

Time to Look Beyond Stereotyped Education System

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Abstract

In the present article, the aim is to highlight the real goals of education. It is an effort to put an end to the age old beliefs and myths that education is only possible with the help of text books, assessments, evaluation, standardized curricula and qualified teachers. It is a life process which continues to happen with the longevity of life on earth and ends with its end. We fully agree with the words of W.B. Yeats according to whom "education is not the filling of pail but the lighting of a fire." This article is an endeavour to replace the myth of the yesteryears about education by projecting that in present time the ultimate goal of education should not merely be academic progress of a child but it should encompass all essential aspects of life, which are basic to life. Man is to be conferred with the title of "educated" only if he is accepted by the society. If he is embellished with the life skills he is educated. If not then he is only literate. This article has discussed that the end result of the process should be the enhancement of intellectual as well as sociological potentialities. The time demands a step ahead from the conventional pattern of education.

Introduction

It is well said that the strength of a multi-storeyed building depends upon its strong foundation. If the foundation is strong then neither the scorching heat, nor thunderous rain or extreme weather conditions can affect the structure. Similarly, if the basics of an individual are perfect nothing can stop him from being considered an educated man. Education is just a beacon of light which acts as a torch to an individual through the dark caves of ignorance. According to Addison, "What sculpture is to a block of marble, education is to the soul".¹

Education is an ever-widening concept. Ever since the dawn of life on the earth, the process of education has commenced. This concept is well knitted to life that it is extremely impossible to think of life without it. Man, directly or indirectly, educates himself. It is the only virtue by which he can be considered to be distinctive from animals.

An art by which a raw and rough person can be transformed into refined, civilized and a well-meaning citizen. In fact, a man becomes man only through education. In other words, education grooms the personality of a human being as per the need of the hour with a clear objective that he does not find himself an odd figure with the changing times of life.

Education is a wider term which is as wide as life. Just as it is difficult to sum up the definition of life in a few words, similarly it is not at all easy to put the concept of education in a word or two or may be a few lines. Etymologically the word is derived from a Latin word Educare which means 'to nourish'. So, the word means nourishing the child morally, socially, spiritually, professionally, economically etc. The word seems to have originated since time immemorial and yet the meaning is very unclear. It has become a debatable issue as the ancient thinkers attach an idealistic or spiritual inclination to it, while modern thinkers differ from them. They look at the concept from functional point of view.

Different perspectives have resulted in different definitions. According to Swami Vivekanand, Education is the "manifestation of divine perfection already existing in man".²

Aurobindo Ghosh has defined education as "helping the growing soul to draw out that is in itself".

Many thinkers have put forth their views on the subject of education but none could give a comprehensive definition except perhaps Mahatma Gandhi. It was only Gandhi who touched all the essential spheres of life such as physical, moral, mental and spiritual. According to him, education is an "all-round drawing out of the best in child and man-body, mind and spirit".³

The life of man is, undoubtedly, multi dimensional. He grows with different capacities and capabilities harmoniously. If he grows, his mental capacity also accelerates, so does his physical potential. This harmonious development of the many-sided personality is possible only through the process of education. Indeed, man is an

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amazing amalgamation of good and bad, energy and joy, happiness and grief and various other instincts. It is none other than education which enables these instincts to sublime. He explores himself and discovers the best in him. Gandhi believed "real education consists in drawing the best out of yourself. What better book can there be than the book of humanity!"⁴ Certainly, if man fails to find his worth or fails to make a distinction between good and bad, average or below average, acceptable and unacceptable, then the objective of education becomes futile. Education enables him to realize the area he is good at, transforms his way of thinking and changes his outlook on various issues. In all, education is an influence on the individual to produce a drastic transformation in his habits, behaviour, thought and attitude.

Education has both narrow as well as broader meanings. In its narrow sense, this art of learning is limited to the four walls of school, college or university instruction. As soon as the child steps into the boundary of school the process of imparting limited and definite amount of knowledge gets activated. It would not be incorrect to say that school has a rudimentary role to play but it is not the only means to achieve an end. It provides knowledge of specific subjects with an aim to enable an individual to pass exams with good percentage or CGPA. The stereotype method of teaching, chalk and talk method, one way interaction, narration and dictation method makes education very narrow. This type of learning is superficial by nature and is of no benefit in the near future. Such learning is based upon rote learning. A child has to prove his worth by cramming the content and procuring good marks. In other words, the worth of an individual relies upon his capacity of memorization and not on his real calibre. Contents of education in bits and pieces can prepare one only for writing an exam but not for life. Fetching good marks and attaining the eligibility criteria, getting degrees can only develop him intellectually but cannot make him a good person or a good citizen.

We feel that Er. before an engineer, Dr. before a doctor or Adv. before an advocate or any other suffix before any professional representation of designation may only be a certification of literacy because the copy rights to be educated are still reserved. Education is not just CBSE, ICSE or any other board but, in reality, it results in providing proficiency in all other spheres of life. In short, if school makes a child well versed and well read in reading and writing or enables him to outshine in

academics then the objective of school, in the present scenario, is superfluous. Schools and universities simply prepare him for jobs and make him aware of means of occupation. If education is measured on the parameters of degrees and diplomas awarded to him, then, no doubt, the periphery of education is narrow.

In the wider sense, it is a continuous and a lifelong process. J.S. Mackenzie says: "Education in its wider sense includes all the influences which act upon an individual during his passage from the cradle to the grave".⁵ What we could infer from this statement is that the process of education, based upon experiences, commences as soon as a child comes to life. It is a cumulative effect of his experiences which starts from the very first day and closes with the last day of life. Each day we face a new problem and meet new challenges of life and learn a new task of life. The curiosity to learn new things makes human beings distinctive from animals. For instance, a child when sees a lit candle gets attracted to it and, certainly, yearns to touch it. When touches, naturally, burns his hand. This teaches him a lesson for life and he would refrain himself from touching the lit candle again. This experience would remain latent in his heart and enables him to remember it throughout his life. This is what education is.

In real sense of word education is too vast and lengthy process as it is a complete story of man and his life. In the words of Lodge "All experiences are said to be educative. The bite of mosquito, the taste of a watermelon, the experiences of falling in love, of flying in an aeroplane, of being caught in a storm in a small boat...all such experiences have directly educative effect on us...Whatever broadens our horizon, deepens our insight, refines our reactions, and stimulates thought and feeling educates us".⁶ Like an educational institution, the time for learning is not specific. The methodology is not fixed. It does not aim at one particular attainment, since its aim is all-round development of human personality.

If we take both broader and narrow scope of education into consideration, then also the fact remains same that education is not merely to be linked with literacy provided at educational institutions, though its role should not be ignored. Intellectual capacities of an individual are developed in such atmosphere. But this aspect is only one of the whole process which is responsible for the complete development of man. There is a wide gap between literacy and education. Where literacy is merely learning of 3R's (reading, writing

and arithmetic) education has a much wider meaning. Literacy trains an individual in three particular skills such as reading, writing and arithmetic, whereas, education is the enhancement of all the life skills which makes him suitable and desirous in the society.

A man who is able to read and write is conferred with the title of being 'literate' without realizing that if literate man fails to have social etiquettes, civic sense, sense of responsibility, punctuality, moral ethics, then he would be placed in the category of an uncivilized person. Education has tremendous power of converting a savage into a well behaved human being. Like literacy, it does not believe in the formative or summative assessment, for it evaluates him on the basis of his conduct.

According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, "Education is not merely imparting of information. It is to give the educated a sense of values".⁷ Sometimes when we observe the ways of the present generation we are often confused by a question that is this generation educated in the real sense of the term or is it just literate? But then within no time we get an answer that this present generation is just literate because they are skilled in 3R's, but not in the life skills, which are very crucial. They know how to read and write, but, honestly speaking, do not know how to behave themselves or respect their elders. They lack the sense of responsibility, civic sense, social etiquette and the basic conduct. This situation has arisen because of our present system of education which focuses only on fulfilling the job criteria and not at all thinking of instilling good values in them. This system has made life so mechanical and practical that people of today are just concerned about themselves. With the passage of time people have forgotten that education is a legacy which is supposed to be carried forward to the coming generation. It has been transmitted to us by the previous generation; those experiences are lived by us and those are to be transmitted to the future generation. It seems that there has been wide gap between what we have given and what they have taken. According to the process, we have to pass on values, skills, patterns, habits, customs and knowledge, but it seems that the system has failed.

Man is uneducated if he fails to get adapted to the social environment. He borrows from philosophy, sociology, technology, basic sciences and positive responses to deal with stress. All such nuances not only enhance his personality, but will further develop the ability to assimilate well in the

surroundings. This enables them to meet the challengeable situations of life and to achieve the maximum both for himself and for the society of which he is an integral part. But the present generation does not aim to work for the society but for themselves. Their aim is the attainment of professional heights. But till the time he understands the need to be well-equipped with all the essential skills of life, he is neither categorized as educated person nor an indispensable organ of society. An individual is the major component of society, its life line. If the organ is malfunctioning, then it is impossible for the society to function properly. The development or growth of an organ would ultimately accelerate the growth of the society. For example, if an individual grows responsible towards his duty, becomes focused, critical learner, flexible, cooperative, analyst of his actions, the society would definitely progress.

By analyzing the current status of our present situation an urgent need to re-orient and re-design the goals of education has come up. In the present system, there is a dire need to incorporate value education and to help the generation to overcome the malady of value crisis. Rabindranath Tagore once said: "Education is not limited to the imparting of information or the training in skills. It has to give the educated a proper sense of value".⁸ Too much emphasis on facts, figures, theories etc becomes a futile exercise because only value based education is needed for the complete development of man. A lot of alterations are to be made in the traditional education system. At school and other institutional level, the students can be introduced to the elementary sensitivity towards environment, aesthetic sense, sense of belongingness, love for others, empathy, concern, respect for the culture, national heritage, respect for elders, etc. This is the real goal of education in the emerging society.

If we do not yield to this change, we might be considered unfit for the society. The society which aspires to develop must regard values as indispensable to the life. If education fails to inculcate value in the youth, then it is not education at all. It's time to look beyond stereotypes.

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