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MODERN EDUCATION IN INDIA: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS



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Abstract: Since Second World War many sociologists devoted their energies to the study of educational problems from sociological perspective. In India, the Five Year Plans were organized with specific social and economic objectives. One of their objectives was the transformation of Indian society from traditional and agrarian pattern to modern industrial one. Education was rightly considered to be the most important instrument to bring about a social change. The aim of this article is to analyze the impact of modern education on Indian society.

Keywords: Socialization, Education, Modernization, Social Change, Social Control, Liberalism.

INTRODUCTION:

Education is one of the basic activities of people in all societies. The continued existence of society depends upon the transmission of culture to the young. The idea of education is not merely to impart knowledge to students but to develop habits and attitudes with which individuals may successfully face the future.

According to Aristotle, 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". (Quoted in Rao, 2006)

DEFINITIONS

Emile Durkheim conceives of education as "The socialization of the younger generation". He further states that it is "a continuous effort to impose on the child a way of seeing, feeling, and acting which he could not have arrived at spontaneously".

F. J. Brown and J. S. Rock stated that education is "the sum total of the experiences which mould the attitudes and determine the conduct of both the child and the adult".

James Welton, in the Encyclopedia Britannica (11th edition), writes that education consists in "an attempt on the part of adult members of human society to shape the development of the coming generation with its own ideals of life".

From the above definitions, it can be perceived that education is responsible for the systematic transmission of knowledge, skills, and cultural values within a formally organized structure.

As a social institution, education imparts values, beliefs, and knowledge considered essential to the social reproduction of individual personalities and entire cultures (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1990). Education grapples with the issues of social stability and social change, reflecting society even as it attempts to shape it. Education serves an important purpose in all societies. At the micro level, people acquire the

basic knowledge and skills they need to survive in society. At the macro level, the social institution of education is an essential component in maintaining and perpetuating the culture of a society across generations (Kendall, 2007).

Today, education has become an essential aspect of the modern industrial society. It has become increasingly secular, which is a healthy sign. In fact, all the credit must be given to the untiring efforts of Indian social reformers and the British rule, because without them this would not have been possible in a conservative country like India. Although British imperialists did have vested interests, no one can deny their contributions in the field of communication and universalization of education. Education helped to develop a rational mindset, of which we have undeniably reaped the benefits.

Yet, education is now regarded more as an agent of social change than an instrument of social control. All the nations in the world are investing a huge amount of money on education for it has become an essential condition of advancement. Education, modernisation, advancement in science, technology and industry normally go together. Formal education has become an absolute necessity today (Sharma and Sharma, 1985).

In the words of Yogendra Singh (1973), education has been one of the most influential instruments of modernisation in India. It has led to the modernization of people's aspirations of nationalism, liberalism and freedom. It has been responsible for the growth of an enlightened intelligentsia which carried forward not only a movement for Independence but also a relentless struggle for social and cultural reforms.

The most important function of education is modernisation. Modernization is a comprehensive concept aimed at capturing, describing, and evaluating profound qualitative and quantitative changes in society. It describes the transition of a society from medieval to modern culture. It stands for progress beyond tradition. As compared to urbanisation, industrialisation, and westernisation,

modernization represents a more complex process and a more complex result. In the intellectual sphere it is an awareness, that it is possible to see a rational explanation of physical and social phenomena. In religion, it is expressed in secularism. In philosophy, it is expressed in humanist thought. In the political field it stands for democratization. In ecology, it is characterised by an advancing degree of urbanization. But the most important feature of modernization as related to education is cultural. In the cultural sphere its symptoms have been pointed out by A.R. Desai.

Desai stated that the spread of literacy and secular education lead to a more complex, intellectual and institutional system for cultivation and advancement of specialized roles based on intellectual disciplines. This implies the emergence of a new personality orientation, traits, and characteristics that reveal a greater ability to adjust to the broadening of societal horizons: some ego flexibility, widening spheres of interests, growing potential and empathy with other people and situations, growing evaluation of self-advancement and mobility, a growing awareness of the dignity of others and an increased disposition to respect them, and growing faith in sciences and technology. Finally, modernisation implies the ability of society to develop an institutional structure capable of adjusting to continually changing problems and demands.

Modern education is the most important instrument of modernisation as the latter includes a directed change in the system of attitudes, beliefs, and values, and the enhancement of the acceptability of modern technology and its organizational and operational framework. Modernisation also involves the development of infrastructure essential to the adaptation of foreign technology to specific national needs, and laying the foundations of institutions and organisations which could, in time, assume the responsibility of independent innovation and technological growth to cater to the country's needs and problems.

LIMITATIONS OF MODERN EDUCATION

In spite of performing the laudable functions mentioned above, modern education has a flip-side as well. An uncritical imitation of the Western model of education has caused a number of serious problems. Things have gone wrong because of the tremendous emphasis given to technical education without realising the simple fact that society cannot be run only by technocrats. We have treated education as one of the means of getting employment rather than as a means to achieve the all-round development of individuals. As a result, the study of liberal arts (courses of study on classical and modern languages, literature, social sciences, humanities, etc.) has been ignored considerably.

In focusing on gaining knowledge, it appears that we have disregarded basic human values. The impact of modern science and technology has led to the loss of significance of many of the cherished values of the past. The new set of values that has replaced the old ones has given rise to spiritual dislocation and confusion among both, individuals and society. In the absence of meaningful human values, the life of modern educated individuals has become

more mechanical and materialistic. The uncontrolled growth and use of technology and the directionless development in sciences have today added much on human tension, anxiety, and misery.

CONCLUSION

Modern education's over-emphasis on the study of science and technology has led to liberal education taking a back seat. This has prevented modern learners from knowing their own past traditions, ethical values and cultural heritage. In the words of P. B. Kar, "It is argued that in such circumstances an individual would be cut off from his 'roots' and his creative faculties, particularly his emotional and spiritual talents, would languish for want of nourishment."

To prevent this damage there is a strong need for rethinking and reappraisal in the field of modern education planning. Special attention has to be given to the study of languages, literature, and humanities because these subjects are related to culture and the maintenance and transmission of ethical values. Without these, human existence would completely disintegrate.

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