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EDUCATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION: AN INTERRELATIONSHIP

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ABSTRACT

This paper is an effort to evaluate the interrelationship between education and social transformation. Educational systems contain both transformative and reproductive elements. The balance and tensions between these has varied extensively over time and continues to vary across countries and the world's region. Ideally, education would reproduce the "good" and transform the "bad", but "good" and "bad" are value based and inherently political in nature. Accordingly, the prevailing form of governance and the nature of power relations, as reflected in the dominant socio-cultural and socio-political institutions in a given context, profoundly condition the balance and tensions between these elements. It is thus not just education per se, but the socio-cultural and socio-political contexts in which education is delivered that matter for the transformation of society in ways that are consistent with notions of social justice.

Key Words: Education, Social Transformation, Reproductive elements, Socio-culture.

INTRODUCTION

The term social transformation is used to indicate the transformations that take place in human interactions and interrelations. Society is a web of social relationships and hence social transformation means transformation in the system of social relationships. These are understood in terms of social processes and social interactions and social organization. August Comte the father of Sociology has posed two problems- the question of social statics and the question of social dynamics, what is and how it transforms. The sociologists not only outline the structure of the society but also seek to know its

causes also. According to Morris Ginsberg social transformation is a transformation in the social structure. The International Encyclopedia of the Social Science looks at social transformation as the transformation in the social structure, or in the pattern of action and interaction in societies. Alterations may occur in norms, values, cultural products and symbols in a society. Alteration may occur in norms, values, cultural products and symbols in society. Other definitions of transformation also point out that transformation implies, above all other things, alteration in the structure and functions of a social system.

Social transformation can vary in its scope and in speed. We can talk of small or large scale transformations. Transformation can take a cyclical pattern, e.g., when there is the recurrence of centralization and decentralization in administrative organization. It can also be revolutionary. Revolutionary transformation can be seen when there is an overthrow of government in a particular nation. Transformation can also include short term transformations (e.g., in migration rates) as well as long term transformations (in economic structures). We can include in social transformation, both growth and decline in membership and size of social institutions. Transformation may include continuous processes like specialization, bureaucratization, and also include discontinuous process such as particular technical or social invention which appears at some point of time.

EDUCATION AS AN INSTRUMENT FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The relationship of education with social transformation is not a simple, unilateral one, as perhaps many would like to believe, for education is not only instrumental in bringing about social transformation, it is also quite interestingly instrumental in maintaining the status quo. In other words, education plays with a ‘conservative’ and radical role, i.e., it helps both in ‘maintaining’ and changing different aspects of the social system.

Society wishing to transformation or modernize itself has to employ a number of means, instruments, institutions, agents or agencies to achieve its desired goals. Among such means, education is perhaps the most important. Education provides necessary training in skills and occupations and thus, produces the needed competent personnel for maintaining the different specialized jobs in modern industrial, business, educational and research establishments. Not only this, education is expected to transformation the values and attitudes of people. The role of education in bringing about social transformation or modernization has led leaders and planners in developing nations to make large scale provisions of educational facilities for their respective people. We in India, have also seen the great efforts of our educational planners during the last fifty years of national planning to expand diverse educational facilities at all levels, and in all regions of the country. Also India is encouraging retransformation of personnel and ideas with developed countries to obtain and utilize theories; practices and mechanisms of education to achieve a modernized society. These have resulted in many good things although much transformation still remains to be brought about.

If we try to analyze the life styles of individual citizens in India, we shall find two interesting transformations coming up. More and more people of the lower and middle classes are now making great sacrifices so that children may get educated and with their education they may be able to make their living better. Secondly, more and more people of the lower castes are now becoming successful in uplifting themselves socially and economically by getting education. Education has certainly enabled them in changing their lives for the better; it has granted them better social status and opened the flood-gates of aspirations for their children.

Education must emphasize social reforms with a similar spirit, perspective and force as social reform movement like Jabri Taleem, Brahmo Samaj, Arya Samaj, Protestantism, etc. showing more liberalism and openness to modern influences is not sufficient. Concrete programmes often social action warranted by contemporary Indian society, which could not be taken up during the sixty odd years of freedom, must now be seriously accomplished within the shortest possible time through the power use of education. Without a renovated programme of adult or social education it cannot be done satisfactory. Similarly, without making education a multipurpose tool, the desired social transformations cannot come up. Our curriculum must really need to get transformation and become modern.

Teachers must certainly help the nation in bringing about long awaited social transformation. We have, ourselves, first of all, to become personalities with a high degree of empathy, achievement motivation, social sensitivity, risk-taking capacity and similar other attributes of a modern man. It is only then we can activate or generate the minds and energies of our youth. Indian teachers have to have a progressive vision of modernity. Teachers can prepare their students for taking their right place in such a future society. So teachers have to involve themselves whole heartedly in generating the process of social transformation in India.

We are conscious of the fact that teachers alone cannot do all this. The various reference groups, the educational planners, educational administrators, political and social leaders and parents also should come forward to help the teachers by modernizing their working in their own sphere of social action.

There is a prime need from all political parties to discuss amongst themselves the educational needs of the country and arrive at a consensus on a core programme of education to be implemented in the country in spite of their varied political moorings. That is why common core curriculum was recommended by the Indian Education Commission (1964-66). The educational bureaucracy, still dominated by many old stereotyped notions, ministries, universities, directorates, colleges and schools must also transformation. The parents must take greater initiative and interest in aiding education in changing the society. However, the ultimate responsibility of activating all these reference groups and enlisting this functional support for transformation and modernizing our society through education would eventually fall on the teachers of contemporary India. This is great responsibility and challenge.

EDUCATION AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

The role of education as an agent or instrument of a social transformation and social development is widely recognized nowadays. Social transformation may take place when human needs transformation when the existing social system or network of social institutions fails to meet the existing human needs and new materials suggest better ways of meeting human needs. Social transformations do not take place automatically or by themselves. As MacIver says, social transformation take place as a response to many types of transformations that take place in the social and nonsocial environment. Education can initiate social transformations by bringing about a transformation in outlook and attitude of man. It can bring about a transformation in the pattern of social relationships and institutions and thereby it may cause social transformation.

There was a time when educational institutions and teachers were engaged in transmitting a way of life to the students. During those days, education was more a means of social control than an instrument of social transformation. Modern schools, colleges and universities do not place much emphasis upon transmitting a way of life to the students. The traditional education was meant for an unchanging, static society, not marked by rapid transformations. But, today, education aims at imparting empirical knowledge that is knowledge about science, technology and other type of specializations. Education was associated with religion. It has, however, become secular today. It is an independent institution now. Education today has been chiefly instrumental in preparing the way for the development of science and technology

CONCLUSION

Thus, education has brought about phenomenal transformations in every aspect of man's life. Francis Brown remarks that education is a process which brings about transformations in the behavior of society. It is a process which enables every individual to participate effectively in the activities of society, and to make positive contribution to the progress of society. According to Olive Banks (1968), the precise relationship of the education system to social and economic transformation is extremely complex and it is almost impossible to draw conclusions that are not misleading. The concept of education as producing or impeding social transformation is enormously complicated by the fact that the education system itself is a part of society, which is itself changing. Consequently the real issue is that of the interrelationship between educational institutions and other aspects of the society. Moreover, it is this interrelationship which makes it so difficult to use the educational system to produce conscious or planned social transformation. The education system cannot be seen in isolation from its social context. The realization that educational reform is not a universal panacea should not lead us to minimize the importance of knowledge about the educational institutions in society. This simply means that the relationship between education and social transformation is very complex and no simple generalizations can be drawn regarding them.

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