

Role Of Education In 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 today. 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 is seen as a major vector 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 nonsocial environment. Education can initiate social changes by bringing about a change in outlook and attitude of man. It can bring about a change in the pattern of social relationships and thereby it may cause social changes.

KEYWORDS: role of education, social change

Introduction

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. It has become secular today. It is an independent institution now. 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. Francis J. Brown remarks that Education is a process which brings about changes in the behavior 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 Period

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 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.

How is education related to equality of opportunity can be perceived on the basis of the findings of one empirical study conducted in eight states in 1967 on the social background of students (age, sex, caste, father's occupation, father's education, etc.) studying at various levels high school, college and professional colleges. This study presented two posse-group, propositions:

- (1) Education is priority with those in the white-collar group, and children in this group use educational facilities more than other groups, and children in this group use educational facilities more than other groups;
- (2) Education is differentially available to those who do not belong to white-collar group (see Gore,1994:33). If the first proposition is correct, it probably underlines the irrelevance of education to non-white-collar groups in our society.

Education, Social Change And Modernisation :-

Education has been accepted as one major agency of socialization, and teachers and educational institutions as socializing agents. In describing education as an instrument of social change, three things are important: the agents of change, the content of change, and the social background of those who are sought to be changed, i.e. students. Educational institutions under the control of different cultural groups reflect the values of those groups which support and control education. In this situation, teachers Impart specific values, aspirations and to the children.

Social reformers, who were educated emphasized values like removal of caste restrictions, equality of women, doing away with social evil social customs and practices, voice in the governance of the country, establishing democratic institutions and so on. They, thus, wanted to teach liberal philosophy through education for changing society. In other words they regarded education as a flame or light of knowledge which dispelled the darkness of ignorance.

The use of education for spreading the values of modernization came to be emphasized from the 1960s and 1970s onwards. Highly productive economies, distributive justice, people's participation in decision-making bodies, adoption of scientific technology in industry, agriculture and other occupations and professions were accepted as goals for modernizing the Indian society. And these goals were to be achieved through liberal education. Thus, modernization was not accepted as a philosophy or a movement based on rational values system but as a process that was to be confined only to economic field but was to be achieved in social, political, cultural and religious fields too. Education was sought to be utilized as channel for the spread of modernity

According to the sociological perspective, education does not arise in response of the individual needs of the individual, but it arises out of the needs of the society of which the individual is a member¹. The educational system of any society is related to its total social system. It is a sub system performing certain functions for the on-going social system. The goals and needs of the total social system get reflected in the functions it lays down for educational system and the form in which it structures it to fulfill those functions.

In a static society, the main function of the educational system is to transmit the cultural heritage to the new generations. But in a changing society, these keep on changing from generation to generation and the educational system in such a society must not only transmit the cultural heritage, but also aid in preparing the young for adjustment to any changes in them that may have occurred or are likely to occur in future. In contemporary societies, "The proportion of change that is either planned or issues from the secondary consequences of deliberate innovations is much higher than in former times." This is more so in societies that has newly become independent and are in a developing stage. Consequently, in such modern complex societies, education is called upon to perform an additional function of becoming

Thus, the relationship between educational system and society is mutual; sometimes the society influences changes in educational system and at other times the educational system influences changes in the society.

Education of Women :-

The National Policy on Education, 1986 also laid emphasis on education for attaining women's equality which will foster the development of new values. The strategies proposed are: encouraging educational institutions to take up active programmes to further women's development removal of women's illiteracy, removing obstacles inhibiting their access to elementary education, and pursuing policy of non-discrimination to eliminate sex stereotyping in vocational, technical and professional courses.

Education of SCs, STs. And OBCs

Education is directly related to the development of an individual and the community. It is the most important single factor for economic development as well as social emancipation. For the weaker sections of society, education has a special

significance because for a number of centuries, their illiteracy and social backwardness have been used for their harassment, humiliation and economic exploitation.

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 neighboring or distant societies have very widespread impact now. English, for example, is now became a world language for dissemination of knowledge and consequently India feels the necessity to emphasis 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 behavior 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 dys functional 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 has become one of the influential instruments of social change in India. It has led to the mobilization of people's aspirations for 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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