

Education as an Instrument of Social Change in India

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Abstract

Education is a powerful and effective instrument of social change and social development. Social change is a gradual but inevitable process that occurs when the existing social system or network of social institutions fall short of fulfilling the needs of society. And also when there are new needs, new discoveries and inventions and evolving thought processes in society. Education is a major vector in society, but previously it was largely allocated a conservative role; its main function being familiarization of new generation with the ways of the world so as to maintain and preserve social order. During times of rapid social change, such as the first and second half of the 20th century, as well as that of 21st century, the role of education in the service of the nation is emphasized. During times of comparative prosperity and peace, experimentation in education becomes possible and is supported, and more realistic as well as idealistic goals, can be pursued. But the most fundamental and significant role that education plays is in the ideological and moral spheres. Social changes are a result of a multitude of changes in social, national and international factors. Widespread education can initiate and channelize social changes by bringing about a change in the very outlook and thought pattern of individuals. This paper discusses how education certainly can bring about changes in the pattern of social relationships and progress. It also analyses the nature and causes of social change and how education causes it and is altered by the same.

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I. Introduction

Education has a great social importance especially in the modern, complex industrialized societies. It is one of the concrete sources from which one gets information and knowledge. It affects the society. The role of education as an instrument or agent of social change and social development is widely accepted in the present society. Society needs to change from time to time for its own prosperity and development. Social change may include changes in nature, social institutions, social behaviours, or social relations. Change means accepting new ideas leading to evolution and development. Social change takes place as a result of many types of changes that takes place in the social and non-social environment. Change is inevitable in a society. Education in every sense is one of the fundamental factors of development. No country can achieve sustainable economic development without substantial investment in human capital. Education enriches people's understanding of themselves and world. It improves the quality of their lives and leads to broad social benefits to individuals and society. Education is an instrument on social change and development which constitutes an essential input into the development process itself. The role of education in the development of human resources in particular, requires hardly and emphasis. Education raises people's productivity and creativity and promotes entrepreneurship and technological advances. Additionally, it plays a very crucial role in securing economic and social progress and improving income distribution. Education plays a major role in eradicating poverty by granting access to different employment opportunities. Education system needs to be upgraded time to time to incorporate desired changes in order to cope with the present changes in the society. Education system should be made more practical rather than providing mere theoretical knowledge. Rather than learning only the theoretical aspects practical knowledge should be provided. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) brings about a powerful learning environment and it transforms the learning and teaching process in which students deal with knowledge in an active, self-directed and constructive way (Volman and Eck, 2001). ICT is not only considered as a tool, which can be added for existing teaching methods but also nowadays ICT is seen as an important instrument to support new ways of teaching learning process. In this 21st century, the term "technology" is an important issue in many fields including education. This is

because technology has become the knowledge transfer highway in most countries.²

II. Education and Cultural Change

All cultures are inherently predisposed to change and, at the same time, to resist change. There are dynamic processes operating in a society that encourages the acceptance of new ideas and changes. When changes take place for progress they are readily accepted by the society for its well-being. Within a society cultural changes take place as a result of diffusion which is the movement of things and ideas from one culture to another. Culture loss is an inevitable result of old cultural patterns being replaced by new ones. In this process major changes take place which lead to progressive changes for the welfare of the society. Education can cut down the thick roots of traditions, superstitions, ignorance and backwardness etc. When diffusion takes place the form of a trait may move from one society to another but not its original cultural meaning. Within a society, processes leading to change include invention and culture loss. Inventions may be either 4 technological or ideological which include inventions of new tools, scientific instruments or transportation methods etc. or invention of new mathematical theorems. Education can prepare the society for the cultural imbalances that inevitably characterize the social transitional situation, and should endeavour to prevent, as far as possible, shocking conditions, and, during the long transitional phase, it can discipline the people to withhold immediate gratification in the interest of future inputs for the furtherance of the long-range plans of modernization. Education and social change Social change means change in social structure: the nature, the social institutions, the social behaviour or the social relations of a society, community of people, and so on. Education and social change are interrelated. Both are equally important for the growth and development of a society.³ Education and social change is a two-way process. While education is responsible for preservation, transmission and dissemination of the whole culture, social change is the instrument and precondition of educational thought. Education initiates

²Dudeny, G. The Internet and the language classroom (Vol.X). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³Agarwal,Pawan.Indian Higher Education:Envisioning,(The Future.Sage India,2009)

the social change and gives them direction and purpose. Education prepares the individual for social changes. Education determines the nature of social changes, which ought to be brought about. Education is the most powerful instrument to bring about social revolution. Education for all, at all levels, and at all ages of children is the only remedy to bring about the desired social change in any society. The relationship between education and social change takes a dual form—education as an instrument and education as a product. Education as an instrument is used as a means for bringing about desired changes in the society and in the latter case changes in the educational structure follows as a consequence of changes which have already taken place in the society.⁴

There are three types of relationship between education and social change which are as follows:

1. Education as a Necessary Condition of Social Change Historical experience of advanced countries has shown that for any social revolution education is the pre-condition. Illiterates remain satisfied with their existing conditions and feel that they are destined to be what they are. They never bother to exert to bring change in their present social and economic conditions. They are guided by orthodoxy, traditions and fate rather than by rationality in their actions. Education helps people to make them rational in their thinking and approach.
2. Education as an Outcome of Social Change There is inter-dependent relationship between education and social change. On the one hand it brings change in social conditions. On the other hand it is influenced by social change, which means social change helps spreading education. Education follows social change. It has its place before and after social change First come social changes and then teaching process is changed according to those social changes. Education system changes according to the needs of society.
3. Education as an Instrument of Social Change Education as an instrument of social change means how education helps people to bring social change. Education changes the outlook and the tradition approach towards social and economic problems. It sharpens the skills and

⁴P.R.Gopinathan Nair, Primary Education, Population Growth and Socio-Economic change, New Delhi, 1981

knowledge of the children. Technical education helps in the process of industrialization which results in vast changes in society. Education not only preserves the cultural traditions i.e., customs, traditions and values etc. of the society but also transmits them to the next generation. It also motivates the children to adopt new pattern in order to remain dynamic and forward looking. Education fulfils the needs of the society and propagates such ideas which promote social changes in all fields of life.⁵

Society has undergone vast transformation through several ages. New ideas have emerged and social changes have been brought about by both individual and collective actions. Changes in a society are inevitable due to the existence and amalgamation of different cultures, languages and religions in a society. As a result of these social change cultural changes takes place. Social change is an alteration which occurs in the structure and functions of social organizations of a society which is a part of cultural change.

III. Factors Leading to Social Changes

The stimulating factors which are responsible for bringing about social changes in a society are the following Demographic Factors: Changes in the size and composition of the population are undoubtedly a very important factor leading to social change. The rapid growth of population brings about many changes in the standard of living as well as changes in the social structures and organization of the society. 6 Biological Factors: Due to the problem of conflict between generations there is always a scope for new patterns to emerge. No new generation ever exactly reenact the social life of its predecessor leading to rejection of some aspects of social life while acceptance and innovation of some others. Technological Factors: Technological developments play an important role in societal changes as they transform the structure of the whole society. These rapid technological advancements bring about many changes in the attitudes, beliefs and even in traditions of the society. Natural Factors: Man can never have complete control over nature as none can claim to regulate the weather which greatly affects our mode of thinking, traditions, customs, eating habits, clothing, etc. Moreover it is difficult to achieve technological

⁵ Ram Ahuja ,Society in India concepts, Theories and Recent Trends. (5th ed.),(Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2005).

developments in a country lacking in the natural resources. Legislations: Law is dynamic. It brings about social change by influencing behavior, beliefs and values. Psychological Factors: Human nature always wants a change. He does not want to be tied to the same environment, same customs, traditions and same cultural values. Human beings welcome innovation for the development and betterment of the society. As a result of these changes modernization takes place.⁶

IV. Functions of Education as an Instrument of Social Change

Education fulfils the needs of society and propagates such ideas which promote social change in all fields of life. In this way, education becomes a social process by means of which society moulds children according to its needs and approved patterns of behaviour. Functions of education as an instrument of social change are as follows:

- (1) **Stabilizing Eternal Values** : Education protects eternal values, saves them from pernicious effects of social changes and promotes their knowledge and acceptance in such a manner that inspite of social changes, people in general keep faith in these values. In our society such eternal values are of moral and spiritual nature. Education should protect, preserve and promote these values.
- (2) **Increasing the Areas of Knowledge** Education promotes in the individuals the capacity to increase the scope of knowledge more and more for their benefit. It opens new areas for investigations and researches, which bring about desirable changes in material as well as non-material aspects of culture. Thus education prepares ground for the advent of social change.
- (3) **Leadership Role in Social Change** Education provides leadership in social change. Education makes people capable to initiate and guide for needed social changes by fighting successfully against social evils, customs and blind traditions. Thus, people become capable for realizing

⁶ Zimmerman, B. J., & Martinez-Pons, M. (1988). Construct Validation of a Strategy Model of Student Self Regulated Learning. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 80(3)

their own true personality to the full and promote social welfare to greater and greater extent.⁷

- (4) Evaluation of Social Change Education lays down the required standards and criteria of values with reference to which this process of evaluation takes place effectively, and only after that, desirable social changes are propagated where the undesirable ones discarded.
- (5) Education Accelerates Social Change Education tries to banish social evils, blind customs and traditions through various social reformation projects, political movements, social service schemes and also tries to bring in 'needed social changes and reforms.
- (6) Education Prepares People Mentally for Social Change It prepares the mentality of people to welcome and adopt desirable social changes easily. It may be noted that people will welcome and adopt any technique or pattern only when they become convinced of its utility and desirability. Education, thus structures a wholesome and conducive environment for these social changes to become acceptable to all. It tries to remove the mental reservations and complexes in the minds of people which obstruct the progress of change. Education provides necessary training in skills and occupations and thus produces the needed competent personnel for manning the different specialized jobs in modern industry, business, educational and research establishments and other secondary associations. Education is expected to change the values and attitudes of the people for the betterment of the society.⁸

V. Role of education in society

Education has a great social importance especially in the modern, complex industrialized societies. The main social objective of education is to complete the socialization process. The school and other institutions have come into being in place of family to complete the socialization process. Education acts as

⁷ T.K.Oommen, Strategy for social change, A study of untouchability, EPW, Vol.III, dated 22nd January, 1968

⁸ Karuna Ahmad, Towards a study of Education and Social change, EPW, dated 27th January, 1979

integrative force in society by communicating value that unite different sections of society. The family may fail to provide the child the essential knowledge of the social skills and values of the wider society. Education helps the child to develop the inborn potentialities of child providing scope to develop. Education helps to modify the past behavior through learning and through different agencies of education. Education aims at the all-round development of child-physical, mental, social, emotional, and spiritual. After completion of education the child can earn its livelihood getting proper education, which has productivity. The education should be imparted according to the own interest of the child. The whole personality of the child is developed physically, intellectually, morally, socially, aesthetically and spiritually. He is recognized in the society.

VI. Education in the Present Time

There is no denying the fact that India, in the last six or seven decades , has given to the world a great number of number of scientists, academicians, intellectuals, innovators, professionals and technocrats who have not just excelled in their fields but also made a mark at the international levels. The present era is, however an era of great change and rapid technology that is changing every facet of life—and has posed some challenges as well as puzzles before Education. Today, it is a world of high competition and career focused individuals-both men and women-like never before. Now education has closely come to be synonymous with employability. And modern technology is the indispensable tool that is used heavily to give, provide and receive education. However,besides being employment-oriented, education should also aim at making modern technology accessible, acceptable and usable. India has a huge pool of population .Instead of viewing the growing population as a liability; it should be changed into an asset and an instrument to boost economic and social and growth. This can be done only through human development, which in turn is possible only by education .⁹ And this is where the challenges before the present educational system begins. The present education system needs some changes to fulfil the above goals. Some deficiencies in the present education system may be described as follows: (1) The present education generates and

⁹ Sharma R. Development of Education System in India,(Alpha Publications, New Delhi, 2007)

fortifies, but only partially, the type of knowledge that is relevant and pertinent to our changing society. 2) Technology associated with a particular stream of knowledge maybe inappropriate to the present stage of development in India, in terms of its employment potential or investment, or its widespread utility. (3)The present information, speed, and vocation -centred education has completely failed to provide value framework which is vital to preparing honest, sincere, and conscientious citizens—who eventually take the country to the path of peace and progress. Education is a means as well as end by itself. It is not and it should not be a guarantee to achieve high status and higher positions to all people—nor can that be possible. But certainly it could be a facilitator to a quality life –to the means to provide all the basic amenities of a comfortable living, so that once, these are fulfilled, man can think of and work towards attaining self actualization, which is the ultimate aim of education .Moreover, in the rudimentary form, education also helps achieve social mobility. It also plays a significant role in equalizing opportunities in many ways, some of which are— (1) By making it possible for all those who have the desire to be informed as well as enlightened citizens of their country, to receive and be benefitted by education. (2) By promoting a scientific and objective outlook. (3) By creating a social environment of acceptance of and mutual tolerance towards various religions, languages, castes, class, etc. (4) by providing equal opportunities of social mobility to all individuals in society.¹⁰

VII. Modernization of Education in India: Problems

The path of modernization of education in India may be paved with many difficulties. India is marching on the path of economic development within the framework of a free and democratic society and therefore it cannot adopt authoritarian means to modernize education. Firstly, the centre needs to get the consent of the states and each state has to get the same from its elected representatives in their legislative assemblies before introducing any major change in the allocation of resources for introducing changes in educational system . Secondly, India is as yet a developing nation, with limited resources, which are directed primarily to meet the basic needs of its huge population. But,

¹⁰Mathur SS. A Sociological Approach to Indian Education,(Vinod Pustak Mandir, 1966)

it can avail assistance from advanced and prosperous countries and international agencies like UNESCO which have specially developed programmes to assist educational development in developing countries. However, the fact that this aid may not be sufficient should be taken into account. Thirdly, India is a land of diversities. India has mixed economy, where modern means of production and modern practices co exist with traditional and orthodox and even outdated practices and beliefs, and at many places. The same is true of thoughts and value-system as well as life styles of its citizens. The tribal, rural and urban groups in India show extremely wide contrasts in their physical and social conditions of living. Such extreme varieties and contrasts in society pose a great challenge in formulating and implementing a uniform system and curricula in the sphere of education. The aims, methods and objectives of education which may be beneficial for one group may be worthless for the other; and vice versa. Lastly, in Western societies, economic development and modernization preceded political and social modernization. Consequently, in their educational planning and development, 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 monetarily challenged, to a great extent, has to put the economic needs of the country at the fore before it can embark on a journey to social and individual development, which is brought about only through education. Hence in a country like India, the majority of resources and capital cannot be spent with a free hand on new and innovative and expensive educational programmes that are not productive in realizing immediate economic gains. 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, advances in technology as well as cultural and social temperament of each state. The masses should be made aware of the new developments, their accessibility, their utility and benefits.¹¹

VIII. Judicial Contribution towards Right to Free and Compulsory Education

¹¹ Ram Ahuja ,Social Problems in India. (2nd ed.). (Rawat Publications, New Delhi, 2005).

The judiciary showed keen interest in providing free and compulsory education to all the children below the age of 14 years. In the year the Supreme Court of India decided two Public Interest Litigation cases i.e. Mohini Jain and UnniKrishnan¹² case in which the court enforced right to education. In reality, both cases concerned the impact of certain state laws on private educational institutions of higher learning, the court took the opportunity to develop a precedent that also governed the public provision of elementary education. In Mohan Jain vs. State of Karnataka¹³, popularly known as the ‘capitation fee case’, the Supreme Court has held that the right to education is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the constitution which cannot be denied to a citizen by charging higher fee known as the captivation fee. The right to education flows from right to life. In the instant case the petitioner had challenged the validity of a notification issued by the government under the Karnataka Education Institution (Prohibition of Captivation Fee) Act 1984 passed to regulate tuition fee to be charged by the private medical colleges in the state. The division bench of two judges held that the right to education at all level is a fundamental to citizen under Article 21 of the constitution and charging captivation fee for admission to education institutions is illegal and amount to denial to citizen’s right to education and also violative of Article 14 being arbitrary, unfair and unjust. Subsequently, in Unni Krishna vs. State of Andhra Pradesh,¹⁴ the Apex court was asked to examine the correctness of the decision given by the court in Mohini Jain case. The five judge bench by 3-2 majority partly agreed with the Mohini Jain Decision and held that right to education is a fundamental right under Article 21 of the constitution as ‘it directly flows’ from right to life. But as regards its content the court partly overruled the Mohini Jain’s case, and held that the right to free education is available only to children until they complete the age of 14 years, but after the obligation of the state to provide education is subject to the limits of its economic capacity and development. The obligation created by Article 41, 45 and 46 can be discharged by State either establishing its own institutions or by aiding, recognizing or granting affiliation to private institutions. Thus, the Supreme Court by rightly and harmoniously construing the provision of Part III and Part IV of the Constitution has made right to

¹²1993 AIR 217

¹³(1992) 3 SCC 666.

¹⁴(1993) 1 SCC 6

education a basic fundamental right. In the case of *Bandhuwa Mukti Morcha vs. Union of India and others*,¹⁵ it has been held that it is the solemn duty of the state to provide basic education to children also working in different industries or factories and the court directed the government to take such steps and evolve scheme assuring education to all children either by the industry itself or in coordination with it. In the case of *TMA Pai Foundation vs. State of Karnataka*¹⁶ the scheme formulated by the court in the case of *Unni Krishnan* was held to be an unreasonable restriction within the meaning of Article 19(6) of the Constitution as it resulted in revenue shortfalls making it difficult for the educational institutions. Consequently, all order and directions issued by the state in furtherance of the directions in *Unni Krishnan's* case was held to be unconstitutional. The court observed that right to establish and administer an institution includes the right to admit students; rights to set up a reasonable fee structure; right to constitute a governing body; right to appoint staff and right to take disciplinary action. Frankly speaking, *TMA Pai foundation's* case for the first time brought into existence the concept of education as in 'occupation', a term used in Article 19(1)(g) of the Constitution. The majority held that Article 19(1)(g) and Article 26 confer rights on all citizens and religious denominations respectively to establish and maintain educational institutions. Additionally, Article 30(1) gives the right to religious and linguistic minorities to establish and administer educational institution of their choice. In *Islamic Academy of Education vs. State of Karnataka*,¹⁷ another issue arose for the determination of fees structure in private unaided professional educational institutions. It was submitted that management has been given complete autonomy not only as regard to admission of students but also as regards to fee structure which could include a reasonable revenue surplus for the purpose of development of education and expansion of education.

IX. Conclusion

Education has always been and still is the most and the influential instruments of bringing about social change in India. Education brings about development

¹⁵ (1991) 4 SCC 177

¹⁶ AIR 2003 SC 355

¹⁷ AIR 2003 SC 3724

by changing mindsets. But in modern complex national societies, education should not be regarded as a force to control and conserving cultural heritage. It should only be regarded as a cooperative agent in bringing about constructive social changes in harmony with forces possessing more pervasive power in a diverse society like India's. Thus, the Indian education system needs a complete overhaul through proper laws and their effective implementation. Legislations should be made taking into account the regional, linguistic and cultural diversities of the country. Education can transform society by providing opportunities and experiences through which the individual can cultivate himself for adjustment with the emerging needs and philosophy of the changing society. A sound social progress needs careful planning in every aspect of life – social, cultural, economic, and political. Education must be planned in a manner which is in keeping with the 14 needs and aspiration of the people as a whole. Sociologists, social psychologist, philosophers, politicians, educationists and educational planners regard education as an instrument of social change. In the end, it should be noted that educationists, educators and schools have a tremendous responsibility in social change. Defective education leads to defective social changes. Hence if society is to change in the right direction, it is essential that attention is to be paid to the educational system, as education is at once a creature and creator of social change. The environment and socialization process to which students are exposed remain as important factors contributing to academic success and character building.