

TOPIC –1. PROCESS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

2. EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

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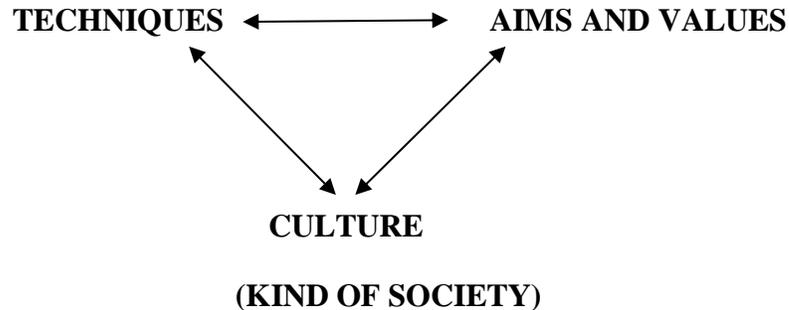
**Title of the Paper - PHILOSOPHICAL AND SOCIOLOGICAL
PERSPECTIVE OF EDUCATION**

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The PROCESS OF SOCIAL CHANGE

According to Ottaway, the culture of a society during a given period is determined by the interaction of two classes of factors

- (a) The stage of technical invention and scientific discovery it has reached
- (b) The dominant aims and values of the society



←→ = interaction (FIG.1)

Thus it can be said that culture is determined by the interaction of techniques and values. The relation can be represented diagrammatically as in Fig.1 where the double arrows represent a dynamic interaction, or a two- way process.

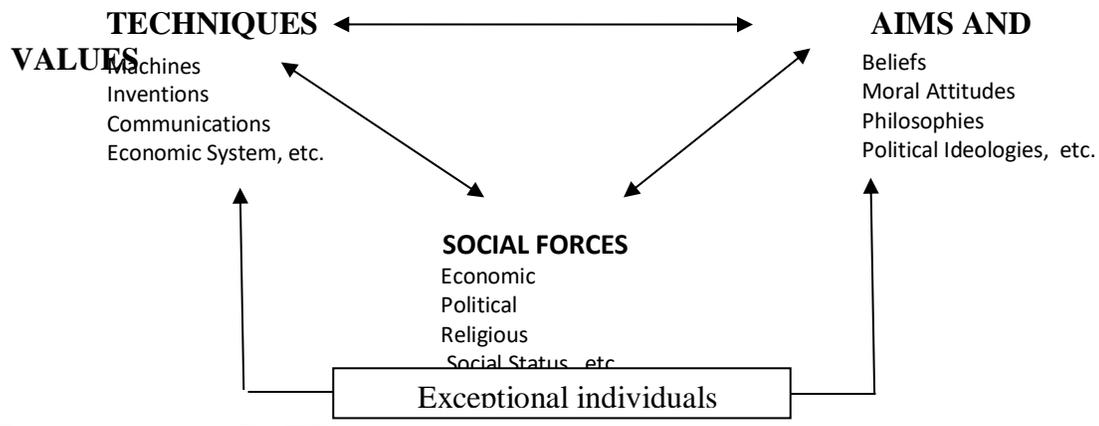
The interaction of techniques and values

Both techniques and values change and it is their interaction which determines the nature of a society at a given time. It is not easy to say which influence is dominant in any particular social change. New inventions are considered to be a primary source of social change but that is not a sufficient explanation. Its use will depend on the prevailing set of values in the society. The aims and values of a community determine how its techniques will be used. On the other hand, the force of technology changes habits of work and life which in turn change habits of thought and belief. Thus a number of variables influence each other and cause social change. The relative importance of techniques or values will be different on different occasions, and in relation to other variables and social forces at work.

A social force is an attempt by a number of members of a society to bring about social action or social change.¹

¹ This is derived from the following definition in the dictionary of sociology: 'social force: any effective urge or impulse that leads to social action. Specifically a social force is a consensus on the part of a sufficient number of members of society to bring about social action or social change of some sort.'

The social forces at work in a society, at a given time, are the active determinants of culture, and are both the media for the diffusion of techniques and values, and change as a result of their interaction. Social forces will themselves overlap and interact, and they can be classified as economic forces, occupational groups, political forces, religious forces, social status groups, educational forces etc. All such social groups are engaged in a constant conflict of interests and a struggle for control over change. This dynamic relationship can be diagrammatically illustrated as in fig. II.

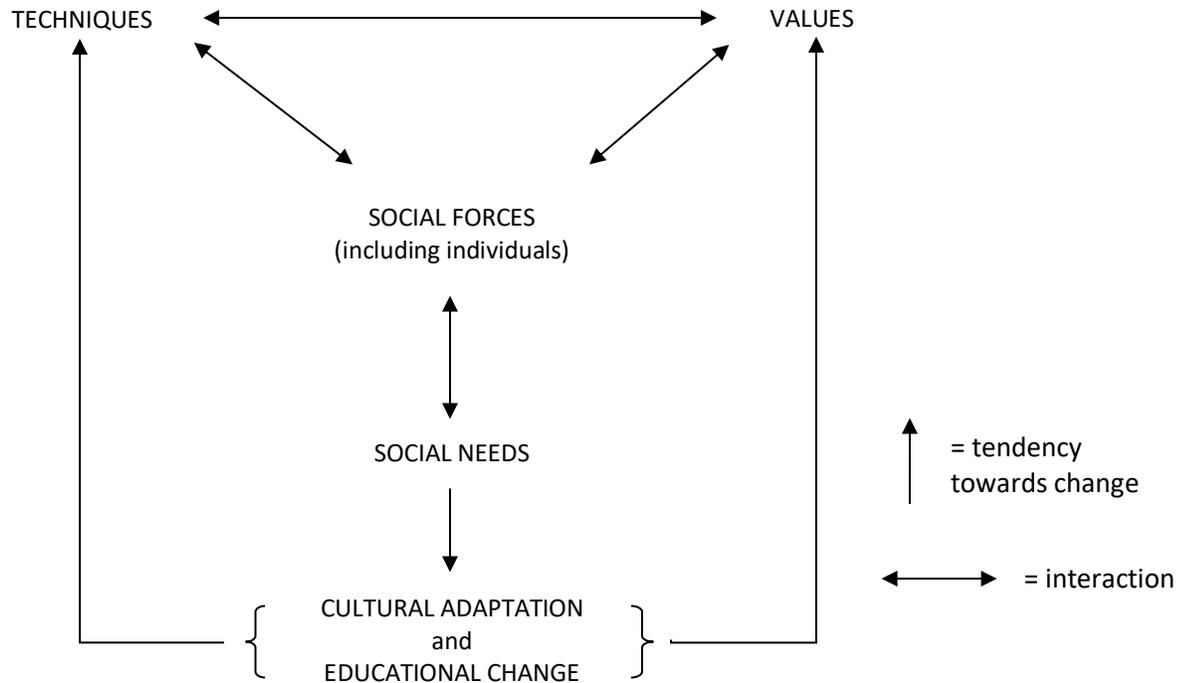


(Fig. II)

Certain individuals can be considered social forces on their own, because of the influence they have on the ideas and actions of others. Exceptional individuals have a very special place within a society because of the direct influence they exert in changing the existing techniques and values. Scientists and inventors can cause a sudden change in the techniques of a society, while thinkers and reformers may change its values. But the individual only becomes a social force when his ideas are followed and acted upon by a group.

Social needs and cultural change

All human beings are primarily driven to action by the desire to satisfy their needs, and this is the power behind social as well as individual action. It is the process of satisfying social needs that cultural adaptation takes place. As the culture changes, new needs are met, new techniques arise, values may change, and so a continuously interacting cycle is at work.



EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Education and social change are interdependent on each other. Educationists and philosophers are of the opinion that education may lead to social change or it may follow social change. In order to understand this complex issue, it is important to know about the relation between education and society.

Relation between education and society

The educational system of any society is related to its total social system. The goals and needs of the total social system get reflected in the functions it lays down for its educational system and the form in which it structures it to fulfill those functions. Education may perform a function of conservation and transmission of traditions and customs of society or the progressive function of changing society.

In a static society, the main function of the education system is to transmit the cultural heritage to the new generation. But, in a changing society, these keep on changing from

generation to generation and therefore the education system in such a society must not only transmit the cultural heritage, but also aid in preparing the young for adjustment to any changes in them that may have occurred or are likely to occur in future. An educational system geared to mere maintenance of status-quo is bound to become dysfunctional in a changing society.

Modern societies are changing societies. In such contemporary societies, “the proportion of change that is either planned or issues from the secondary consequences of deliberate innovations is much higher than in former times.” Consequently such modern complex societies call upon its educational system to help it bring about the change in a peaceful manner through the socialization of the younger generation. Thus, the relationship between education system and society is mutual; sometimes the society influences changes in the educational system and sometimes the educational system influences changes in society (new generation). All these show a relationship between education and social change which needs to be seriously and scientifically studied.

Types of relation between education and social change

There are three ways in which the relationship between education and social change can be studied

1. Education may ignore social change and serve as a conserver of traditions
2. It may act as a co-operative force in social change; or
3. It may act as an agent of social change

Education as a conserver of traditions

According to this view, the function of educational institution is to train the intellect, transmit what is permanently worthwhile in the cultural heritage and adjust the young to society as it is. It regards it only as an institution of learning and is against turning it into an agency of reform.

Education as a co-operative force in social change

The contemporary world is a world of changing societies. According to Moore, changes that occur in them “are frequent, occur in sequential chains and affect a wider range of individual experience and functional aspects of societies.” 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 co-operative 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.

Here, education is conceived as an effect of change. Social changes come first and consequently society needs to recast education as a social institution. In India, for example, after independence, we have introduced big changes in polity, economy and in religious, social and technological fields. We have adopted new values and goals such as democracy, freedom of individual, secularism, equality, social justice, industrial development with the help of science, socialistic pattern of society, evaluation of the status of the individual on the basis of his individual abilities and achievements, and so on. In order that the educational system may become useful in internalizing all these new values in the new generation, we have introduced the necessary changes in it and are still attempting to introduce newer changes.

Education as an agent of social change

This way of thinking regards education as an agent of social change. It believes that education can engage itself in much more positive action and can perform the function of a starter of social change; it can inculcate in the younger generation whatever social changes it considers proper and can rebuild society through a programme of social reform.

A number of sociologists, educationists and anthropologists also are of the view that education should not attempt to be a prime mover and an agent of social change, but should work as a co-operative force in social change. According to Ottaway changes in education, society and culture come only under orders from those people who are in power; education itself does not initiate social changes, but is a force which supports and develops changes in social aims already decided by those in power.” Dewey also draws the same conclusion. He envisages three choices for the educators in face of social changes;

- either they may ‘drift’ along with the social change or**
- they may observe and assess the impact of “the newer forces that are producing change in the old order,” estimate “their direction and see what can be done to make schools their ally” or**
- they may become “intelligently conservative.”**

Thus, in modern complex national societies, education can neither be regarded as a controlling force conserving the cultural heritage, nor could it be viewed as an agent of social change. It can only be regarded as a co-operative force in bringing about social changes decided by the forces possessing more pervasive power in society.

It is sometimes suggested that education is one of the causes of social change. In fact the opposite may be true. Educational change tends to follow other social changes, rather than initiate them. Education cannot be changed until the culture changes – except by a few pioneers who are ahead of their time and are trying to educate society.

Counts, in his book ‘Dare the School Build a New Social Order’, has analyzed the general reconstruction of society through the school. He has argued that “.....our school, instead of directing the course of change, are themselves driven by the very forces that are transforming the rest of the social order.”

It would not be wrong to say that instead of initiating and leading social changes, education today follows social change. In other words when changes occur in needs, technology and values, education also adapts to these changes.

All education has a dual character. As a process of socialization it makes individuals conform to the norms and values of society and its establishments, thus dominating and domesticating them; at the same time it has the capacity to generate a spirit of inquiry and questioning of the accepted truths, thereby liberating the human mind from the shackles of the past and the present.

The educational system is largely conditioned by the prevalent socio-economic and political power structure. Its expansion, growth and development are adjusted to the requirement of the larger social structure. The educational sub system is thus seen as a product of the entire social system.

If social change is meant to connote fundamental structural changes in society, it is clear that the socio-economic factor and its executive are, the political system have primary importance rather than education. Thus the educational system in its actual functioning cannot transcend the socializing agents taken collectively, i.e. the prevailing socio-political interests. Its effectiveness depends on the ability of the educators to exert decisive influence on the political power holders.

The concept of causation in the social sciences is dangerous and difficult. There are always a large number of variables interacting together. That is why education is rejected as a cause; it is rather a dependent variable. That education has an important role to play in social change is undoubted, but its influence is secondary and not primary.

Education and modernization of Indian society

Modernization is a multidimensional process. It is not merely an economic process concerned with maximization of physical power and improvement of tools to increase the productive potential and thereby raise the levels of living of a given society. It is a political, social and

cultural process as well. It is a complex process which touches the entire life of the members of a given society. It emphasizes change as a value and encourages individuals to have faith in efficacy of human effort for bringing about desirable social changes. It expects them to be secular, cosmopolitan, rational, scientific and universalistic in their outlook and approach to life and its problems, equalitarian and democratic in their relationships with others and innovative and creative in their contribution to social problems and developments.

As Indian society has decided to modernize its social, political and economic institutions very rapidly and without force, it wishes its educational institution to play a modernizing role. It believes that the educational system can play a major role in bringing about necessary changes. This is well reflected in the constitutional directives of state policy, governmental efforts to reconstruct the educational system and declarations of governmental educational policy.

In the post independent period, a major concern of central and state governments has been to give increasing attention to education as a factor vital to national progress and security. The education commission (1964-66) in its report subtitled “Education and National Development” stated in its very first sentence that “the destiny of India is now being shaped in its classrooms” and concluded that “if this change on a grand scale is to be achieved without violent revolution, there is one instrument and one instrument only that can be used and that is education”.

In developing societies which attempt to introduce rapid social changes through democratic and peaceful ways, education is considered the chief activity that can initiate and speed up the mobilization and transformation of human resources that are needed for modernization. It can impart different levels of technical and social skills that are needed for the performance of variety of new roles. It can make the masses literate enough to be able to support the modernized political, economic and other institutions actively and efficiently and help to accelerate the process of modernization. As Lerner says, “Literacy, once acquired, becomes a prime mover in the modernization of every aspect of life.....”

In India education has failed in creating an egalitarian society. In order to make our theory of education operative, the pedagogy of bringing about a New Society has to be generated. Our education should conscientize the students to change radically the unjust status quo. Only then does education becomes contextual and, therefore relevant. According to Paulo Freire, the special contribution of the educator to the birth of a new society would have to be a critical education which could help to form critical attitudes and critical consciousness facilitating the transition of people to handle the challenges of their time. Only an education which awakens people from drugged lethargy can play any creative role in modern society.

The vision of a new society and commitment to it are by and large lacking in our teachers. They are just passive spectators of the present oppressive society. They fail miserably in

awakening and organizing the students to put their service at the task of building a community of justice and peace. Hence teachers should have an ongoing formation to enable them to respond to their contextualized needs and to conscientize the students for suitable liberative praxis. A team of socially conscious and committed teachers has to be formed in a progressive manner. For this, young men and women of outstanding abilities to teach should be encouraged to adopt an academic career.

TEACHER AS AN AGENT OF SOCIAL CHANGE

It goes without saying that teachers are responsible for the change that takes place in learners. Their words and actions trigger positive behavioural and attitudinal changes in learners. But teachers' role as change agents is not limited to the school setting and their learners. In the communities where literacy rate is low and people are not aware of their rights and responsibilities, lack ideas on good health habits and development perspectives, local teachers can act as change agents. Because teachers are conscious and educated, they can cause change to take place in the community settings.

An approach which respects the students and places them at the center of learning has an inevitable impact on the lesson content and on teacher/student roles. Once we start looking at education in this way, however, various problems arise. For example, how are the students to be assessed in terms of personal growth, when they have to pass competitive exams in order to "succeed", i.e. to get into a "good" school, and then to find a "good" job? Having reached this point, let us pause to consider once more. We have been looking at the teacher as a physician who treats the students for emotional and cognitive disabilities. Let us now go even further in terms of role-change.

It is not unusual to see the results of man-made disasters on television or in the newspapers. We see man's inhumanity to man, lack of consideration, selfishness, etc. We see the earth being ravaged and destroyed by greed, corruption and narrow-sightedness, and we feel that there is nothing we can do. We are simply pawns in the process; we have to meet the criteria we are told to meet, and that is our lot in life. However, the technology that began the industrial revolution and inspired mass education, is now showing destructive potential, and we can no longer watch mutely. As H. G. Wells remarked early in the 20th century: "Civilization is a race between education and catastrophe".

Teachers can actually make a positive contribution to this situation. We are the people who can model the skills and characteristics of responsible citizens, and we can use the micro-society of the classroom as a model for the greater society that students will meet when they leave school. We can focus on the sort of problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills that students will need when they enter that society, and we can manufacture situations in which students can experiment with the social skills that they will need to develop. In short, we can promote the sort of positive qualities that are needed in society; we can help our students develop the moral strength to refuse bribes and to say "no" to drugs; we can give them responsibility for learning and assessment and help them learn how to use and respect that responsibility.

Humanists, philosophers and educationalists (e.g. Bruner, Dewey, Krishnamurti) have been making these points for more than a hundred years, and it is noticeable now that a number of government-based policy statements cite holistic and humanistic principles as educational goals.

To conclude, teachers have the opportunity and the responsibility to expand their role to that of cognitive and affective physician in the classroom, diagnosing learning and social ailments and offering courses of healing. Such an approach to teacher/student roles focuses on the learner as a potential responsible member of society, and concentrates primarily on helping him or her to develop the critical-thinking and problem-solving skills necessary if he/she is to make a positive contribution to that society. If we treat our students with love and respect, then they will learn, and we will be initiating social improvement. We cannot "sit on the fence" and let the world look after itself. In short, teachers are agents of social change, and must respect themselves as such. They must take on the responsibility that this involves.

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