

Education as an Instrument of Social Transformation: Aspects and Prospects

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Abstract

Education is the foundation of every society to grow in a healthy manner. Every civilized society has accepted the phenomenon of education, it is the duty of the society itself to nourish it in a positive way. Social change on the other hand is a dynamic process in which education is just an aspect. Education moulds the society by uplifting individuals and thus comes the change, a prosperous change. In India, from Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Ramakrishna Paramhansa, to Dr. Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam and all other great Indian educationists have left the legacy of social transformation through quality education. Right to Free and Compulsory Education is a Fundamental Right and the State is obliged to secure it anyway. Besides this, educational cultures play an important role across the globe whether it's social, economic, political, traditional, cultural, demographical, or religious. Government and Non-Government Organizations also have the social responsibility to provide financial aids to the institutions to ease the access for the financially weak sections of the society. Furthermore, the Judiciary should act as the watchdog to mould education in an exemplary shape and most importantly awareness of the people is needed to acquire proper education. Education, whether it's formal, informal, legal or of any other kinds, is the only way to transmit knowledge, skills, values, norms, mores or any particular habit from generation to generation in a community or society.

Key Words: *Education, Social Change, Social Security, Development and Transformation.*

I. Introduction

The highest education is that which does not merely give us information but makes our life in harmony with all existence.

-Rabindranath Tagore.

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The word “Education” has a wide variety of connotations with various manifestations. To crystallise a precise definition of education, it is necessary to understand the perception of the great thinkers and philosophers. These definitions are the outcome of their own outlook for life, experiences, perception, staunch viewpoints, which are not contradictory to each other; on the other hand they are complimentary to one another.

Etymologically “Education” has been derived from the Latin word “Educatum” i.e. act of teaching, “Educere” i.e. to lead out or to draw out, “Educare” i.e. to bring up or to raise or to nourish, “Educo” i.e. to lead forth or to contract out.

If I say “Education”, what is the first thing that comes in our mind? Schools, Colleges, Universities or any other Conventional, Classical, Traditional or Technical Education Systems and similar kind of institutions. But in reality Education is not confined within the boundaries of these institutions and has a wide spectrum.

Education in its broadest general sense is the medium through which the aims and habits of a group of people live on from one generation to the next. Generally, it occurs through any experience that has a formative effect on the way one thinks, feels, or acts. While in its narrow, technical sense, education is the formal process by which society deliberately transmits its accumulated knowledge, skills, customs and values from one generation to another, e.g., instructions in schools.

On the other hand, “Society” is the fundamental subject of sociological phenomenon. The term “Society” is evolved from the Latin term “Socius” that reflects the meaning of togetherness or companionship. According to MacIver, “Society is a web of social relationship.” In our society, the human beings stand at the centre as rightly stated by Aristotle, ‘Man is a social animal’. Human cannot live alone without other human beings and for that they form mutual relationships which may be called as Society. Philosopher Thomas Hobbes in his famous book ‘Leviathan’ has given the ‘Theory of Social Contract’. According to this theory, men cannot live in solitariness and for survival they enter into social relationship and inter-dependent to each other. He argued, before the Social Contract, the life of Human was Solitary, Poor, Nasty, Brutish, and Short. So as the human life was unorganised and short, the chance of transferring knowledge was very less.

Though Society refers the association of people, it is different from Social Community or Social Association or any Social Group in many aspects. Community falls within the society and it is formed by a particular type of people. Association is a specific organisation to fulfil any or some specific goals. Social Groups are collaboration of people which is voluntary and it can be categorised according to their nature.

In Sociology the term 'Society' does not refer to a group of people but to the complex pattern of norms of interaction that take place among them. People are valuable only as carrier of social relationships. People are considered as 'things'. A society is rather tangible or real. It is a process rather than a thing, the important aspect of society is the system of relationships.² The nature of society is not constant and it keeps changing with the time and according to the social needs. Social Change is inevitable and it occurs spontaneously. Society is a continuous process and the inherent nature of society is continuous changeability.

However, transmission of knowledge i.e. education is always an undividable part of society since time immemorial. Earlier the main purpose of education was Social Control i.e. teaching only about religious knowledge and learning about the way of righteous life. Thus, it was primarily oriented towards Social Control rather than Social Change.

But in today's world the social structure has been changed from only Social Control to Social Change. Various sects of education have been evolved and thus making it more experimental than before. Education itself changed in significant manners with passing time and it has also changed the society at large. 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."

It is rightly said that humans are social animals but which makes us different from all other species is our intellectual behaviour. Intellectual properties have always been an economic source of any society or country. Therefore, an

²N.K. THAKUR, AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY 50 (2nd ed central law publications, Allahabad).

intelligent human being is a treasure of a country and brings social change by his good deeds. As Drucker has stated that “highly educated man has become the central resource of today’s society and the supply of such men is the true measure of its economic, military and even its political potential.”

II. Education in Ancient India

In India, Vedas, Aranyakas and the Upanishads give us the glimpses of the values and ideals of learning and educational system during the ancient period. When we go through these texts, one thing which comes to our mind, is the ‘teacher’ who was worthy of highest reverence next only to one’s parents. System was to lay great emphasis on acquisition of knowledge, discipline of the mind and body.

The father was considered as the first teacher and the home as the first school. Vidyarambha (starting of education) was an important ceremony to initiate the primary education. Primary education used to start at the age of five and that was called as ‘Aksharambha’. The education in upper classes was called ‘Upanayana’. The final step of education where a person used to get spiritual and other social knowledge was called the ‘Brahmacharya’.

Thus, Social Control through which a society maintains itself was the primary object of teaching and education rather than propelling Social Change. Ancient education system lacked novelty and the growth was sluggish. Unlike modern education system, ancient education system was religion biased to some extent and with the changing of Rulers, the entire education system used to change.

Undivided India was the oldest knowledge hub in ancient period. Scholars from all over the world came here throughout many centuries and acquired knowledge in various institutions like University of Taxila (Takshashila) which was built by Achaemenid in the city of Taxila (presently in Pakistan) and destroyed by Mihirakula, Nalanda University which was built by Kumargupta in Magadha (presently Bihar), Vikramshila which was also built in Magadha by Dharampala. Both Nalanda and Vikramshila were destroyed by BakhtiyarKhilji.

III. Aim of Education

There are various numbers of aims of education. It changes according to the period in prevailing situation and prevailing philosophy of life. Political ideologies, religious precepts, social problems, economic soundness so and so forth are also determining factors of the aim of education.

To endow utmost benefit to the society, the aims of education have to be determined. Education is the main component for the survival of the society. The continued existence of society depends upon the transmission of culture to the young. Every society has its own ways and means of fulfilling this need. Hence education has to be one of the ways of fulfilling this ever-increasing need.

The great thinker and philosopher Plato explains that the aim of education is to allow the individual to develop along the line of his own greatest powers.

The Education Act, 1944 of England pronounces the objectives of education as “Happier childhood and the better start of life”.

Americans elaborated the aim of education as “Education should be guided by a clear conception of the meaning of democracy”.

Educational outcome generally reflects a society’s pattern of racial, ethical and social class. As much as educated the society, it becomes less conservative and more flexible.

In **Unni Krishnan v. State of A.P.**³, the Supreme Court observed, Education is enlightenment. It is the one that lends dignity to a man. Education seeks to build up the personality of the pupil by assisting his physical, intellectual, moral and emotional development.

The fundamental purpose of education is to transfigure the human personality into a pattern of perfection through a systematic process of the development of the body, the enrichment of the mind, the sublimation of the emotions and the illumination of the spirit.

³Unni Krishnan v. State of A.P.³, (1993) SCC (1) 645. (India).

In **Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka**⁴, in this landmark case, it was held by the US Supreme Court that Education is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today, it is the principal instrument in awakening the true cultural values, in preparing children for later professional training and in helping them to adjust normality to his environment.

IV. Agencies of Education

- (i) **Family:** A family is treated as the first institution of education. We all know the proverb “charity begins at home” i.e., learning about taking responsibilities starts from home or from a family. Family is the place where children learn basic things like manners, values, norms etc. Family is the primary institution of Social Control. In family, a child learns how to respect family and other relationship, self-respect and dignity. It’s called social education.
- (ii) **Educational Institutions:** Educational Institution is the second agency of formal education. It is also called Academic Institution. In this type of institutions, children learn disciplines and good behaviour and also learn about punishments for breaking rules. It also plays the role of social control by imposing disciplinary action.
- (iii) **Religious Institutions:** The main purpose of religion is to achieve salvation. For this purpose, people become righteous and refrain themselves from committing any crime. Religious institutions discuss about morality and which is not moral, is against the God. So, in this way, religion maintains peace in society and takes a vital part to establish spiritual society.
- (iv) **Activity Groups of Children and Youth:** Activity rates of children in groups are much higher than an individual child. Children in groups are more productive whether it is a good act or bad. Some groups of children encourage each other to do good things and they learn positive things but some are deviant

⁴Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka 347 U.S. 483 (1954). (U.S.A.)

in nature i.e., they act against the social norms and values. These types of children encourage their companions to do immoral acts or acts which are criminal in nature.

- (v) **Special Education for “Differently Abled” children:** Differently abled children are not same as other children and they need special care and protection. Due to their physical or mental health issues, they need special types of educational instruments and infrastructures to fit their requirements. There are many differently abled persons from Thomas Edison and Helen Keller to Stephen Hawking and Nick Vujicic who proved that disabilities aren't any barrier to achieve success.

V. Characteristics of Society

There are many aspects to constitute a society. Among them some important elements have been briefly explained below:-

- (i) **Mutual Relationship:** It is also called Social Relationship. It is the primary requisite to form a society. Mutual relationship means interactions and interrelations among individuals. According to some Sociologists, physical awareness of presence of one on another is essential. Sociologists such as Giddings termed it as “Consciousness of the mind”. Again Sociologist Cooley termed this kind of physical awareness of presence as “We Feeling”.

Society means likeness as well as difference.⁵ MacIver stated that, “primary likeness and secondary difference create the greatest of all social institutions...the division of labour.” Social likeness mainly builds within family and it extends to other relationships also. Whereas, social differences create separate identity of individuals and thus encourage them for Social contract.

⁵N.K. THAKUR, AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY 52 (2nd ed central law publications, Allahabad).

- (ii) **Necessity and Social Security:** Humans form society to secure themselves from external attack. Humans are living together in groups since time immemorial and thus they fulfil the needs of one another.
- (iii) **Social Engineering:** This theory was propounded by Roscoe Pound. According to him, society forms a social order to minimise conflicts among men and to secure the interests of individuals. Interests may be private, public or social in nature.
- (iv) **Cooperation:** Cooperation with each other is an essential element of a society. Without cooperation a society can never be developed. By cooperation individuals bind them together.

VI. Characteristic of Social Change

Characteristics of social change are not limited or certain but it has some basic factors which are as follows:

- Social change is an inevitable and spontaneous process.
- Nature of Social change is different in different societies.
- Social change is universal but it is not coequal in every society.
- Social change is fundamental as well as natural.
- Social change can be planned or unplanned.
- Social change does not affect a particular person rather it is effective for the society at large.

VII. Social Control, Social Change and Educational Construction

Social Control is “any social or cultural means by which systematic or relatively consistent restraints are imposed upon individual behaviour and by which people are motivated to adhere to traditions and patterns of behaviour that are important for the proper functioning of a group or society”⁶ Sociologist E.A. Ross was the first person to use the word ‘Social Control’. According to E.A.

⁶Scott’s Dictionary of Sociology.

Ross, Social control is “the system of devices whereby society brings its members into conformity with the accepted standards of behaviour.”

There are many means of social control; it may be formal or informal. Apart from these, social customs, law, morality, family, education, peer group, religion, education are treated as agencies of social control.

Society must have harmony and order because in their absence societies do not exist. Society is in fact a harmonious organisation of human relationships. So to maintain the harmony, conducts of people should be regulated by controlling it. Therefore, in order to exist and development controls need to be imposed. This control is termed as ‘Social Control’. In other words, it is the control of society over its individual.

On the other hand, Social Change or Social Transformation is a dynamic process and it takes place spontaneously in a society. Change is the law of nature. Every social structure is subject to inevitable change and society is not a static phenomenon rather it is an on-going process by which a society changes its social structure.

An individual may strive for stability, societies may create the illusion of performance, the search for certainty may continue unabated, yet the fact remains that society changes ceaselessly thereby decaying, renewing and accommodating itself to changing scenario and undergoing vast alterations in the course of time.⁷ Apparently, being a part of a particular society, we may not realise the social change in that society in day to day life but if we take a period of time, we will be witnessing the change in many aspects.

According to M. E. Jones, “Social change is a term used to describe variations in, or modifications of, any aspect of social processes, social patterns, social interactions, or social organizations.”

According to MacIver and Page, “Society exists only as a time sequence. It is becoming, not a being; a process, not a product.” That is to say, change is a continuum of being-becoming. In the process of becoming, being undergoes

⁷ N.K. THAKUR, AN INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY 201(2nded. central law publications, Allahabad).

changes. As soon as the process ceases, the product disappears.⁸ For example, usages and customs cease their effects after the non-practising. Here the 'non-practice' is a process and 'usages and customs' are products.

Further MacIver and Page defined Social Change as "Social change refers to a process responsive to many types of changes, to changes in the manmade conditions of life, to changes in the attitudes and beliefs of men, and to the changes that go beyond the human control to the biological and the physical nature of things."

Social Control and Social Change are supplementary and complementary to each other. Change in one automatically affects another. Social control determines the pace, direction and perception of Social change. As the number of factors of Social control increases, area or amount of Social transformation is bound to rise high.

Education is treated as a strong instrument in Social Control as well as in Social Transformation. Education brings knowledge and knowledge brings positive attitude in an individual. As individual is the basis of a society, change in an individual itself brings change or transformation in the society.

As we know our India is the most populated country after China, it demands a wide educational network to provide education to all. Where basic or elementary education is a big challenge for India as well as in most of the developing countries, the field of Higher education is almost remained untouched. Here, number of aspirants is a big factor as number of colleges and universities are few in respect to schools. Therefore, many students are forced to quit their education due to insufficiency of opportunities for admission in colleges and universities.

This crisis has become the golden opportunity for the private entrepreneurs to grab the students who fail to take admission in the government and government aided colleges or universities. Here private institutions play a vital role for the students who want to pursue further study. Private institutions offer a wide

⁸ D.C. BHATTACHARYYA, SOCIOLOGY 718 (7thed .Vijoya Publishing House, Kolkata).

range of courses to the aspirants and hence it's becoming interesting among the students.

VII. Higher Education and Its Privatisation

Higher education is also called Post-Secondary education, Third level or Tertiary education. It is an optional final stage of formal learning that occurs after completion of secondary education. It is often delivered at Universities and Colleges.

The word 'privatise' first appeared in a dictionary in 1983 and was defined narrowly as "to make private, especially to change (as a business or industry) from public to private control or ownership".

E.S. Savas in his monumental work **Privatisation- The Key To Better Government** defines privatisation 'as the act of reducing the role of Government or increasing the role of the private sector in an activity or in the ownership of assets.'

In poor countries, there was a growing need for education, health, roads and other infrastructure as well as for industrial diversification. A distinction has to be made between privatization and commercialization of education. India has a long tradition of private effort in higher education. Tilak, Maharishi Karve, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sri Syed Ahmed Khan, DAV Trusts, Sanatan Dharam Sabha, Khalsa Dewan, Jamia Milia Islamia and many other charitable trusts started educational institutions to widen educational opportunity in the society. But modern educational entrepreneurs are not guided by philanthropic motive of the earlier reformers, but intend to invest in educational institutions to realise higher rates of return on their investments, because the demand for professional education is very high and the risk is low.

VII.I. Factors Responsible

There are many direct and indirect factors which are responsible for the rapid growing of private sectors in the field of education. The factors vary from country to country and as per the need of hour they change.

According to the International Institute for Educational Planning⁹, factors that drive privatization fall into two groups:

- Demand-side pressures;
- Supply-side-pressure;

The more optimisation in both sides, the smoother running of the institutions.

In addition to numerous changes the world is facing every day, there are six basic forces spurring the spread of privatization in higher education:¹⁰

- Growing importance of knowledge-based economy;
- Changes in demographics;
- Change of public attitude towards education;
- The advent of new technologies;
- Striving towards knowledge-based organization;
- Decline in public trust on the public sector;

VII.II. Advantages of Privatisation in Higher Education

No doubt private institutions are very much helpful to provide higher education. Due to the large number of institutions almost every aspirant can accommodate themselves in colleges or universities. With the growing number of passed out students it's very much needed to establish new colleges and universities but government sometimes cannot make it due to insufficient fund whereas private colleges are very easy accessible for those who have sufficient means.

Private institutions almost provide all the modern infrastructure to meet the needs of the students. Time to time up-gradation of teaching technics and by introducing new methods of teaching-learning process they make the offered course much more interesting.

⁹Belfield, Clive R.; Levin, Henry M.; Education Privatization: Cause, Consequences and Planning implications, Fundamentals of educational planning, UNESCO: International Institute for Educational Planning, Paris, 2002

¹⁰LEVINE, A.: PRIVATISATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION, at http://www.interactivemusicnetwork.org/wg_educational/upload/higheredprivatization (last visited ??)

Unlike the public institutions, their competitive nature makes them more efficient.

VII.III. Drawbacks of Privatisation

Even if Privatisation plays a great role in providing Higher Education, it has some negative aspects too, which are summarised as follows:

- (i) First problem with this kind of institutions is that, their profit oriented mind set. They focus more on their profits rather than providing quality education;
- (ii) Usually the course fees are high so it is quite tough for the economically weak people to take admission;
- (iii) Most of the private institutions are providing professional courses so the candidates who are seeking general courses stay far away from the college boundaries.

VII.IV. Implementation of Privatisation in Higher Education

Proper implementation of the privatization is very much needed. Nothing can grow positively if it is not regulated well, so does privatization. There are some factors which should be thoroughly followed:

- (i) Government should monitor every activity of the private institutions so that they refrain themselves from making unjust money;
- (ii) Proper verification and certification should be done before granting affiliation to any institution;
- (iii) Government should financially support economically backward candidates who are willing to study in private institutions;
- (iv) Private companies should take the social responsibility and should provide financial aids or should bear certain portion of the tuition fees;
- (v) NGO's should provide funds to the private institutions so that the institutions can arrange scholarships for the economically weak candidates.

VIII. Constitutional and Other Educational Safeguards

The Constitution (Eighty-sixth Amendment) Act, 2002 inserted Article 21-A in the Constitution of India to provide free and compulsory education of all children in the age group of six to fourteen years as a Fundamental Right in such a manner as the State may, by law, determine. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009, which represents the consequential legislation envisaged under Article 21-A, means that every child has a right to full time elementary education of satisfactory and equitable quality in a formal school which satisfies certain essential norms and standards.¹¹

VIII.I. Central Government Schemes

a. Schemes for Elementary Education:

- SarvaShikshaAbhiyan (SSA);
- Mid-Day Meal Scheme;
- Integrated Child Development Scheme;
- Integrated Child Protection Scheme (ICPS);
- Operation Blackboard;
- Strengthening for Providing Quality Education in Madrassas (SPQEM).

b. Schemes for Secondary Education:

- RashtriyaMadhyamikShikshaAbhiyan;
- National Scheme of Incentives to Girls for Secondary Education;
- Inclusive Education for Disabled at Secondary Stage;
- Scheme of Vocational Education;
- National Scholarships;
- Scholarship Schemes for Minority students.

c. Schemes for Higher Education:

- National Scholarships;
- Post-Doctoral Research Fellow Scheme;
- Junior Research Fellowships for Biomedical Sciences;
- All India Council for Technical Education Scholarships;
- Sports Authority of India Promotional Schemes;
- Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities - Schemes/Programmes;

¹¹DEPT. OF SCHOOL EDUCATION AND LITERACY; MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT, <https://www.mhrd.gov.in/rte>(last visited)

- Post-matric Scholarships for SC /ST students.

VIII.II. Additional Schemes by Government Of West Bengal

- KanyashreePrakalpa
- SikshashreePrakalpa
- SaboojSathiPrakalpa

IX. International Safeguards

A Right to Education has been created and recognised by some jurisdictions. Since 1952, Article 2 of the first Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights obliges all signatory parties to guarantee the Right to Education. At the global level, the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of 1966 guarantees this right under its Article 13.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights guarantees that “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and Professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit”.

X. Conclusion

Education is any kind of Information or Knowledge, which we get, which we experience and which we share. It starts even when a Child doesn't understand anything and even death cannot cease it as it flows from one generation to another.

So throughout our lives, we get Educated whether it's good or bad. But here we are to experience the Good in education. An Education which is Prosperous, which brings out the Human inside us.

As we know that Education is the only way to transfer knowledge, skills, values, norms or any other practice from one generation to another. Here the example of Seasonal Migratory Birds could be the best example. Like they come again and again at the same place from miles away in a particular season. It is possible

because they transfer the information about the place to their offspring and thus they make them known. Similarly humans follow this method but in a wise or advanced manner.

‘Nothing can be taught; everything can be learnt.’ – A Chinese proverb. Education is a two way transmission of knowledge and until communication develops between or among the teachers and learners, the purpose of education cannot be served.

Education is unique investment in the present and the future. The aim is to facilitating process of National development through its manifold tasks of generation, dissemination, utilisation and expansion of knowledge, fostering the spirit of national integration, international understanding, social responsibility, and education is one of the significant cultural activities of life aiming at the utmost harmonious growth of human personality.¹²

According to Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Education is for purification of the mind and heart. As education is the process of making the man, it should pave the way for bringing out persons of excellence.

Mahatma Gandhi was of the strong view that education is nothing to do with literacy. Contradictorily, Rousseau stated that education must be done by census. He also cursed the education system which is found all over the world.

To uplift the quality of education, it is needed to upgrade the whole education system with time to a new arena and adopt modern learning technics. In this respect Government institutions often fail to meet the demand and that is the prime reason for the rapid growth of private institutions which fulfil the need very well hence pushing education system towards privatisation.

Last but not the least, what I feel that Education is a bundle of Good Conscience wrapped in a holistic behavioural phenomena.

“Learning is a Journey.. Successes are Milestones;
Achievements are Treasures.. Wisdom is Pleasure.”

¹²The National Policy on Education, 1996 (India).