Education in India: Challenges and Its Role In Bringing Social Change

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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.

Keywords: Education, social change, society, progress ,agent.

Introduction

Education is the best instrument to empower the individual. In the current system of education, there is child or student centred learning which makes the learner's role more active. Students can now understand their participation in social transformation better. Societal change is a result of collective transformation of the individuals within that society.

Education has played a pivotal role in the development and propagation of scientific thought, science and technology. Every aspect of man's life has witnessed a phenomenal change owing to education. Education brings about changes in the behavior-pattern of society by enabling every individual to effectively understand and hence, participate in the activities of society and to make positive contribution to progress –of individual, community and nation.

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 indispensible tool that is used heavily to give, provide and receive education.However,besides being employmenat-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 . And this is where the challenges before the present educational system begins.

The present education system needs some changes to fulfill the above goals. Some deficiencies in the present education system may be described as follows:

(1) The present education generates and 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.

Education, Modernisation and Social Change:-

Education is the major instrument of positive and progressive social change and growth, and educators and educational institutions are agents through which such changes may be brought. To this end, three things are to be considered: the agents of change, the content of change, and the socio-cultural background of those who are sought to be changed, i.e. students. Educational institutions that are under the control of or are patronized by different cultural groups consciously and unconsciously reflect and propagate the values of those groups. In such a situation, teachers impart specific values, ideals and aspirations to the students that are held and propagated by that particular group.

Social reformers, across the world, and specially in a multi-religion country like India, emphasized values like removal of caste restrictions, humanitarianism, communal harmony,tolerance towards other religions, equality of women; while working at the same time,against social evils, inhibiting customs and practices; which gradually led to the establishment of democratic institutions. They, thus, endeavoured to , and were successful in teaching liberal philosophy through education for changing society. They regarded education as a flame or light of knowledge which dispelled the darkness of ignorance.

Education as an instrument of disseminating values of modernization came to be emphasized from about the latter half of twentieth century. For 'modernizing' the Indian society, study of economic theories and practices aiming at increasing production, distributive justice, public participation in decision-making bodies, adoption of scientific technology in agriculture , industry, agriculture and other occupations and professions were increasingly being included in educational framework-both at school and more so at university level. The goals of modern day economy could only be served through liberal education. Modernization came to be accepted not just as a philosophy or a movement based on pragmatic and novel value system but as a process that was to be confined only to enhance economic prosperity; not without its incidental 'benefits' in social, political, cultural and religious fields too. Education was obviously utilized as channel for the spread of modern practices.

The evolution and change in educational thought and practices arise out of the needs of the changing society of which the individual is a member. The educational system of any society is related to its total social system. It performs the various functions to preserve and multiply the on-going social system. The objectives and requirements of the entire social system are reflected in the functions it lays down for educational system and the form in which it formulates it to fulfill those functions. But in a society going through various phases of change and development, values and ideals and life-practices also keep on undergoing various changes from generation to generation and the educational system in such a society must not only transmits the cultural heritage, but also aid learners to adjusts to and assimilate these changes while preserving the beneficial old practices.

The relationship between educational system and society is mutual, reciprocal and symbiotic; sometimes the society influences changes in educational system and at other times the educational system influences changes in the society.

Women's Education :-

The National Policy on Education, 1986, also laid emphasis on women's education. Many provisions and laws have been made to promote women's and girls' education and the present system of education aims at attaining gender-equality which would in turn foster humanitarian and just outlook in learners. Educational institutions across the country are running programmes to further women's development removal of illiteracy among women. Government is running many programmes, both at school and college level, as well as campaigns for easy access to elementary education for girl-child beside pursuing policy of non-discrimination to eliminate sex stereotyping in vocational, technical and professional courses.

Social Change: Its Nature and Impact and Its Impact on Education

A)Change In Wider Social Milieu :-

The changes occurring in any social environment may be due to some internal forces or extraneous factors arising in other societies; or across the globe. The world is a global village now. Social phenomena or any major thought process occurring in neighboring or distant societies have rapid and widespread impact now. English, for instance, has now become a world language. It is heavily used for dissemination of information and propagation of knowledge and consequently India feels the necessity to emphasis the need for retaining and strengthening the knowledge of English in order to continue to be benefitted by the latest in science and technology and the world's pool of knowledge.

B)Change In Goals, Objectives And Values of Society :-

Any change occurring in society necessitates in its changes in larger in social goals, objectives and values. Such changes in social values may directly or indirectly affect the fabric of social roles and social interaction. The adoption of equality as a value has ultimately led to compulsory and free primary education, to expansion of primary educational facilities to all children up to the age of fourteen and to providing financial and other aid to backward classes so as to enable them to avail of the expanded educational facilities.

C)Advances In Knowledge And Technology

Social changes are much affected by innovations and progress in science and technology. The last century has witnessed tremendous developments in science, such as, space exploration, vast and rapid industrialization, innovations in agricultural technology, development of transportation, and mass media of communication etc. All these have brought about new understanding of the human organism as well as psychological basis of individual and social behavior This, would very naturally be reflected in the entire system of education , reflecting itself through changes in curricula and syllabi, methods of teaching and learning, as well as the role of teacher and teacher-taught relationship.

D)Change In Size And Composition Of Population

The size and composition of population in our country is expanding. Increase of population brings about differential rates of increase in different regions, communities, socio-economic groups and age groups and this consequently necessitates many changes in the educational system. A variety of students from different socio-linguist groups, from different economical status, of varied levels of intelligence now find themselves in the same classroom. This calls for changes in educational system.

Thus, the various types of social changes occurring from time to time in society make the existing educational system deficient to a certain extent and necessitates it to change accordingly and evolve.

Social Change and Gaps in Indian Educational System

In response to social change educational system must also change. The change must be in consonance with the social change so as to meet adequately the new goals and demands of various social groups. Otherwise a gap would be created between the goals and demands of the society and those of the educational system. A number of such lacunae have occurred in the Indian educational system after independence and in many ways it played a dysfunctional role in Indian society. This was accepted and noted by the Kothari Commission very clearly.

Modernisation 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, 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.

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 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.

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