

Education and Social Reconstruction

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Abstract

The term 'education' is utilized in the three senses like knowledge, subject and a process. When we talk of education, we talk about education as a process. Education as a process will develop both the individual and the society to higher and higher position of glory and cultural eminence. Education is a conscious efforts and, as such, it has definite aims and objectives. Social and economic issues serve as determinants of educational aims and objectives. In the process of social reconstruction, education plays a key role. The philosophy of social reconstruction emphasizes on the social questions and quest to create a better society as the aims of education. This paper aims at understanding the role of education in the process of social reconstruction in various phase of life and in different segment of social conditions.

Keywords: Education, Social reconstruction, social change, Economic development, Social Value, Modernization.

1. Introduction

About 500 years before Christ, a Chinese Philosopher, Kuan Tzu (551-479 B.C), very rightly declared, 'if you plan for a year, plant a seed. If for ten years plant a tree, if for two hundred years, teach the people.' When you sow a seed once, you will reap a single harvest, when you teach people, you will reap a hundred harvests. We, looking at the world, can claim that the nations and cultures committed to education has made greater strides in both intellectual and social growth. Education plays a vital role in shaping our lives in society. It is an established fact that education is a catalyst of social reconstruction. In today's world, natural resources or military strength do not determine the space of nation's progress. Education does. Education is about raising the confidence of an individual to think a worthy dream and to translate that dream to reality by high performance action. It is about opening up one's mind to accept new ideas, to evaluate them and to use them for progress. The concept of Education and system of Indian education will be discussed in brief.

2. Concept of Education

Education is a dynamic concept. It's meaning changes from time to time. It is interpreted by different person from their own background and ideas. Philosophers and thinkers from Yajnavalkya (about 600 BC) to Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948 AD) in the East and Socrates (469-399 BC) to Dewey (1859-1952) in the West have defined education in accordance with their philosophy of life. There are four important reasons for different interpretations of education.

2.1. Complex nature of human personality.

2.2. Complex nature of environment.

2.3. Different philosophies of life.

2.4. Different educational theories and practices.

In Sanskrit the word “Shiksha” has been derived from the Sanskrit verbal root ‘Shas’ which means ‘to discipline’, ‘to teach’, ‘to instruct’. The term ‘Vidya’ (education) is also derived from the Sanskrit verbal root ‘Vid’ which means ‘to know’. Thus the word ‘Vidya’ really means knowledge.

The Vedic rishis held education as means of salvation. “Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye’ was the maxim of the Vedas and Upanishads. According to Kanada, an ancient Indian Philosopher, education means development of contentment and to Yajnavalkya, an ancient Indian law-giver, education means character building and practical utility. An important principle of education according to the Indian philosophy is selfless devotion or nishkama bhakti. Even Sankaracharya regarded education as a means of self-realization. The keynote of education is “Know thyself” (Tatwamasi) or self-realization according to Indian culture. “The following noble sentiments of best wishes for all the world expressed in vedic scriptures in the ancient Indian life and culture have influenced its education as well through the ages:

“Let all be happy and healthy
Let all be courteous and gentle and
Let everybody free the pinch of sorrow”.

(Sarve bhavantu sukhinah, Sarve santu niramaya,
Sarvebhadrani pashyahtu, Ma kaschit dukibhag bhavet).

When the quest of education is mainly spiritual reconstruction, then traditional Indian context of education will work. But this paper aims at the nature of education as it is defined by social philosophers of the East and of the West as well, because here we are dealing with education and social reconstruction.

In accordance with the plan followed in this paper we are concerned with education in its social aspect. For this we need a clear idea about education from western point of view as well.

The term “Education” comes from Latin “educere “which literally means to ‘bring up’ and is connected with the verb ‘educere’ which means to ‘bring forth’.

The Latin author Varro writing of the person who in his time played a vital part in the life of the young said : ‘Educit obstetrix, educat nutrix, Institut pedagogus, docet magister which verbally means: “The midwife brings forth, the nurse brings up, the tutor trains, and the master teaches : Hence the genuine idea of education in western culture is not merely to lead the people in the acquisition of knowledge and experience, but also the principally, to bring him up or develop in him those habits and attitudes with which he may successfully face the future. Nigerian educationist Aderemi Olutola (1981) describes education as “a process of socialization, of change and innovation, of preservation and dissemination of social values and of the total development of an individual from birth to death”. In every society the educational system is one of the most effective agencies of societal control, either in its static or in its dynamic aspect. Without committing ourselves to B. Russell’s over

statement that “education is, as a rule, the strongest force on the side of what exists against fundamental change.” It must be admitted that education is largely concerned with the transmission of the social and cultural heritage to the new generations, and in this sense it is a conservative agency. Kothari report on Education and National Development aptly declares, education is one of the main instruments of change especially when it is organized into a national system. It is evident that education has a great bearing on social structure, mode of living, thought and behavior patterns and personality structure of individuals. Mahatma Gandhi rightly proclaimed, ‘Education must be of a new type for the sake of creation of a New World.

For human reforms, we have to re-think over the system of education – not only in India, but all the world over.

In the literature of *prakrit* languages, we get a beautiful indication:

“Education ought to achieve two objectives”

- 1) To solve the problem of livelihood.
- 2) To attain *sadgati*, i.e., to develop the values of life or values promoting good conduct.”

In the absence of the above-said values, it is not possible to awaken the ‘good’ in human nature, to construct a healthy society.”

3. Concept of Social Reconstruction

The idea of social reconstruction is closely related with the idea of social change and social progress. Thoughts must emerge within a social framework and at a given time. That is, thoughts come from people, people who live at a particular time, in a particular place, and under specific circumstances. Any effort to separate thought from person or theory from thinker is fallacious and bound to prove trivial. Since all social theories were thought by social thinkers, we need to understand the social and cultural environment within which they did their thinking to come to a greater appreciation for the thoughts themselves.

The theory of social reconstruction is a firm belief that it is not only possible but imperative for the rational community to apply itself to the altering of faulty social situations and conditions and such altering is based up-on confidence in the ability of the thinking community to understand the reasons why social problems exists.

Thus it is obvious from the above facts that there are two major aspects of social reconstruction.

3.1. The confidence in the ability of thinking community to understands the reasons why social problems exist.

3.2. It is not only possible but imperative for the rational community to apply itself to the altering of faulty social situation and conditions.

4. Process of Social Reconstruction

Professor Ogburn classifies culture into two great components – material culture and non –material culture. Since innovations may appear in either of these components, we have four casual probabilities.

- 4.1. Mechanical inventions may cause social inventions.
- 4.2. Mechanical inventions may cause other mechanical inventions.
- 4.3 Social inventions may cause social inventions.
- 4.4. Social inventions may cause mechanical inventions.

It is clear that social conditions bring about mechanical inventions and also that mechanical inventions cause changes in social conditions. But it is desirable to know which sequence is more common.

A Comprehensive generalization on this point has not been established. But at the present time, in the modern world, it appears easier to find illustrations of technology causing changes in special condition. Hence we are inclined to favour the hypothesis of the greater importance of the sequence of technology causing social changes. In this way technological inventions became the primary factor in explaining cultural change.

To avoid this kind of stigma in the field of cultural change, reconstruction of society is needed. And to reconstruct the society conscious effort is essential. Conscious effort is only possible when a conscious being is involved. Undoubtedly, this conscious being is an innovator, a thinker, a social philosopher, a philosopher of education.

5. Education system of India

The Indian education system has undergone a tremendous change. It is continued to be considered as a social service rather than a trade service. The education system of India passed through three main eras viz.

- 5.1. *Gurukul* Era
- 5.2. British Era and
- 5.3. Independence Era

5.1. Gurukul Era: In ancient India, education was imparted in *gurukuls* (teacher's home) where students were sent to the teachers after attaining of an age of five years. The pupils stayed there for fourteen years continuously and learnt through the method of verbal chanting. During this stay at *Gurukula* the pupils rendered all services to the teachers (Guru) and the teachers in turn, provided education to the pupils, prepared them to face the real world. In *Gurukuls*, the main objective was to provide overall personality development (cognitive, physical, social and emotional) of the pupils. This concept of education still prevails in India.

5.2. British Era: The above situation continued in India for thousands of years till British entered India. During this period emphasis was on training a class of people qualified by their intelligence morality for employment in the administration of India. Efforts were made to make natives of the country thoroughly good English scholars. The promotion of European literature and science amongst the people of India was emphasized. The whole education system was tailored to suit the needs of the British regime. Making the system more or less elitist in nature.

5.3. Independence Era: The education system especially the higher education system was not in a good shape at the time of independence. Since then higher education in India is undergoing a transformation to meet the needs of the developing country. Our higher education system has grown enormously in the last half of a century. It has expanded in an unprecedented manner not experienced by any nation in this world. In a way

it could be taken as a major achievement as from 1950's figure of one lakh, the student number has grown to seventy five lakh. The basic infrastructure of education has equally grown from 750 to 11,831 colleges. Although the growth in numbers does not tally with the growth in quality, as a result figures are raised from various section of society towards the quality of education. Consequently efforts have been made for quality assurance with the establishment of government institution like NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) and DEC (Distance Education Council).

Now the system of higher education is taking a new turn. The youth of India has started preferring technology and employment oriented courses. As a consequence more and more engineering and other technical institutions have started coming up. In order to meet the growing demands for such technical and employment oriented courses, the government started permitting the private institutions to come into education sector and encourage more private investment in education started and self-financed private universities started developing. The thrust of the new developments is on market-oriented economic policies.

6. Key Role of Education

In the process of social reconstruction, education plays a key role. Since the contribution of education to human progress is so vital, great demands on education are being made in today's world. Education is one of the most powerful tools in shaping our future. We expect that education will help to build up a qualified and creative workforce that can adopt to new technologies and to advance knowledge in such a way that economic development goes hand to hand with responsible management of the physical human and cultural environment. Education also adopts new trends in society to prepare our future generations for change.

Education is also a key to human development. It is fundamental to all round development of human potential - material and spiritual. It refines sensitivities and perception that contributes to national cohesion, scientific temper, independence of mind and spirit; thus furthering the goals enshrined in our Constitution.

7. Role of Education for Social Reconstruction

It is evident that education system of different countries have been different at different times due to differences in social or political ideology. As for example, in a totalitarian state education becomes a tool in the hands of the rulers to promote a totalitarian way of life. A uniform and rigid system of education is established. Everything is determined from the top. Hence we will discuss the role of education in the process of social reconstruction in various spheres of life and in different segment of social conditions.

7.1. Education and Social Change

“The old order changth, yielding place to new.
Good fulfils himself in many ways.”

This memorable stanza by Lord Alfred Tennyson vividly brings out the spirit of change in society and change in nature. In modern societies, education tends to become the master determinant of social mobility and social transformation because it alone leads to higher occupational achievements. The significance of the role of education in social change has been very aptly described by the Education Commission 1964 – 66 “The destiny of India Is now being shaped in her classrooms.....in a world based on science and technology, it is education that determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people. On the quality and the number of

persons coming out of our school and colleges will depend our success in the great enterprise of national reconstruction the principle of which is to raise the standard of living of our people.”

Social change and social mobility are two sides of the same coin and both these can be represented by social transformation. Education is viewed as an experience equips individuals through the process of learning to shoulder the responsibilities of adulthood in society. Thus, education is a social instrument which functions as a vital agent of socio –cultural change. The main aim of education is to preserve, transfer and enrich cultural change. Culture symbolizes the society and consequently education emerges as an instrument of social reconstruction. The education system prepares the projection of total social structure in which the dimensions of social stratification undergo the process of mobility. It is one of the most important agencies whereby a person with ability regardless of his or her resources rises from one caste, class or position to another social hierarchy. Brook-over (1955) affirms that education is an instrument of social change and cultural transmission.

Education is a constructive instrument for social progress. Brown has stated. “Education brings changes in behavior, and if its main functions are to remain mere transmission or enrichment of culture, it will fall short of its role in dynamic society.” The Child is to be led towards a better and happier future. The needs of the society are ever changing. Education helps in reconstructing and reorganizing the experience of the needs of the society and thus eliminates the unworthy features of the society and builds up a happier and better world.

In India, there are studies which confirm the effectiveness of education in inducing social mobility. The education system has greatly benefited the oppressed and the downtrodden sections of India society and helped individuals from these sections to acquire higher status and esteem in the society to a large extent.

The sector which has a great potential for social change is adult education. There is no doubt that adult education is directly linked with the economic social, cultural and political regeneration of a country. A comprehensive study of the leading nations of the world shows that nations in the highest scale of literacy are also in the highest scale of per capita national income. In India, adult education received hardly any attention under the colonial administration. But the country’s independence gave a new direction to the scheme of adult education. We have relied, almost exclusively, on the provision of universal elementary education as the channel of mass education. There is no doubt that we have achieved tremendous progress. As for example, Sixth Five- Year Plan deserves special mention. The plan includes that the following existing programmes of adult education will be continued improved and expanded.

7.1.1 Farmer’s Functional Literacy Project.

7.1.2. The Shramik Vidyapeeths and Adult Education Centers.

7.1.3. Adult Education Department in Universities.

7.1.4. The Nehru Yuvak Kendras.

7.1.5. National Service Scheme.

7.2. Education and Economic Development

Economic development is usually defined as the maximization of national income and its rate of growth. The world today acknowledges the capacity of education to eradicate poverty and increase income.

A decade or two ago, most of the policy makers believed that trained persons are key to development. Planners and policy-makers favored the kinds of secondary and higher education that directly met the manpower requirements of modern sector. People who worked with their hands were thought not to have much need of formal education.

However over the past few decades, views have changed substantially. It is being accepted worldwide that educated people in an era of innovative and complicated technologies are more able to adopt to changes introduced in the economy zone. Education imports specific knowledge and develops general reasoning skills (cognitive effect) and also induces changes in beliefs and values and attitudes towards work and society (non-cognitive effect). On the job training, informal education and vocational training all depend heavily on learning abilities acquired earlier in general education. Many of the non-cognitive effects or schooling – receptivity of new ideas competitiveness and willingness to accept discipline are directly relevant to productive economic activity. Some other abilities like tolerance, self –confidence, social and civil responsibilities etc. are more personal or political in nature but may also effect economic performance.

In case of employees, studies relating educational level of individuals to their wages and salaries in majority of the cases it was found that more schooling leads to higher earnings (Thakur & Thakur 1997). Thus we can say that education plays a significant role in economic prosperity of individuals and consequently it helps in reconstructing society.

7.3. Education and Human Resource Development

The terms Human Resource Development (HRD), Human Resource Management (HRM), Human resource Planning (H RP) have originated during the past few decades and all these have all most the same meaning , i.e. to plan, form and utilize human capital for better socio-economic growth. Education and training are two major components of HRD, HRM, and HRP. In India, prime objective of HRD has been economic growth, increasing Gross National Products (GNP) and levels of individual consumption. To achieve it economy needs increasing levels of capital formation. Human resources are an important variable in the overall efforts of economic growth. Proper man power planning is necessary to make the available human capital more productive and to reduce its pressure on the future growth. Education and training are the only tools to implement whenever manpower planning is done. Thus HRD is considered as a function of education and training.

The concept human capital refers to abilities and skills of human resources of a country and formation of human capital consists of qualitative improvement in abilities and skills of human beings. Investment of human capital implies expenditure on formal education, health facilities and services, on the job training, migration of individuals and families and study programmes of adults. Among these, education is by far the most important one. In today's world of industry and technology investment on education, training and research is a must for every country and India is no exception. So, we can conclude that education plays a vital role in case of HRD for national reconstruction.

7.4. Education to Include Social Values

Education as an instrument of social change and socialization is also responsible for inculcating values among individuals. Modern age of science and technology has created certain evils like industrialism, mechanism and materialism. In spite of spectacular achievements in science, man is not happy and contented. Violence, frustration, immorality self-centeredness, egoism are rampant everywhere. Powerful tools of destruction like atom bombs, biological weapons, and chemical weapons are in the possession of mankind. That is why, in spite of wonderful scientific achievements, the world is a place of violence, gloom and uneasy.

Such unsatisfactory situation have arisen due to crisis of values and character. The Kotahari Commission has rightly observed. 'The expanding knowledge and the growing power which it place at the disposal of modern society must, therefore, be combined with the strengthening and depending of the sense of social responsibility and keener appreciation of moral and spiritual values'. After independence, continuous attempts have been made for inculcation of right values in the students at different stages of education. In a paper entitled ' Education in the 5th Five- Year plan, 1974-79" brought by the Ministry of Educational and Social welfare, Government of India (1972) it is pointed out, "Perhaps the most significant need of the hour is to transform the educational system with a view cultivating the basic values of humanism, democracy, socialism and secularism"

Our country has a lower level of literacy and comparatively lower per capita investment on education and that is why we are not succeeding in eradicating unemployment crisis, increasing our GNP and per capita income. Population explosion may be considered as a major contributing factor for illiteracy and unemployment. But it can also be managed. What we really need is a deeper commitment, strong will, a package of innovative strategies and a corruption – free character. One such step for improving the employment situation is vocationalisation of education which has been strongly advocated by New Education Policy (1986). However, after more than a decade of starting vocational courses, one can see some shortcomings on the front of vocational education. Universalization of Elementary Education and vocationalisation of education in the light of Gandhian Basic Education must be our two main aims which can definitely be a solution to many of our problems like unemployment, social evils, value – crisis etc.

7.5. Education and Modernization

Due to science and technology the space of progress has been amazingly accelerated during the 20th century. Now man is travelling from place to place faster with meteoric speed. He has left for the moon. He has almost conquered the time and space. Industrialization has given a material culture unprecedented. Agriculture has been revolutionized and the biological and chemical processes have increased the yield beyond imagination. All these aspects indicate our society as dynamic.

Essentially, modernization denotes a dynamic process, a powerful movement from traditional and quasi-traditional order to certain desired types of technology and the resultant changes in the social structure, value orientation, motivation, achievement and aspiration. Education is the most powerful tool in the process of modernization. The spread of education, the preparation of educated and skilled citizens and training of intelligentsia promote modernization.

Role of education in the modernization of Indian society.

- 7.5.1. Education for developing skills to increase production.
- 7.5.2. Equalization of educational opportunities.
- 7.5.3. Education for promotion of emotional and national integration.
- 7.5.4. Education for establishment of a socialist pattern of values.
- 7.5.5. Education for promotion of democratic values.
- 7.5.6. Education for promotion of secular ideas.
- 7.5.7. Education for developing a wider outlook.
- 7.5.8. Education for synthesizing cultural and socialistic values.

8. Conclusion

Education has played an important role in social reconstruction in our country and it will continue to do so in future as well. However, a lot more is desired in this direction as social inequality will still persist in our country. We need to provide easy access to education to the weaker sections of the society, particularly to the poor, SCs and STs, minorities and especially to women and girls.

Education is a pre-requisite for progress and development. In India, education has been accorded a high priority as an integral part of country's development process. It is a very grim situation that today we have more illiterates than what our population was at the time of independence in 1947. In our journey to social reconstruction, our first step should be in the area of education. When socio-economic development is becoming more knowledge intensive, the role of education becomes more crucial. Education will have to make a motivating force in socio-economic transformation of our society. Therefore there is a need to concentrate on reforming, reorienting, rejuvenating, reinvigorating and revitalizing the entire education system to meet the emerging needs of our society in the new millennium. In this connection our education system for social reconstruction calls for at least five new linkages.

In the first place, we should try to link our great and authentic past with the living present of existing realities and the emerging future of goods and aspirations in the search of a national identity. Only then, we will know that what kind of a person we should nurture through a life-long education and what life styles and values should be projected and cultivated.

Secondly, a linkage of the urban elite and the rural people through educational opportunities.

Thirdly, the youths need a closer sense of the belonging and fuller involvement with the making of the larger society. Youth – power and people power can together achieve development as tasks for a new quality of life.

Fourthly, a linkage of science and spirituality implies that living traditions from the past should function along with the appropriate technologies of modern science that we choose consciously for our way of life.

Finally, the formal education should be linked with the realm of practical work.

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