



Educational System and Development in India: Reforming Educational Policies – A Critical Appraisal

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ABSTRACT

Education has long been recognized as a key instrument for achieving participative citizenship for sustainable-development, policies that support practical educational change in this regard required. There is an emerging consensus amongst public, government and business on the need to move with some urgency towards more sustainable lifestyles in future generations are to enjoy quality of life. All people are directly affected by education and its policies. To understand the extent to which the globalization of trade and finance is contribution to the wealth gap; be able to critically evaluate the role of science and technology in the resolution of environmental and sustainable development issues. To understand the variety of ways in which individuals and groups can actively participate in the promotion of sustainable development and the implications of this has for the social and economic operation of communities to able to justify their own views and positions on ethical issues related to sustainable development.

1. Introduction

“The whole educational and professional training system is a very elaborate filter, which just weeds out people who are too independent, and who think for themselves, and who don't know how to be submissive, and so on -- because they're dysfunctional to the institutions.”

— Noam Chomsky

Education is important not merely as means to other ends, but it is an attribute that the valued in itself, by most individuals. It is a priority for countries seeking to develop and sustain their level and pace of development. The rationale for the effective inclusion and integration of educational policies and globalization for sustainable-development. Education has long been recognized as a key instrument for achieving participative citizenship for sustainable-development, policies that support practical educational change in this regard required. There is an emerging consensus amongst public, government and business on the need to move with some urgency towards more sustainable lifestyles in future generations are to enjoy quality of life. All people are directly affected by sustainable development issues. To understand the extent to which the globalization of trade and finance is contribution to the wealth gap; be able to critically evaluate the role of science and technology in the resolution of environmental and sustainable development issues. To understand the variety of ways in which individuals and groups can actively participate in the promotion of sustainable development and the implications of this has for the social and economic operation of communities to able to justify their own views and positions on ethical issues related to sustainable development. To understand the range of causal factors involved in reduction of global biodiversity and recognise the principles underlying good practice in biodiversity maintenance or creation, be familiar with arguments for and trends in globalization and localization in economic activity in relation to the needs for a sustainable economy. Thus Sustainable Development can be defined as that which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations as meet their own needs.

2. Development System of Education

Ideally and materially education for sustainable development revolves around the quality of basic and professional education that is essentially determined by curriculum relevance, liberation oriented pedagogy, teacher's development dynamism and the practice of wide participatory democratic school governance. Let us discuss these variables. Curriculum is one of the main input for quality education whereby emphasis is supposed to be given on local cultural environment. Education is linked to production in the sense that the activities of learning leads to

preparation of products which have intrinsic values. As was the case in traditional informal education systems, one learnt as (he) grew up and again one learnt as one produced. Teachers' quality both in terms of professional excellence and social behaviour greatly influence the education outcome. This makes the professional development of teachers. It is expected to give them induction courses on critical issues. so as to enable them adopt to changing students' characteristics, changing nature of teaching and social expectations of teaching in the light of fast pace of the growth of knowledge. The efforts have been taken to establish and develop teachers. The policy makers are hard to engage development partners in assisting in meeting such needs in schools.

3. Reforming of Educational Policies in India

In order to evaluate performance of an institution in the light of sustainable development and being about a measure of accountability a mechanism of accreditation has been developed by UGC. This is an autonomous council under UGC called National Accreditation and Assessment Council with a purpose to carry out periodic assessment of universities and colleges. NAAC has evolved a methodology of assessment which involves self-appraisal by each university and college and an assessment of the performance by an expert committee. Similarly, for technical education AICTE has been established its own accreditation mechanism for its institutions through the National Board of Accreditation. NBA has also undertaken a detailed exercise for benchmarking the performance of reference for evaluation. Both NAAC and NBA are in the right direction and need to be encouraged and strengthened.

There should be deliberate efforts of encouraging private agencies to participate in the provision of education, to establish and manage schools and other education institution at all levels where curriculums are reoriented to address the need more-sustainable production and consumption patterns. The government needs to reexamine curriculum at all levels Emphasizing the provision of education that is locally relevant and culturally appropriate, reflecting the environmental, economic, and social conditions of the targeted community through improved teacher management and. use of appropriate performance and assessment strategies. Identification of critical priority areas for the purpose of creating and enabling environment for private agencies to participate in provision of quality education. Nations should share knowledge and innovative technologies to achieve the goal of sustainability in development. Broadening of the financial base for education training, through more effective control of the government spending cost sharing and liberalization strategies. Reorganization of the management structure of education by placing more authority and responsibility on schools and local communities. Strengthening the integration of formal and non-formal education relationship by strengthening coordination. Application of global practices needs comprehensive policy directions with strategies for sustainable development issue particularly of education and literacy with the prime objective of efficient management and implementation. Provision of well planned exercise for addressing to the issue of social learning, integrated with contextualized literacy is the need of today. In this context, there is a need to intervene the formulation of policy within a framework.

The policy has to be translated as per the situation and geographical demarcations of a particular village. Education of a remote area located in the plains has to be different from that placed in difficult terrains or near coastal areas. Organization of education has to be made specific to the local conditions. Contextualizing of education becomes more crucial since one will find difference in everything; local topography, demography, environment, climate, culture, occupation, migratory trends, society composition (children, age-group old people), the level of education of people and resources available.

4. Educational Development - Social Goals

In terms of social goals of Cooperative Learning, Kurt Lewin, known as the founding father of modern social and organisational psychology, who influenced the Group Dynamics Movement, may be mentioned here for his pioneering contributions vis-a-vis group processing, psychological ecology of behaviour settings, cooperative experiential learning experiences, action theory, and resolution of social conflicts. Paulo Freire's (1968) notion of education as a concentrically attuned, democratic, critiquing, and conscientizing experience vis-a-vis the pedagogy of the oppressed and the deprived could be named here as another driving force towards cooperative learning that has consciousness raising-significance. Freire was insistent on defeating the 'banking' concept of education which, as an instrument of oppression, tended to transfer facts into the minds of learners as if 'their minds were passive', and on minimizing 'the teacher-student dichotomy'. He believed in Rousseau's idea of the child as an active learner and Franz Fanon's idea of decolonization of the mind. Based on 'dialogicity' that promotes bi-directional relationship wherein both the teacher and student learn, his method of learning aims at realizing the essence of education, namely 'freedom in practice'. In his method, no one 'liberates anyone else, nobody liberates himself all alone, and people liberate themselves in fellowship with one another'. Learning is generative, and learning to realize social goals

is a social process of learning together by discovering and understanding each one's reality, of acting together by struggling together so as to transform the reality - when it means oppression, and of experiencing fellowship by enjoying freedom in practice. 'No one can create himself in silence, but through dialogue, reflection and action'. This was how Freire espoused the cause of learning, rather cooperative learning by extension.

Learning is an act of believing in and practising face-to face interactive learning so as to encourage creativity and foster critical thinking through group processing. In Cooperative Learning, learning is not memorizing a set of truths, or already established or arrived at conclusions. Instead, as Carolyn et al (1992) observe, it hovers around raising the level of 'learners' curiosity' and their 'spirit of questioning', infusing in them a democratic and scientific way of investigation of facts and findings, and facilitating them to integrate critical assimilation and 'multidimensional aesthetic responses' . It organizes learners at any graded level in small groups for learning together that aims at contributing to the attainment of shared common goals and a win-win situation for all. With teacher as facilitator performing multiple roles such as 'midwife', 'learning process engineer', 'need detector and analyzer', 'conflict manager' and 'psychologist', learners in groups interact and discuss the given topic - say, a lesson or a particular issue in an anxiety-free ambience wherein 'the affective filter' is lowered to the extent possible. Learning via better understanding and meaning-making via discussion, free from tension, do take place. Discussion that prompts critical thinking, peer-evaluation that minimizes alienation, and collaborative ethic, rather than competitive ethic, that 'promotes mutual respect, trust and altruism' may be viewed as core part of this learning together.

5. Excellence of Education and Social Goals:

Pursuit of excellence is fine but when it happens to be the privilege of a few who outperform, win extra encomiums and receive better teacher approval, and who, in a way, contribute to the elimination of other learners, that too at the cost of national exchequer or limited public resources, it causes disquiet and disparities, and aggravates social tensions. A gifted learner, in all likelihood, is a high achiever by virtue of a sound foundation or innate abilities. A gifted learner's extraordinary academic achievement may give him/ her a personal and individualistic sense of achievement in life. Whether his/her achievements have contributed to eradication of poverty, inequality and societal discrimination, and to the promotion of humane interdependence and solidarity so that occasions for peace are more than occasions for tension, or he/she has become part of the world of cynicism and snobbishness can be a moot point. If seekers and achievers of excellence turn out to be cynics churning out more and more cynics from among the brainy, then it is a sign that our educational systems need comprehensive corrective revamping measures.

It is time that the era of teacher-fronted lecturing or dispensing information, as if learners were mere recipients, gradually gives way to Cooperative Learning. The nitty-gritty of Cooperative Learning foregrounding the grasp of 'the complexity of the real world', heterogeneity, disequilibrium, multiculturalism, and convergence towards consensus cultivate, harness, and garner positive interdependence lest civilizations should experience fragmentation and dissolution. It is understandable that gyrations occur in civilizations in ascending and descending order in the sense W.B. Yeats meant. But, no one has the right to wantonly destroy cultures and civilizations as it is happening in Iraq. The sort of hegemony USA has been perpetuating, the sort of xenophobia being practised in different parts of the world in the context of migrations and the presence of emigre diasporas and their progeny, and the ways a small minority of citizenry in every civilization - India is in no way an exception - appropriates and arrogates opportunities provided by educational policies and systems leaving a pittance or peanut for the rest and marginalizing the majority in the name of competitive ethic, are dangerous portents.

This is one of the lessons all of us need to learn from the impacts of globalization, multiculturalism, racial discriminations, and East-West or North-South divide. How we live is more crucial and significant than how long we live. Moving towards a just world can be a reasonable belief and goal but our belief and goal cannot remain as a perpetual delusion. The 'ecology of aggression' should not overpower us in our effort for peace, fellowship and harmony. Inspired by the writings of Paulo Freire and by Philip Leeman's review of Freire's Pedagogy, one could ask: 'Is it naive thinking if our students and teachers look towards 'rekindling and sustaining the kind of aspirations that have the synergic goal of social utopia?' 'Can we maturely contemplate overcoming the oppressive realities that lead to dehumanization, and instead, base human relationships on the ideal of love?' If we are skeptical about it, we are part of the dehumanizing process. Cooperative Learning could inspire the world citizenry to cherish, cultivate, and develop social attitudes, goals and skills towards such rekindling. As a long-term strategy, it could be a key to finding suitable answers for many problems haunting nations and human relationships within and among nations. And therefore, the dictum could be: "We learn to cooperate, and cooperate to learn, and therefore, we are'. The time is

ripe and right to think of the greater benefits Cooperative Learning is capable of offering via primary, secondary and higher education.

6. Conclusions

The step towards identification of people interested in carrying out community development programmes to give a 'feel' of small communities as an integral part of a larger global community. If cities, in the global age, are to address the twin tasks of urban regeneration and social inclusion, they will require a drastic change in learning. This calls for developing capabilities for people to become active participants in remaking the communities in which they live and work. It is now clear that 'a new education' is emerging for a new age. Now the new forms of governance are taking an active role in enhancing the awareness of communities. The government and non-governmental organisations along with the international aid to education are forming new partnerships that can develop capabilities of communities. There have been several drives to help people to recognize each other as citizens who share a common status and equal rights and to express comprehensive themselves in the public spheres.

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