

NEED OF BASIC EDUCATION

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Abstract

Education is a basic right of all people and the basis for a peaceful, healthy and stable world. Education encourages the development of an individual's total personality: conveying the wisdom of ancestors, traditional norms and values, and promoting understanding and development of modern science, technology, and environmental conservation. Primary and secondary education is the center of the modern school education system. They are also the core of basic education, as this period builds a balanced character, and seeks to unite a nation's sovereignty by sharing a common language, values, and behavior. Therefore, the "expansion of primary and secondary education" is regarded as the center of development assistance for basic

education in developing countries, and various types of assistance have been provided. Recently, care and education for children up to the age of six years old has been incorporated into international goals. The acquisition of practical "life skills" is also essential to improve people's lives. For instance, a lack of knowledge on health care and hygiene prevents people from keeping good health, and environmental education is vital for environmental conservation. Thus, it is quite justified to say that the fundamental principles of basic education are still valid and fruitful in the context of our present educational reform. They are relevant to be used as guiding principles of modern education.

Introduction

Education is a basic right of all people and the basis for a peaceful, healthy and stable world. Education encourages the development of an individual's total personality: conveying the wisdom of ancestors, traditional norms and values, and promoting understanding and development of modern science, technology, and environmental conservation. Education perpetuates social, economic and cultural prosperity of human beings and creates an infrastructure for international cooperation through the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance, thereby enabling the achievement of self-reliant development, and functioning as an effective tool for poverty eradication in countries worldwide. However, while the importance of education has been widely acknowledged, there are still more than 880 million people who are illiterate; 113 million children who don't attend schools, and 150 million students who have dropped out of school before the fifth grade. Two-thirds of illiterates and out-of-school children are women, and a serious gender disparity exists in developing countries (as of 2000), while neither the quality nor quantity of education is fully satisfying individual and social needs. Given the above situation, the international community is now aiming to achieve "Education For All" (EFA) focusing particularly on the "expansion of basic education"

Definition of Basic Education

After the “World Conference on Education for All” (WCEFA) in 1990, the international community focused on the concept of basic education. According to the “World Declaration on Education for All”, adopted at the conference, basic education was defined as “educational activities designed for people to acquire necessary knowledge and skills to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning.” More specifically, basic education was defined to cover early childhood education, primary education, lower secondary education and non-formal education.

Basic Education Issues

The six “objectives,” shown in the “Dakar Framework for Action” agreed at the WEF in 2000, were based on specific basic education concerns of the international community. The objectives are as follows:

- Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete, free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life-skills programmes;
- Achieving a 50 percent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- Elimination gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls ‘full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality’;
- Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Expansion of Primary and Secondary Education

Primary and secondary education is the center of the modern school education system. They are also the core of basic education, as this period builds a balanced character, and seeks to unite a nation’s sovereignty by sharing a common language, values, and behavior. Therefore, the “expansion of primary and secondary education” is regarded as the center of development assistance for basic education in developing countries, and various types of assistance have been provided. There are two major issues for primary and secondary education: the “promotion of school attendance (quantitative expansion) in

primary and secondary education” and “qualitative improvement of primary and secondary education”. There is a considerable amount of cases in developing countries where children have been forced to leave school, not only because there is no school nearby, but also because they have to work to support their family, or they cannot afford tuition, textbooks, supplementary materials, stationary, school uniforms or shoes. There are also cases where a school’s time schedule does not comply with children’s lifestyles, or the children cannot attend school because of frequent relocations due to their parents’ jobs. Moreover, children may have to give up school in time of contingency such as Natural disasters or war. The problems of low primary and secondary school enrollments are deeply related to political, social, and cultural constraints over educational opportunities such as poverty, discrimination and conflict. Among the wide range of issues related to “qualitative improvement of primary and secondary education”, four major categories have been identified: educational input, process, output, and outcome. Examples of typical problems are as follows.

Educational Inputs

Divergence from curriculum, textbook content, and children’s lives due to a lack of reflection on educational needs in the local community; a lack of teachers with licenses or sufficient education/training; and a lack of classrooms or overcrowding of classrooms.

Educational Activities

Insufficient school hours due to irregular class schedules, an imbalance of school hours among subjects, classes that discourage the development of thinking abilities (passive learning styles such as copying textbook onto a blackboard or simply memorizing the content), and difficulty in understanding lectures as different languages may be used at school and home.

Outputs

Output problems are related to “inputs” and the “quality of educational activities”, for example, low scores on tests and the effect on a pupil’s sense of value and attitude.

Outcomes

Limited derivative effects on improving income and productivity, transition to a market economy, democratization, population control and living standards that are expected within a certain timeframe after completion of basic education.

Expansion of Infant Care and Early Childhood Education

Recently, care and education for children up to the age of six years old has been incorporated into international goals. In addition to this move having its roots in an increased awareness of children’s rights, it is also due to the following. It has been

scientifically proven that child development during the first three years from birth has a significant physical and mental impact on a person's future life, treatment and care at an early stage is more effective than treating children with difficulties at a later stage, which lowers social and economic costs, it is now widely acknowledged that early intervention helps reduce cultural, social and economic inequality, the incidence of repetition and dropouts in lower grades declines if children are better prepared for school, leading to the elimination of educational inefficiency.

Improvement of Educational Management

Recent growing recognition of good governance in many developing countries has encouraged decentralization of educational administrations along with other administrative fields. Efforts have been made to strengthen educational administration through swift decision making, emphasizing organizational efficiency, securing appropriate educational budgets and effective expenditure, maintaining educational statistics, and formulating educational plans and curriculum. However, in reality, progress is slow since there is a delay in developing related legislation, ineffective decentralization of decision-making and authority, an insufficient number of educational administrators and deficiency in their performance, and underdeveloped facilities or equipment. In terms of qualitative improvement of education, school principals have made efforts to enhance school management and maintenance. However, serious problems continue to exist, including insufficient skills of principals, a lack of training opportunities, low incentives, insufficient school budgets, and a weak relationship with communities.

Satisfaction of Educational Needs of Youths and Adults

In developing countries, many people still must give up schooling or drop out. Therefore, the provision of educational opportunities for these people is also a very important issue of basic education assistance. Illiterate adults have limited access to administrative services and employment, which are both key factors that can improve their income levels. Illiteracy is also an obstacle to their social participation. Therefore, improvement of literacy is a very important issue. The acquisition of practical "life skills" is also essential to improve people's lives. For instance, a lack of knowledge on health care and hygiene prevents people from keeping good health, and environmental education is vital for environmental conservation. Thus, to acquire knowledge and a range of techniques (life skills) is necessary for effective implementation of development assistance.

Significance of Assistance

Basic education is important as a "basic human right" and as a means to "support development." The concept of "education as a human right" was presented in the 1948 "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" based on the idea that "education, especially basic education teaches the necessary knowledge and skills for individuals to survive in

society and is a basic human right.” In developing countries, development aims not only for economic improvement, but also for qualitative improvement of people’s lives through creating ability to lead healthy lives, escape poverty, live in harmony with the environment, and cherish a democratic and safe society. In a broad sense, basic education is an important part of development that all people have a right to enjoy. In the 1990s, the emphasis on economic development has shifted to human development via social development. Through this process, human beings have been placed at the center of development. Accordingly, education, particularly basic education which has direct links to human development, has become increasingly important.

Main Features of the Wardha Scheme

Free and Compulsory Education

Gandhiji wanted education to be free and compulsory for all boys and girls between the ages of seven to fourteen. He evolved a scheme of education which would be in harmony with the culture and civilization of the Indian people and which would solve the problem of mass education in a practical way.

Education through Craft

The basic idea of this scheme is to impart education through some craft or productive work. Craft work helps the child to acquire sensor and motor co-ordination and to appreciate the value of honest labor. Gandhi was of the opinion that the method of training the mind through village handicraft from the beginning as the central focus would promote the real, disciplined development of the mind. The advantages of making craft as the centre of education as listed by the Zakir Hussain Committee are as follows–

- “Psychologically, it is desirable, because it relieves the child from the tyranny of a purely academic and theoretical instruction against which its active nature is always making a healthy protest.”
- “Secondly, the introduction of such practical productive work in education, to be participated in by all children of the nation will tend to break down the existing barriers of prejudice between manual and intellectual workers harmful alike for both.”
- “Economically, carried out intelligently and efficiently, the scheme will increase the productive capacity of our workers and will also enable them to utilise their leisure advantageously.”
- “From educational point of view, greater concreteness and reality can be given to the knowledge acquired by children through craft as knowledge will be related to life.”

Self Supporting Aspect of the Scheme

The self supporting aspect of the scheme may be interpreted in two ways

- Education that will help one to be self supporting in later life,

- Education which in itself is self supporting.

The basic idea of Gandhiji was that if the craft chosen is taught efficiently or thoroughly, it would enable the school to pay the cost of salaries of teachers. At the same time his aim was to accord dignity of labour and ensure modest and honest and livelihood for the student after leaving school.

Medium of instruction

One of the resolutions that was adopted at the All India National Conference at Wardha was that education must be imparted through the mother tongue. In this connection, the Zakir Hussain Committee's observation was that the proper teaching of the mother tongue is the foundation of all education. Without the capacity to speak effectively and to read and to write correctly and lucidly, no one can develop precision of thought or clarity of ideas. Moreover, it is a means of introducing the child to the rich heritage of his people's ideas, emotions and aspirations.

Ideal of citizenship

Another important feature of the basic scheme is the ideal of citizenship which is implicit in it. It aimed at giving the citizens of the future a keen sense of personal growth, dignity and efficiency and social services in a cooperative community. The Zakir Hussain Committee envisaged that the new generation must at least have an opportunity of understanding their own problems and rights and obligations. A completely new system is necessary to secure the minimum of education for the intelligent exercise of the rights and duties of citizens.

Flexible Curriculum and Free Environment

The flexibility of the curriculum and free environment for the child to perform according to his own capacity are other remarkable features of basic education. Under this scheme the teachers and students are free to work according to their interest and there is no compulsion for completing a prescribed portion due to fear of examinations. Necessary changes may be introduced in the curriculum if a situation demands. Thus, whatever the child learns according to his interest and capacity is permanently remembered by him. The teacher is also free to organise necessary environment for the development of the child.

Curriculum of Basic Education

You know that basic education is designed for children between seven and fourteen years of age and accordingly curriculum has been suggested. For the boys general science and for girls home science have been emphasized. The various subjects as suggested are given below

1. Basic Craft.
 - (i) Spinning and Weaving,
 - (ii) Carpentry,
 - (iii) Agriculture,

- (iv) Fruit and Flower Cultivation,
 - (v) Leather work,
 - (vi) Culturing Fish,
 - (vii) Pottery,
 - (viii) Any handicraft according to the local need,
 - (iv) Home Science for girls.
2. Mother tongue.
 3. Mathematics.
 4. Geography, History and Civics to be combined as Social Studies.
 5. Painting and Music.
 6. P.T., Drill and Sports etc.
 7. General Science comprising Physics Chemistry, Botany, Zoology ,Hygiene and Nature Study etc.
 8. Hindi for that area in which it is not the mother tongue.

If you observe minutely the above curriculum you will find the following characteristics–

- English has not been included as a subject of study.
- Although the medium of instruction is mother tongue, all students must learn Hindi language.
- There is no place for religious and moral education in the curriculum
- The craft chosen must not be taught mechanically, but systematically and scientifically keeping in view the social significance.

Merits of Basic Education

- The scheme is financially sound and acceptable in a poor country like India, where about half of the total illiterate people of the world reside. It is helpful for rapid expansion of elementary education with fewer burdens on public exchequer.
- It is also economically productive as it is based on the principle of work. Work occupies the central place in basic education. The system is production oriented and helps in the programme of national economic reconstruction.
- The system was able to remove class and caste distinction. It helps to bring social solidarity and national integration.
- It also removes the barriers between the educated and the non-educated, between manual work and intellectual work, between the rich and the poor and village and the town.
- Basic education is activity-centered education. The child is not a passive learner but an active participant in the learning process. It fosters learning by doing. Thus, instruction is not passive, and the child learns through a productive and useful craft.

- Basic education is child-centric. The child is the centre of activity. It primarily considered the constructive and creative instincts of children.
- Basic education is based on sound educational principle of correlation, where all educational activities are correlated to a basic craft. Correlation also takes place between physical environment, social environment and craft work.
- The system is based upon the cultural and social heritage of the land. As such, it inculcates social and moral values in the minds of the students.
- It is truly an education for the whole man. It aims at a harmonious development of the body, mind and soul.
- Basic education system recognizes the dignity of labor.
- It recognizes the importance of mother-tongue as the medium of instruction at the elementary stage.
- It inculcates democratic values like co-operation, responsibility, fellow-feeling in the minds of the students, which are essential for proper functioning of a democratic social order.

Demerits or Causes of Failure of Basic Education

After the independence Basic scheme of education made good progress for about a decade but gradually due to several difficulties it failed to make much headway.

- The self supporting aspect of Basic Education received severe criticism in the academic circle. Teachers, social leaders and educational administrators had shown an indifferent attitude towards it. It was argued that the scheme turns a school into a centre of small scale industry. Moreover, teachers had to depend upon the earnings of the students. This had a demoralizing effect on teacher-pupil relationship.
- Too much emphasis on craft had led the neglect of liberal education. Very often the craft is not properly selected from the point of view of education and social significance and teaching through craft had become just a slogan.
- Another criticism leveled against Basic Education was that a single craft can and should not be the basis of the entire educational process. It may not help in the development of liberal education and thus would create an imbalance in the educational system between vocational and intellectual education.
- The method of correlation as technique of instruction was not stressed and sincerely followed. Correlation is no doubt a sound principle of education but correlation of the subjects through craft may appear to be sometimes unusual and time consuming.
- Basic Education is often regarded as inferior type of education meant for the poor villagers. It has nothing to do with the urban people, who usually sent their children to modern type of schools. The general public had no confidence in basic schools

because of the degraded social value accorded to it. Thus Basic education failed to become an integral part of our national system of education.

- Basic Education can in no way help in the progress of modern scientific and technological development of the society, which was the need of the day. Rapid changes and modernization of our society can only be possible through the application of modern science and technology in the fields and factories.
- Lack of finance and the absence of sound administrative policy was also responsible for the failure of Basic Education. Practically there was no coordination between the official and non-official agencies engaged in the organization and development of Basic education.
- Teacher occupies the central position in Basic Education. Lack of adequate supply of efficient, trained and sincere teachers was one the most important cause for the failure of this scheme of education. Suitable orientation and training of teachers of basic schools was highly needed, which was rare. The majority of the teachers had no faith in this system.

Conclusion

The concept of Basic Education as an educational theory and practice is unique and unquestionable. But its implementation was far from satisfactory. The Education Commission 1964-66 fully recognized the importance of basic education and incorporated in its recommendations many of the fundamental features of basic education. Work experience, community living, social service, integration of academic knowledge with experience, vocationalisation of education, education for moral and spiritual values have been recommended by the Kothari Commission. As a step for modifying the secondary school curriculum, the Iswarbhai Patel Committee of 1977 had given a new terminology as Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW), which demarcated a distinct curricula area. The committee opines that education should be work-centered and socially useful and productive work must be given a central place in the curriculum at all stages of school education and all academic subjects should be related to it. All these changing concepts originated from Gandhiji's Basic Education. The UNESCO Commission on Education in its report known as "Learning to be" has adopted the term "Basic Education" for primary education and emphasized that "education must cease being confined within school house walls, and many forms of social and economic activity must be used for educational purposes."

Thus, it is quite justified to say that the fundamental principles of basic education are still valid and fruitful in the context of our present educational reform. They are relevant to be used as guiding principles of modern education. In fact, it needs to be reformed on modern lines then it may serve as one of the most interesting and fruitful techniques of instruction at elementary stage.

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