

Role of education in social change

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Abstract

Education like so many other social institutions is two-faced, forward-looking and backward looking. Education in the older sense of the word is training in the arts, crafts and values of a tribe or a class or a society. Education has tremendous scope as an instrument of social and cultural change. One should bear in mind that through education not only knowledge is imparted, but skills, interests, attitudes, aspirations and values are developed, social and cultural progress is facilitated, and at the same time social and cultural level of the people is raised. Education brings cultural changes which may result in many transitions and alterations in the society in many forms. This may be observed in every aspects human culture like variations in norms of values and thinking modes, changes in material culture, ideas, family relations, political culture, patterns of administration at the local, state, regional and national level, involvement in social activities, change in abilities and attitudes of personnel; in short in every aspects of human activity.

In the words of Golda Meyer, the purpose of education is to civilize the thousands of barbarians that are born in to this world every hour. If education fails to bring change in the learner, then it is worthless. Education is considered the most powerful tool in bringing change in man. On one hand, education acculturates an individual; on the other hand, it preserves, transmits and develops the culture of a society. In short, education and culture are mutually interdependent, complementary and supplementary in all their aspects and activities.

The technological advancement, the result of education has helped human being change his living habits. Machines are taking over more and more of man's mechanical activities. Now he has more leisure time at his disposal. There is tremendous burst of inventive skills. The scientific attitude and training is relieving the Indian of his static background of the inherited past of dogma, superstitions, inflexibility, and loaded moral values and predetermined behavioural patterns. Today the Indian mind carries not only its racial and cultural memories but also the technological and scientific truths of others.

Keywords: education, social and cultural change

Introduction

Education like so many other social institutions is two-faced-forward-looking and backward looking. Education in the older sense of the word is training in the arts, crafts and values of a tribe or a class or a society. This education is largely a transmission of culture and so, the more effective such an education is the more conservative it is. What is desired is cent percent transmission, and changes are due to accidents of transmission and reception and are considered aberrations from the desired norm rather than innovations. In such a conception of education the Guru, the traditional transmitter, assumed an exaggeratedly important position. His word could not be assailed or doubted; his person was sacred.

"Education" very simply means providing profitable experience. Learning is gaining through experiences for efficient learning, education is necessary. Giving education to young means to provide such experience, to which may help them to grow physically, mentally, and spiritually.

The term "education" is derived from the Latin word 'educare' which literally means to "bring and is connected with the verb "educare" which means to "bring forth." The idea of education not merely to impart knowledge to the pupil in some subjects but to develop in him those habits and attitudes with which he may successfully face the future. The

Latin author Varro wrote, "The midwife brings forth, the nurse bring up the tutor trains and the master teaches. "Plato was of the opinion that the end of education was "to develop in the body and in the soul (of the pupil) all the beauty and all the perfection of which they are capable." It means, in short, "a sound mind in a sound and body." According to the Aristotle conception the aim of education is "to develop man's faculties, especially, his mind, so that he may be able to enjoy the contemplation of the supreme truth, goodness and beauty in which perfect happiness essentially consists. The Arabic equivalent of education is "talim" which means "the process of providing and acquiring knowledge."

Sociologists are becoming more and more aware of the importance and role of education institutions in the modern industrialized societies. In recent years education has become a topic of major interest for some sociologists. As a result, a new branch of sociology called sociology of Education has become established.

Definitions of Education

Durkheim, "Education is the socialization of the younger generation." He further States that is "a continuous effort to impose on the child ways of seeing, feeling and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously."

M.K. Gandihiji "By education I mean and all round drawing out of the best in the child man's body, mind and spirit."

Sumner "Education is the attempt to transmit to the child the mores of the group, so that he can learn "what conduct is approved and what is disapproved. How he ought to behave in all kinds of case? What he ought to believe and reject".

According to Samuel Koenig, "Education may also be defined as the process whereby the social heritage of a group is passed on from one generation to another as well as the process whereby the child becomes socialized, i.e., learns the rules of behavior of the group into which he is born."

Dr. S. Radhakrishnan, a great philosopher and educationist of India, has said thus "Education to be complete, must be humane: it must include not only the training of the intellect but also the refinement of the heart and the discipline of the spirit."

In simple words, education means "developing of and cultivating the various physical intellectual, aesthetic and moral faculties, in an individual."

Regarding the main objectives of education, ancient Greek philosopher Plato said long back thus, the end of education is "to develop a sound mind in a sound body." It is widely held education fulfils three main objectives. They are as follows:

1. Education helps man to know him and the universe. It also enables him understand the way in which he is related to the social world in which is living.
2. Education by providing for transmission of culture establishes a connecting link between the past, present and the future; and
3. Education by contributing to the development of both the individual and society, enhance human progress.

To the sociologist, education takes place in the society and is a social thing. Durkheim (1950) argued that: "It is society as a whole and each particular social milieu that determine the ideal that education realizes. Society can survive only if there exists among its members a sufficient degree of homogeneity; education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning, the essential similarities that collective life demands. But on the other hand, without certain diversity all cooperation would be impossible; education assumes the persistence of this necessary diversity by being itself diversified and specialized"

Durkheim thus views education as a means of organizing the individual self and the social self, the I and the We into a disciplined, stable and meaningful unity. The internalization of values and discipline represents the child's initiation into the society. This is why it is very significant to study and analyze education using sociological approaches.

Swift (1969) noted that:

1. Education is everything which comprises the way of life of a society or group of people is learned. Nothing of it is biologically inherited.
2. The human infant is incredibly receptive to experience. That is, he is capable of developing a wide range of beliefs about the world around him, skills in manipulating it and values as to how he should manipulate it.
3. The infant is totally dependent from birth and for a very long period thereafter upon other people i.e. he is incapable of developing human personality without a very great deal of accidental or intended help from other people.

He therefore, defined education as "the process by which the individual acquires the many physical, moral social capacities demanded of him by the group into which he is born and within which he must function". This process has been described by sociologists as Socialization. Education has a broader meaning than socialization. It is all that goes on in the society which involves teaching and learning whether intended or unintended to make the child a functional member of that society. The role of sociology in education is to establish the sociological standpoint and show its appreciation to education.

Manheim (1940) stated that: "Sociologists do not regard education solely as a means of realizing abstract ideals of culture, such as humanism or technical specialization, but as part of the process of influencing men and women. Education can only be understood when we know for what society and for what social position the pupils are being educated."

Thus, from these definitions, one can assume that the purpose of education is to develop the knowledge, skill, or character of students. Education has often been very much so seen as a fundamentally optimistic human endeavour characterized by aspirations for progress and betterment. It is understood by many to be a means of overcoming handicaps, achieving greater equality, and acquiring wealth and social status.

Education is perceived as a place where children can develop according to their unique needs and potential. It is also perceived as one of the best means of achieving greater social equality. Many would say that the purpose of education should be to develop every individual to their full potential, and give them a chance to achieve as much in life as their natural abilities allow. Few would argue that any education system accomplishes this goal perfectly. Some take a particularly negative view, arguing that the education system is designed with the intention of causing the social reproduction of inequality.

Education does not operate in a vacuum. To have a better society, we should analyze the society to show its strengths and weakness and plan the educational programmes to these effects. The educational system of many countries must reflect the philosophy of that society. It should be based on the needs, demands and aspirations of the society for it to function properly. It should be related to the level of culture, industrial development, and rate of urbanization, political organization, religious climate, family structures, and stratification. It should not only fulfil the individual's and society's needs but their future aspirations.

Education as an instrument of social change

Education is the most powerful instrument of social change. It is through education that the society can bring desirable changes and modernize itself. 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 needs and aspirations of the people as a whole

Indian Education Commission (1964-66) observed that realization of country's aspirations involves changes in the

knowledge, skills, interests and values of the people as a whole. This is basic to every programme of social and economic betterment of which India stands in need.

The functions of education in the sphere of social change are outlined as under:

1. **Assistance in changing Attitudes:** Education helps to change the attitudes of people in favour of modern ways of life and develops attitudes which can fight prejudices, superstitions and traditional beliefs. It can bring about a change in attitudes of people in favour of small family towards rising above orthodox values and socio-cultural barriers of caste and class and towards religion and secularism. Education interacts with the process of social development which is another name of social change.
2. **Assistance in creating desire for Change:** Education creates a desire for change in a society which is pre-requisite for any kind of change to come. It makes people aware of social evils like drinking, dowry, gambling, begging, bonded labour etc. and creates an urge to fight and change such things. Education makes under-privileged, down-trodden and backward people aware of their lot and instils a desire to improve their conditions. Thus education creates a desire for change.
3. **Assistance in adopting Social Change:** Whenever some social change occurs, it is easily adopted by some people while others find it very difficult to adjust themselves to this change. It is the function of education to assist people in adopting good changes.
4. **Overcoming Resistance to Change:** Certain factors create resistance in the way of accepting social change. Education helps in overcoming resistance.
5. **Analysis in Change:** Education invests the individual with the capacity to use his intelligence, to distinguish between right and wrong and to establish certain ideals. Education determines the values which act as a criterion for the analysis of social change.
6. **Emergence of new Changes:** Education initiates, guides and controls movements for social reform. Education helps in agitating public opinion towards the abolition of many social changes.
7. **Leadership in Social Change:** Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, Swami Vivekananda, Mahatma Gandhi highly educated and enlightened Indians, made all efforts at conscious level to bring about the social changes. Mahatma Gandhi designed Basic Education to fight the ills of mass illiteracy.
8. **Advances in the sphere of Knowledge:** New researches and inventions depends upon education, because only the educated individuals can search for new things in every field. Thus education contributes to social change by bringing changes in knowledge.
9. **Perpetualizing Eternal Values:** Education protects the eternal values, promotes knowledge and acceptance in such a manner that in spite of social changes, people in general keep faith in these values.
10. **Transmission of culture:** Education is the creator, generator and director of all social change. In short, education is a preservative, consolidating, establishing and creative force.
11. **Stabilizing democratic values:** Education is a weapon of

democracy. It can help in developing democratic attitudes and values for better living. Democratic values such as liberty, equality, fraternity, justice, tolerance, mutual respect, feeling of brotherhood and faith in peaceful methods are stabilized through education in free India. These values are helpful in bringing about social change.

12. **National integration:** Education can prove very useful in bringing about national integration which is the basis for unity among people.
13. **Economic prosperity:** Education is the most important factor in achieving rapid economic development and technological progress and in creating a social order founded on the value of freedom, social justice and equal opportunity.
14. **National development:** Education is the fundamental basis of national development. Education is the powerful instrument of economic, political, cultural, scientific and social change.

Relation between Education and Social Change

There are three ways in which the relation between education and social change can be analysed:

1. **Education as a Conserver:** According to this view the function of educational is to train the intellect, transmit what is permanently in the cultural heritage and adjust the young. It regards it only as an institution of learning it into an agency of reform. It thinks that such "arousing and developing in the child a certain number intellectual and moral states which are demanded the political society as a whole and the special he is specifically destined" (Durkheim 1956) for a milieu that may never be realised. Such sociologically acceptable with reference to more where change takes a very long time to occur.
2. **Education as an agent of Social Change:** This view regards that education can engage more positive action and can rebuild society young a programme of social reform. It regards change as universal and inevitable as wrong. As "Overlook the supra-individual nature and institutions such as socio-economic classes, pressure groups and other centres of power understate the persistence and recurrence patterns and therefore over emphasize history, opportunities for unplanned change ability of progress" (Brameld 1955). They do not see, therefore, that broad social planned rationally and executed firmly so that reactionary can be eliminated and specific goals may be however, is sociologically not acceptable for several future of any society remains very uncertain and chart it in details; any realized reform is always compromise and mutual adjustment of various (ii) deeply entrenched cultural patterns mould people conceive and implement change; for about by industrialization in the west may not be repeated in the east; (iii) indoctrination of a reform programme may interfere with the free play of child's intelligence and limit his growth and, being a programme not approved by the society yet, may alienate the child from his culture; (iv) in order to be an agent of change, education must determine the rate and direction of techno-economic changes and not be determined by them; however, this is not possible for education as other forces are more pervasive; (v) besides, controversy regarding

which reforms should be inculcated through educational institutions may turn them into a battle-ground of conflicting interest groups. "If one admits the possibility of obtaining social reforms that one likes, one must also admit the possibility of obtaining social reforms that one dislikes. What happens will depend on the popularity of various reformers, the plausibility of their causes and the pressures they are able to exert on the educational system." (Hutchins, 1953). Education may, however, influence social and economic change directly as a consequence of its role in the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge.

3. Education as a cooperative force in social change: The contemporary world is a world of changing societies. Changes that occur in them "are frequent, occur in sequential chains and affect a wider range of individual experience and functional aspects of societies" (Moore 1965). In such societies therefore, an educational system that performs the function of conservation only soon becomes either dysfunctional or undergoes a change in its function as well as structure to suit the new needs. However, it is not called upon to work as a prime mover of social change, but only as a cooperative force. It can deliberately cultivate among children (a) necessary intellectual and emotional dispositions and attitudes for dealing with change in general, (b) necessary technical and social skills and (c) teach them to react to change intelligently when it occurs. It can do this by keeping abreast of social changes and modifying in each generation the heritage it may teach in its schools.

A number of sociologists, educationists and anthropologists are of the view that education must be a co-operator rather than a prime mover in it. Warner says, "As our present social structure, education must be adapted will produce a generation or more of maladjusted unhappy adults" (Warner 1944). Education can produce changes in culture and society only from those in power. Education is a force which develops the changes in social aims already decided power, but it does not initiate the changes. Thus in complex nation societies of today education be not regarded as a conserver nor as an agent of change be regarded as a cooperative force in social change forces more pervasive in society.

Role of the teacher in bringing Social Change

Teacher is the central figure in any formal educational system. He must respond to the duty. He is regarded as an effective agent of social change. Any social change without teacher is a mere figment of imagination. The teacher should know well the needs of the society and the nature and direction of social change. The present democratic society expects that the teacher should really act as an agent of social change. Regarding his role, the following points need special mention:

a) Model of modernity: In the process of social change important role can be performed successfully by the teacher only when he makes himself a model of modernity i.e., when he himself imbibes modern values and allows them to manifest in his own conduct. In other words, the following qualities should be imbued in the behaviour of the teacher: scientific attitude, rational thought, empathy, mobility, democratic style, sentiment of

respect for individual personality, secularism, faith in change and transformation.

- b) Competent and skilled:** The teacher should be competent and skilled because he is to lead the younger generation, the future citizens of tomorrow.
- c) Psychological climate:** The teacher must prepare the psychological climate favourable to new attitudes and values.
- d) Suggestions for change:** The teacher should come forward with his wise suggestions of bring about social change. He has to be ready for bringing about an implementing social change. Apart from giving wise suggestions, the teacher should welcome the positive changes taking place. He should welcome what science and technology has bestowed on mankind and inculcate proper attitudes and values in students. He is to encourage non-formal education, technical education, population education, inclusive education, adult education, women education, education of the backward classes and participate, actively in these activities in the larger interest of social change.
- e) Remove obstacles:** The teacher is to help remove the obstacles in the way of implementation of social change. The Government wants social change by implementing family planning. The teacher should help the Government by breaking down the resistance of people to this programme.
- f) Scientific attitude among students:** The teacher should develop a rational, curious, thoughtful, positive, constructive and scientific attitude in his students by encouraging debate and discussion in the class-room as well as in co-curricular activities.
- g) Secular attitude:** The teacher should have secular attitude. He should have respect for all religions. He should eschew all caste, community and class considerations in dealing with students and colleagues. If the teacher can modernize the entire atmosphere of the school, he can give powerful impetus to the process of social change because the students of today will become the pillars of society of tomorrow.
- h) National and international outlook:** The teacher should have national and international outlook. He should try to inculcate emotional integration, national integration and international understanding in the students.
- i) Pupil-centered and Community-centered education:** The teacher should impart pupil-centered, life-centered and community-centered education. He should provide opportunities for the maximum and best development of the pupils. He should constantly strive to improve community life through the best possible use of material and human resources of the school and community.
- j) Use of modernized instructional technology:** The teacher should make effective use of science and technology in the routine activities of the school and in this way habituate students to their use and give them practice in applying science and technology in other situations. Kit-based instruction for teaching of science, language laboratories for teaching languages, programmed learning for all subjects, wise exploitation of radio and television

lessons and educational journals etc. to supplement classroom teaching are essential steps.

Conclusion

Education has tremendous scope as an instrument of social and cultural change. One should bear in mind that through education not only knowledge is imparted, but skills, interests, attitudes, aspirations and values are developed, social and cultural progress is facilitated, and at the same time social and cultural level of the people is raised. Education brings cultural changes which may result in many transitions and alterations in the society in many forms. This may be observed in every aspects human culture like variations in norms of values and thinking modes, changes in material culture, ideas, family relations, political culture, patterns of administration at the local, state, regional and national level, involvement in social activities, change in abilities and attitudes of personnel; in short in every aspects of human activity.

In the words of Golda Meyer, the purpose of education is to civilize the thousands of barbarians that are born in to this world every hour. If education fails to bring change in the learner, then it is worthless. Education is considered the most powerful tool in bringing change in man. On one hand, education acculturates an individual; on the other hand, it preserves, transmits and develops the culture of a society. In short, education and culture are mutually interdependent, complementary and supplementary in all their aspects and activities. The technological advancement, the result of education has helped human being change his living habits. Machines are taking over more and more of man's mechanical activities. Now he has more leisure time at his disposal. There is tremendous burst of inventive skills. The scientific attitude and training is relieving the Indian of his static background of the inherited past of dogma, superstitions, inflexibility, and loaded moral values and predetermined behavioural patterns. Today the Indian mind carries not only its racial and cultural memories but also the technological and scientific truths of others. Thus, it can be concluded that the teacher through his multifarious roles and activities, can accelerate the process of social change in a very powerful way.

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