RELEVANCE OF BASIC EDUCATION IN PRESENT SOCIETY: A CRITICAL ASSESSMENT

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ABSTRACT

An attempt has been made to analyse the impact assessment and relevance of basic education in the present society. This study is primarily empirical in nature covering the broad areas of basic education. For this, analysis are formulated by the historical background and concept of basic education with respect to wardha Education Conference and Zakir Hussain Committee. Again, the whole curriculum and merits and demerits of basic education have been discussed to make a comparative analysis of the relevancy of it in the present society. For the sake of simplicity, the whole paper is divided into six sections: excluding the introductory portion, section I deals with the historical background and concept of basic education; section II explains the Wardha education conference and Zakin Hussain Committee formulated for reviewing the basic education; curriculum of basic education is incorporated in section III; merits and demerits are explained in section IV; section V draws the relevancy of basic education in the present society and finally conclusion appears in section VI.

Key Words: Basic education, social revolution, Wardha education conference, Zakin Hussain Committee, present relevance

INTRODUCTION

Basic education provides such kind of knowledge which may help one to fulfill his basic needs. The main objective of basic education is to make a child self-reliant and self-sufficient. Basic education helps one to select the profession in future according to his innate nature. Basic education provides the all round
development of body, mind and spirit of an individual and it can coordinate with the various aspects of livelihood. Basic education helps to flourish the culture of the local society and also to mitigate the local demands regarding environmental and economical status.

Gandhiji was a great educationist and philosopher of India. He realized the necessity of basic education in British ruled India as he thought it would help the countrymen to reach at the peak of self-realization with respect to truth and non-violence. He wanted a silent social revolution through basic education which does not stand for mere technique rather it stands for anew crafts-centered approach full of spirit and self-realization which always seeks truth. (Nandi. S, Pandit. T & Paul. P. K., 2015)

SECTION - I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE CONCEPT OF BASIC EDUCATION

The Government of India Act, 1935 came into force in 1937. Congrees ministries were formed in seven provinces in India according to that act. Initially Congress leaders were decided that Congress had to implement free, universal and compulsory education based on Indian traditional culture through the medium of mother tongue for countrymen after getting the power. But this required a huge sum of money to mitigate the expenditure. It was an impossible task at that time because Congress ministries did not allocate the sufficient revenue for this purpose. Gandhiji came forward to meet that situation and he then put forward the proposal of mass education need not be held up for want of funds. According to Gandhiji, crafts-oriented Free and compulsory elementary education could be given to every child regarding the needs of local society. Gandhiji expressed his unique views on crafts-oriented education later on which was popularly known as basic education through the several articles published in ‘Harijan’ in June 31, 1937. Finally, Gandhiji placed his proposal of basic education in Wardha Education Conference in Oct, 1937 (www.kkhsou.in>main>wardha).

SECTION-II

WARDHA EDUCATION CONFERENCE

An All India Education Conference was held in Wardha on 22nd and 23rd Oct, 1937 for discussing the various aspects of the basic education proposed by Gandhiji. Gandhiji presided over the Conference where eminent educationists, Congress leaders along with workers had attended the Conference. The following four resolutions were passed in the Conference.

(1) Free and compulsory education is provided on a nation-wide scale.
(2) Mother-tongue be the medium of instruction
(3) Elementary education should be given through learning by doing principle and it should be crafts-oriented as per local needs.
(4) The system of education will be able to balance the remuneration of teacher and other related expenditure as well.
The Conference then appointed a committee under the chairmanship of Dr. Zakir Hussain to prepare a detailed education plan and syllabus on the lines of the above resolutions (www.makarand.com).

**ZAKIR HUSSAIN COMMITTEE**

Besides, Dr. Zakir Hussain, the committee constituted of nine members. As mentioned earlier, the committee was appointed to construct the suitable frame of curriculum of basic education. The scheme of basic education formulates the following proposals –

1) Free, universal and compulsory education should be provided for all boys and girls between the ages 7-14 years.
2) Mother tongue of the child should be the medium of instruction.
3) According to the capacity of the children and the needs of the locality education should be crafts oriented.
4) Spinning and weaving, card-board and wood-work, leather-work, kitchen, gardening, agriculture and fishery were suggested as suitable crafts in basic education.
5) Crafts oriented education have an economic view also because the selected craft should be taught and practiced so that children are able to produce articles which can be used in the school or may be sold to mitigate the expenditure of the school partly.
6) The social and scientific implications of the selected craft must be taught.
7) All the subjects to be taught were to be integrally associated with the selected craft (Roy. S, 2004).

**SECTION-III**

**CURRICULUM OF BASIC EDUCATION**

Wardha education conference in 1937 suggested the basic education for children between 7-14 years of age and curriculum has also been suggested accordingly. A large emphasis was given on general science for boys and on home science for girls. The following are the major subjects suggested in conference –

1) Basic craft  
   (i) Spinning and weaving  
   (ii) Carpentry  
   (iii) Agriculture  
   (iv) Fruit and flower cultivation  
   (v) Leather work  
   (vi) Culturing fish  
   (vii) Poultry  
   (viii) Handloom  
   (ix) Any handicraft according to the local need
2) Mother tongue
3) Mathematics
4) Geography, history and civics to be combined as social science
5) Painting and music
6) P.T., drill and sports etc.
7) General science comprising of physics, chemistry, botany, zoology, hygiene and nature study etc.
8) Home science
9) Hindi for that area in which it is not the mother tongue.

SECTION-IV

MERITS OF BASIC EDUCATION

Merits of basic education are as follows –

(1) The concept of basic education is helpful for rapid expansion of elementary education throughout the country with minimum dependence on public fund.
(2) Basic education helps in enhancement of status of our country because it has a surprising financial aspect.
(3) Basic education is activity-oriented education based on learning by doing principle which helps an individual to acquire the practical knowledge on livelihood as well as guide him to choose the profession in future according to his interest.
(4) As the basic education is child-centric, it considers the creative and constructive sense of children as well as dignity of labor.
(5) This educational approach is based on the principle of correlation; it emphasizes on the basic craft chosen by an individual and correlates entire education with the practical knowledge about the craft. Correlation also takes place between physical environment, social environment and craft work.
(6) Basic education is based upon the cultural and social heritage of our country.
(7) One of major objectives of basic education is harmonious development of body, mind and spirit.
(8) This educational system inculcates social, moral as well as democratic values like cooperation, responsibility, fellow-filling in the minds of the students. (Mondal et.al, 2014).

DEMERITS OF BASIC EDUCATION

Though the concept of crafts-oriented basic education had a good prospect and it made good progress after independence for about a decade but it failed due to several causes. The demerits of the basic education are as follows –
(1) Teachers, educators, social leaders as well as educational administrators had possessed the indifferent attitude towards basic education.

(2) Since the remuneration of teachers was depended on the earnings made by students by producing articles through crafts work, it had a demoralizing effect on teacher-student relationship.

(3) Too much emphasis on craft had led the neglect of liberal education.

(4) Crafts-oriented education will make a disparity between the vocational and intellectual education as high intellect will not be satisfied by the knowledge of a specific crafts only.

(5) Correlation between the subjects is a good technique used so far in the education but correlation of the subjects through craft may appear to be sometimes unusual and time consuming.

(6) The technological upliftment by the help of modern science is necessary for the progress of our society. In this context, the role of basic education was limited in modernization of the society.

(7) Lack of finance and absence of sound administrative policy was also responsible for the failure of basic education.

(8) Lack of efficient, trained and sincere teachers was one of the most important causes for the failure of this education system. (Mondal et.al, 2014).

SECTION -V

RELEVANCE OF BASIC EDUCATION IN PRESENT DAY SOCIETY

In this section, we will discuss the relevancy of basic education in present day society. Basic education provides activity oriented knowledge based on learning by doing principle which helps one to get a job. Basic education also helps one to build his character as well as provides him to develop the social, moral and democratic values like honesty, cooperation, responsibility, fellow-filling, leadership quality etc. Another vivacious aspect of basic education was women empowerment which is very relevant to our present society.

(1) ERADICATION OF UNEMPLOYMENT

In present day if we look around we will see a lot of unemployed and underemployed youth having tremendous depression moving here and there. The youth who have already got a job are in the state of total dissatisfaction because they have compelled to choose it. Non productive area increases day by day by such employment having less interest to the job. In this context, basic education is needed. In elementary level, if a child gets an opportunity to select a suitable craft according to his interest and provides him a proper curriculum of liberal education associated with crafts-orientation, he will perform with interest and will create a productive field by which the society as well as country will be benefited. (Malik, 2013)

(2) ACQUIRING SPECIAL KNOWLEDGE

All we see that in technological science; medical sciences or any other application oriented subjects provide one the special knowledge about it for becoming a specialist of that subject. Basic
education also imparts the special knowledge to a child according to his interest from the elementary level which will help him becoming a specialist.

(3) FORMATION OF CHARACTER

In Gandhian philosophy, character formation was given much importance as compared to literacy. Gandhiji gave importance on making character. He wanted to make a new social order based on purity of soul, concepts, activities, truth and non-violence. In recent time, violent activities are increasing in schools day by day and all we are worried a lot today. Now the quality of character is decreasing gradually. Politics have been intruded in every sphere of our life and it exploits the character of youth. Industrialization also leads the deterioration of values. For this basic education is very relevant in the present day because it creates a new era full of humanity and values. (Nandi, S, Pandit, T & Paul, P. K., 2015).

(4) DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL, MORAL AND DEMOCRATIC VALUES

The concept of basic education was influenced by the Gandhian philosophy and its curriculum was based on the learning by doing principle. During the process of learning crafts work, all kinds of values were developed in a child. In present time where value deterioration occurs in every sphere of our life, basic education with Gandhian views is too relevant in our present day schools. Social values like cooperation, fellow-fillings, moral values like honesty, truth and non-violence and democratic values like leadership quality will be enhanced in our students if the relevant ideas of basic education associated with suitable curriculum are implemented properly in our schools. (Das, D. K, 2012)

(5) WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

There was a limited scope for women empowerment in British ruled India. Even after independence, it is not so easy. Despite the progress India seems to be trapped in a paradox. Although the democratic polity has laid down laws, rules, plans and programmes aimed at women advancement with no distinction being made related to education between boys and girls, there is still a great divergence between the constitutional position and stark reality of deprivation and degradation. It was started to come forward the women of our country in the main stream of working arena through basic education. Still now the scheme of basic education with proper curriculum can show a valuable prospect of women empowerment if it is implemented in the girls and co-ed schools countrywide in the correct way. (Roy, 2004).
SECTION - VI

CONCLUDING REMARKS

To sum up, it can be said that basic education as advocated by Gandhiji, has emerged in India as a silent social revolution in that contemporary times. Although, it has some lacunas, still it creates an atmosphere of self-reliance, activity oriented education by promoting employment, formation of special gainful knowledge, democratic values and specially providing women’s empowerment in our country. So, the policy of basic education is undoubtedly good and significant in the present society but the relevancy of it has been diminished in some extent in the present society due its operational framework and implementation policies.

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