodies and a system of elections based on universal franchise and secret ballot. Cultural modernization involves adherence to nationalistic ideology, belief in equality, freedom and humanism, a rational and scientific outlook. Economic modernization involves industrialization accompanied with monetization of economy, increasing division of labour, use of management techniques and improved technology and the expansion of service sector. Social modernization involves universalistic values, achievement motivation, increasing mobility both social and geographic increasing literacy and urbanization and the decline of traditional authority. The secular and scientific education act as an important means of modernization. It helps in the diffusion of modern values of equality, freedom and humanism. The modern school system can inculcate achievement motivation. These values can form the basis of new relations in the society and growth of rationality can enable the development of administrative system. Diffusion of the values of equality, freedom and humanism can lay the foundations of a democratic political system. The spread of modern education in the second half of the 19th century led to the emergence of modern political elite in India who provided leadership in the freedom struggle. The diffusion of scientific and technical knowledge by modern educational institutions can help in the creation of skilled manpower to play the occupational roles demanded by the industrial economy. Other values like individualism and universalistic ethics etc. can also be inculcated through education. Thus education can be an important means of modernization. The importance of education can be

realized from the fact that all modernizing societies tend to emphasize on universalization of education and the modernized societies have already attained it.

Education and Culture

Education encompasses teaching and learning specific skills and also something less tangible but more profound: the imparting of knowledge good judgement and wisdom. Durkheim sees education as the socialization of the younger generation. It is a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting, which he could not have arrived at spontaneously. Education has as one of its fundamental goals the imparting of culture from generation to generation. Culture is a growing whole. There can be no break in the continuity of culture. The cultural elements are passed on through the agents like family, school and other associations. All societies maintain themselves through their culture. The culture here refers to a set of beliefs, skills, art, literature, philosophy, religion and music etc. which must be learned. This social heritage must be transmitted through social organizations. Education has this function of cultural transmission in all societies.

Nature of Social Change and Its Impact on Education

Change in Wider Social Environment: - The change may be in the total social environment surrounding the society. It may be due to some internal forces or external forces arising in other societies. Social phenomena occurring in neighbouring or distant societies have very widespread impact now. English, for example, is now become a world language for dissemination of knowledge and consequently India feels the necessity to emphasise the need for retaining and strengthening the knowledge of English in order to continue to be benefited by new knowledge developing all over the world.

Change In Social Goals, Objectives And Values: - The social change may be in social goals, objectives and values. The changes may be in social values that directly affect the content of social roles and social interaction. For example, the adoption of equality as a value may ultimately lead to compulsory and free primary education, to expansion of primary educational facilities to all children up to the age of fourteen and to providing financial and other aid to backward classes for enabling them to avail of the expanded educational facilities.

Institutional Social Changes: - The social change may be „institutional“ which includes change in more definite structures such as form of organization, roles and role content. The adoption of democracy and adult franchise in India has made training in responsible and responsive citizenship absolutely necessary for the electorate. This may ultimately affect the content and the method of teaching in educational institutions as well as the teacher-taught relationships.

Changes in Knowledge and Technology:-The changes may be in the existing knowledge and technology. Space exploration, industrialization, agricultural and domestic technology, development of transportation, and mass media of communication, new understanding of the human organism, individual and social behaviour are some of the scientific and technological areas in which knowledge has expanded a great deal and will still continue to expand. Thus, the development of knowledge and technology may bring changes in syllabus, teaching and evaluating methods and role of teacher.

Change in Size and Composition of Population: - The change may be in the size and composition of population. The explosion of population with differential rates of increase in different regions, communities, socio-economic groups and age groups may necessitate many changes in the educational system. Students with different levels of

intelligence and educational aspirations, belonging to different socio-economic classes, different castes and religious groups have begun to come in the same type of educational institution and are huddled in same classroom. All these changes also necessitate change in the educational system.

Thus, different types of social changes occurring in society make the existing educational system dysfunctional to a certain extent and in course of time pressurize to bring changes in it.

Social Change and Lags in Indian Educational System

In response to social change educational system must also change. The change may be in consonance with the social change and meet the new goals and demands of various social groups adequately. Otherwise a lag is created between the goals and demands of the society and the goals and demands of the educational system. A number of such lags have occurred in the Indian educational system after independence and in many ways perform a dysfunctional role in Indian society. This has been accepted by the Kothari Commission very clearly. It reported: "As is well known, the existing system of education is largely unrelated to life and there is a wide gulf between its content and purposes and the concerns of national development. Instead of promoting social and national integration and making an active effort to promote national consciousness, several features of the educational system promote divisive tendencies; caste loyalties are encouraged in a number of private educational institutions; the rich and poor are segregated, the former attending the better type of private schools which charge fees while the latter are forced, out of circumstances, to attend free government or local authority .

Modernisation Of Education In India: Problems the modernization of education in India becomes a special problem in several ways. India has adopted the path of economic development within the framework of a free society and therefore it cannot adopt authoritarian means to modernize education. The centre has to get the willing consent of the states and each state has to get the willing consent of its elected representatives in their legislative assemblies before introducing any major change in the allocation of resources to education or in the educational system itself. Secondly, India has no colonies to depend on for resources to meet the expenditure on modernizing its educational system. It has to depend on its own self and find out its own resources which are bound to be very limited. But, it can avail assistance from advanced countries and international agencies like UNESCO which have developed programmes to assist educational development in developing countries. However, the fact that this aid will also be limited has to be taken into account. Thirdly, India has lots of diversities. Its economy is mixed, including modern factories along with traditional agriculture. Its tribal, rural and urban groups show very wide contrasts in their physical and social conditions of living. The different levels of development at which the various sections of society stand differentiate their educational needs and complicate the problem of educational development. The aims, methods and organization of education which may be functional for one group may be dysfunctional for the other. Lastly, in western societies, economic modernization preceded political and social modernization. Consequently, in their educational thinking, they could lay more emphasis on the needs of the individual than on the economic needs of the country. But India, being largely agricultural and poor has to think of the economic needs of the country before it thinks of the needs of individuals. It cannot initially afford to waste its resources on educational programmes that are not productive in economic terms. Thus the Indian education system needs a complete overhaul through proper legislation and its effective implementation. Legislations should be made taking into account the regional diversities of each state. The masses should be made aware of the new developments.

Conclusion

Education is the most significant means of social change as it has become one of the influential instruments of social change in India. It has led to the mobilization of people's aspirations development and change. Thus, in modern complex national societies, education can neither be regarded as a controlling force conserving cultural heritage, nor could it be viewed as an agent of social change. It can only be regarded as a cooperative force in bringing about

social changes decided by the forces possessing more pervasive power in society. Thus the Indian education system needs a complete overhaul through proper legislation and its effective implementation. Legislations should be made taking into account the regional diversities of each state. The masses should be made aware of the new developments.

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