PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF EDUCATION

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Education, Interaction and Social Change

Introduction

In this chapter, influence of education on the individual and the society in general will be examined. Education is viewed as leading to changes in the individual as well as social changes in the community. On the other hand, when any particular social change is envisaged in the society, strategies to effect such a change are also discussed. Different views on the functions of education in the society are also presented.

Education and change

Institutionalized agencies for deliberate socialization are a universal feature in many societies. Effective participation in modern society today requires heavy investment in educational institutions. Education like the broader process of socialization is person centered and society centered. Education enhances the capabilities of the individual and contributes to his self realization and at the same time, education performs practical work for the social system. It leads to change in the individual and in the society.

Functions of education

Many views as to the function and purpose of education have been expressed by scholars. There is agreement that schools have to play certain roles in the individual and in the society, it is the functions expected of education in the society that seem to be the bone of contention.

Cultural transmission

The communication of beliefs and understanding is a major function of formal education. There is the concern that cultural and traditional values will be lost if no one has special knowledge of them. The role of the school is thus seen as the preserving and transmitting of culture in addition to giving intellectual training to the young. To the conservatives, the school is seen as an instrument for maintaining existing social orders only when the public has decided on them. They object to the idea that the school should take a prominent role in reforming society and its institutions. To the conservative, the society is prior to the

individual, the social order is prior to the school. The school, in the view of the conservatives, is the servant of society. The school is seen as having no basis for reforming or altering the historic character of the society.

However, other scholars who believe in educational progressivism, strongly hold the view that the school can criticize the existing order and help to build a better future. Education is seen as the fundamental method of social progress and reform. Reforms based on laws, legal threats or superficial modifications, according to the adherents of liberal tradition in education, are futile. To them, the only trustworthy means of social reconstruction lies in the adjustment, through education, of individual actions on the basis of social consciousness. The individual and social factors are both recognized. The ideal school is thus, expected to reconcile the individualistic and institutional ideals. The school is regarded as a form of community life in which concentrated effort is made in bringing the child to share in the inherited sources of the race and to use his own powers for social ends. The experience the child has in the school, is considered to be real and vital to him as that of the home or the neighbourhood. The implication of this view is that efforts can be made by the teachers to influence the attitudes and beliefs of the young in the directing of far–reaching social reform.

With reference to education, the individual and the society, certain questions usually come up such as:

(a)   Which comes first, the interests of the individual or the interests of the society?

(b)   Should education find it's orientation around the needs of the individual or the needs of the society?

(c)   Should the school be a leader of social reform?

There are no easy answers to these questions. With reference to the interest of the individual and the interest of the society one may ask which has priority, the rights of the individual or the rights of the society. It is logical to say that education should serve the interests of the individual as well as the interests of the society. Education should take care of the needs of the individual as well as the needs of the society. Serving the needs and interests of the individual is serving the needs and interests of the society. With reference to the role of the school in social reform, education or the school has a significant role to play. The school may need to develop citizens capable of surviving in a society undergoing rapid change. The school should be able to equip the disadvantaged members within the society, with skills and knowledge needed for effective living. The school and community must learn to reinforce each other in teaching about life and about living with social

change. The school should have the responsibility to establish whatever relation is to be established between individuals and the greater social group. Sometimes, schools are criticized for promoting an excessive conformity in students and we also turn round to criticize the school for permitting excessive individual freedom.

The issue of whether it is right or not for the school to impose certain beliefs on children can be debated on and on, the truth of the matter is that the child is always imposed on by somebody. Who then should impress these ideas on the child? Another function of education is social integration of members of the society. Formal education is a major agency for transforming a heterogeneous and potentially divided community into one with a sense of common identity. There could be unity in diversity. Education can also encourage the disadvantaged to contribute meaningfully towards the development of each country.

Education also promotes innovations. Educational institutions are sources of innovations. The teachers or scholars could be called upon to apply his wisdom to new situations. Innovation is increasingly institutionalized and centers of learning are now expected to contribute new ideas and new technology all of which have implications for change. Education is for personal development. Formal education communicates skills and perspectives that cannot readily be gained through other socializing experiences. In addition to providing intellectual and moral discipline and the opportunity to learn specialized subject matters, the school is often a place of transition from a highly personal to a more impersonal world. The school contributes to the personal growth and well-being of the individual. Education can also be viewed as a process of shaping man or guiding the evolving dynamism through which man forms himself as a man.

Processes of social change

Education can be used to facilitate the solution of some of the problems facing the society and it can also be used to facilitate social change in the society. Effecting a social change in the community must involve the analysis of the societal problems and needs and then developing educational and community programmes that will provide solutions to problems.

For an effective problem solving and/or promoting social change, in a society, there are a number of requirements to be met. The requirements include the following:

(i)   *Making co-ordinated efforts among individuals, organizations and agencies:* The school and the community must co-operate with each other. Activating a society into a living learning

laboratory is not possible without close co-ordination and co-operation.

(ii) *Making better use of already existing skills and talents:* Professional educators, planning specialists and governmental officials are some of the people whose skills and experiences in decision-making and problem solving could be utilized. They could assist in analyzing various problems and could lend assistance in planning corresponding programmes towards the envisaged change.

(iii) *The nature of the particular problem must be determined:* The local citizen in the society, various groups, organizations can be involved through study groups, discussions and advisory councils.

(iv) *Programmes must be developed to meet various needs:* The local citizens can be involved at this level too through advisory roles, by assisting the implementation of programmes through provision of information to planners as to whether their needs are being met.

(v) *Developing the problem solving skills:* This can be among members of the society through provision of opportunities and trainings.

Strategies for achieving social change

To achieve changes in the society through education may require efforts by various people or organizations. There are many strategies or approaches that can be utilized to achieve a social change. Some of these approaches will include.

1. Identification of leaders or community influentials within the society. One needs to understand how they affect decision making process and one should carry them along the envisaged change.

2. Identifying with and utilizing existing groups and organizations that will support the change. Co-operation with existing groups will increase the effectiveness to achieve the desired change.

3. Identifying with agencies or organizations whose function include directing or guiding change programmes. Such organizations often perform a change-agent role, with employees skilled in human relations, diagnosis of problems and the adaptation of various resources to achieve a programme's goals.

4. Forming committees or groups around particular needs. This could involve also the cooperation of an agency or organization

that possess various physical and organizational resources with groups that possess skills or accessibility to a particular target group.

These four approaches are some of the strategies that may be utilized in any social change.

Summary

Education contributes to the capabilities of the individual and leads to change in the society. Education serves many functions such as cultural transmission, social integration, promotion of innovations and personal development.

To effect a change in the community, there must be the analysis of the societal problem and the development of programmes to provide solutions to the problem. Social change can also be achieved by involving community leaders, groups, organizations and agencies while also forming groups to cater for particular needs.

Follow-up activities

1. Briefly enumerate some purposes of education that you have learnt in this chapter.

2. What do you understand by the concept of social change?

3. What is the significance of education to social change?

Out-of-class activities

1. Identify a particular problem in the society.

2. Enumerate the programmes to provide solutions to the problem.

Reference for further reading

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