

PRIMARY EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL CHANGE

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Abstract

'The Destiny of India is now being shaped in her classrooms', this is very first sentence in the huge Report of Kothari Commission(1964-1966) on Education high points the importance of Education as being a latent instrument for social change and National rebuilding. Every country has its unique system of education expressing its unique socio-cultural and political identity. It's a first and foremost duty of every nation in the world, to build a system of education reflecting its national goals and ideologies and making students ready to meet demands of tomorrow. Properly crafted and diligently implemented educational curriculum and policies at a primary level, has a potential of bringing positive social change in developing countries.

Education especially primary education has an important role to play in the service of the nation. Skill materialization through primary education is vital in a competitive world to secure the so called demographic dividend. Laws are supported by the monetary policy and status of the country and when things are going well, especially economically, more experimentation with education is anticipated, and more idealistic objectives are chased, such as parity of educational opportunity. Primary Education can initiate social changes by bringing about a change in outlook and attitude of man and thereby help in bringing positive social change. Human mind at a budding stage is capable to be moulded easily, if values like gender equality, social equality, democratic way of thinking, good citizenship, morality etc. are incorporated in their curriculum, it can produce a mature generation of law abided citizens, value abided bureaucrats able to change society and nation.

"Change does not necessarily assure progress, but progress implacably requires change. Education is essential to change, for education creates both new wants and the ability to satisfy them" - Henry S. Commager.

Introduction

Change is the unchanging law of Nature, and the same law is applicable to society as well. Human society keeps continuously changing and evolving. Social change is sometimes revolutionary, sometimes evolutionary, sometimes creeping in or sipping in and percolating down to remotest strata of society. Amongst all other means of social transformation slow and gradual change, reaching at a value level is capable of altering and moulding human thinking, is the most powerful one, and Primary education is one of those means.

It is the most important lever for social, economic, cultural, technological and political transformation. Education in a given country must be framed according to its social and cultural values but at the same time it must be capable of building quality human resources capable to cater needs of the changing world. Primary Education ,when offered as a matter of right helps in the understanding of other human and constitutional rights,helps in internalisation of social reforms and law. Primary education is required for everybody even an agrarian, craftsman or a fisherman etc.

Social Change

Roger Cotterrell – 'Social change is held to occur only when social structure-patterns of social relations, established social norms and social roles-changes.'¹

Social change is a result of change in historical, cultural, geographical, biological, demographical,

political, economic and ideological factor.

The magnitude of social change depends upon the type of society: traditional, modernized and highly sophisticated. While in tradition bound society social change is slow, in modernized one it is speedier.²

Right to Primary Education- Providing Right to Education as a matter of right had never been easy in India. For centuries of invasions and rulings, it was never formally provided as a right. It is evident from History of education in India that Indian field of education was always changing as per the political changeover and trying to meet challenges posed by that change. For the first time it was provided as right by the constitutional amendment, 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.³

Social change through Right to primary education

Education- Report of the Education Commission (Kothari Commission) 1964-1966, “The most powerful tool in the process of modernization is education based on science and technology. The one great lesson of the present age of science is that with determination and willingness to put in hard work, prosperity is within the reach of any nation which has a stable and progressive government.”

Education is a means for development or social change in the desired directions.⁴ In Dewey's essay⁵, “Education and Social Change, Change one can observe traces of progressivism as he supports the notion that society is constantly changing, and that education reflects, generates, and guides social change

P. C. Banerjee defined education⁶: “It is the development of the power of adaptation to an ever changing social environment”.

Basic approaches towards Primary Education and Social change⁷

- Education may ignore social change and serve as a conservator of traditions
- It may act as a cooperative force in social change
- It may work as an agent of social change

Hypothesis and Discussion

- Right to Primary Education has potential to bring social change at various levels
- In India we still follow theory of conservatives regarding Education
- RTE in order to bring social change must be supported by adequate changes in curriculum and proper budgetary allocation to improve quality and availability of government schools

Primary Education is a potential armament capable of bringing social change. Right to Education if framed and supported properly, can initiate social changes by changing perspective and attitude of a human being, which can alter patterns of social relationships and thereby causing social changes.

Primary Education can be used as an ‘ideological state apparatus’ for social change MacIver, R. ⁸asserted that social change happens as a response to many types of social and Non-social environment. Education is considered the most important ‘ideological state Apparatus’ devised by the ruling classes to ensure that the society largely conforms to their ideology. It can be effectively used by the government, to inculcate values like

democracy, socialism, secularism at a primary level, to bring a social change in desired direction.

Primary Education is linked with Political change. Thinking of the budding generation can be shaped through gradual education of a system or ideology, a country is longing for, by this way it has a great potential to achieve the desired change. Subjects like civics at primary level can be effectively used to imbibe the basic values like democracy, importance of public opinion, importance of further education in countries development. This method is called as indoctrination.

RTE can help in indoctrinating gender equality. The rooted foundations of inequality of the sexes is fashioned in the thinking of men and women through an upbringing and socialization process which remains to be tremendously influential. The only institution which can neutralize the outcome of this practice is the educational system. Primary Education must be deliberately planned, till a sustainable model of gender equality is fully absorbed in the Indian patriarchal society.

Primary Education is a key to modernization. Lerner⁹ stated that, the key to modernization lies in the participant society – one in which people go through school, read newspapers, are in the wage and market economy, participate politically through elections and change opinions on diverse matters. He also posted that education is the pivotal agent in the transition to a fully participant society.

Primary education given in a proper manner is capable of altering demographic ratio. Schultz T W¹⁰ Has pointed out that with economic development and the requirement for highly educated and trained manpower, parents become increasingly concerned with the quality of their children, as against the number of children emphasized in traditional societies. Therefore, parents invest in children's education more as it is investment in growth agent(education); it has twin advantages of stimulating the process of development and lowering fertility thus accelerating the process of development.

Right to Primary Education can bring Economic Stability. In the modern society where specialized workforce is needed to attain economic power, the acquisition of special knowledge and education has assumed economic significance. Vocational education at a primary level can improve the human resource quality Technical education helps in the process of industrialization which results in vast changes in society. Primary Education is nothing but an investment in human capital and as a critical factor in economic development is of recent origin. The Prime Minister of India in His foreword to the Seventh Five-Year Plan emphasized human factor in development process In the following words: "In the final analysis, development is not just about factories, dams and roads. Development is basically about people. The human factor, the human context, is of the supreme value. We must pay much greater attention to these questions in future. "Therefore, the human factor is a significant correlate of socio-economic development. Efficiency and productivity is not a mere result of economic resources and inputs. Economic resources are operated by the human factor which works as an important variable in the input output analysis

Conservatives believe that schools should not influence or guide social change.(J, 2001).Conservatives believe that schools should not influence or guide social change. They favour older types of study and "disciplinary methods "in schools which suggest that schools can and should have a positive influence on society, but by instilling conservative principles(J, 2001).

In Dewey's essay, "Education and Social Change, "one can observe traces of progressivism as he supports the notion that society is constantly changing, and that education reflects, generates, and guides social change. According to John Dewey school leads society in a particular direction and this theory is called as pragmatism or progressivism.

In India we are still following conservatives, who believe that education cannot bring social

change. In fact Dewey's approach towards education is much more practical, in India Primary education can be effectively used as a weapon for social change.

Going further, in order to make RTE an instrument of social change, curriculum should incorporate principles of social and gender equality, democratic and socialistic principles, people's role in democracy, importance of public opinion and sex education (so as to control population). Compulsory teacher training for quality assurance is required. If change is introduced at this level, when the value base of the pupil is formed, it can result in total social development. As per the twelfth five year plan (2012-2017), Education expenditure as a percentage of GDP rose from 3.3 percent in 2004-05 to over 4 percent in 2011-12. But it is still below the percentage Kothari commission suggested in 1964. Proper budgetary allocation must be done and directed towards improving quality, accessibility, availability of government schools. Curriculum must be framed so as to make pupils capable to meet needs of changing time. Only 4.5% government schools have all the nine facilities under RTE Act, rest of the schools are without basic facilities¹¹. The four basis for education policy i.e. access, equity, quality and governance must get priority in the budgetary allocation.

Conclusion

At present India is going through a demanding and wide-ranging process of change in its numerous spheres. In order to instil and adopt desired changes in society it becomes necessary to bring about appropriate changes and improvements in the national education system right from the primary level.

Primary education, if properly framed and supported by policy is capable of changing human thinking and values, which makes them better citizens, better human resource means better nation. Education can alter demographic ratio, initiates technological changes, brings gender and social equality. There is an undeniable link with personal development, social and economic development and ultimately, national and international development.

(Endnotes)

- 1 Cotterrell, R., 1992. *The Sociology of Law*. second ed. London: Butterworths
- 2 Friedmann, W., 1960. *Legal Theory*. 5th ed. New Delhi: Universal
- 3 <http://mhrd.gov.in/rte>
- 4 Banks, Olive: *The Sociology of Education*. B.T. Gatsford Ltd., London (1968).
- 5 J, D., 2001. *Education and Social Change*. 3rd ed. McGraw-Hill Dushkin
- 6 P. C. Banerjee to President, A. I. N. C., 1947. *AICC Papers*. s.l.:s.n
- 7 V.B. Shah, K. s., 1998. *Sociology of Education*. Jaipur: Rawat Publications
- 8 MacIver, R (1959). *The Nations and the United Nations*. Greenwood Press.
- 9 Lerner, D. (1958). *The Passing of Traditional Society: Modernizing the Middle East*. Second Printing. Glencoe, Ill.: Free Press
- 10 Schultz, T. W. (1982). Investment in Entrepreneurial Ability. *Scandinavian J. Econ.* 82(4):437-48
- 11 Anon., 2013. *12th Five Year Plan-2012-2017, volume 2*, Delhi: SAGE Publications India pvt.ltd.

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