

A Comprehensive Educational System

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Abstract

Education and personal development are simply matters of unfolding from within, which takes place when there is no authority and pressure. We need to provide the learners a stimulating environment for the development of a healthy mind. I think a new faith and vision in the youths will bring about a change in the educational system. There is a manifestation from the lower to the higher. The more we are able to manifest our human nature from within the better do we realize this. This occurs to oneself on one's own. In educational institutions there are students from different backgrounds, having different levels of intelligence, having aims in life to achieve. Our mission is to give "fire to their wings" of imaginations. The young minds are powerful source of energy and they must be developed and encouraged to bring about a transformation in the society.

Keywords: Challenges, Education, Environment, Human Nature, Methodology, Transformation, Vision

1. Introduction

Challenges in the Educational System

'Educare' is a Latin word and it means "to nourish, to bring up", 'to rise'. This means, educating a child involves nourishing or bringing up the child according to certain ends or aims. It also means "to lead out" or "to draw out". This means educating a child by drawing out from or leading him out of darkness into light, from ignorance to wisdom. Education also means to remove prejudices and dogmas that have not allowed progress to take place within individuals and society. Thus philosophy and education cannot be separated.

The challenges existing at all level in the present educational level are in not understanding our true selves. We are getting away from the core and depth of education. The stress that is in the mind of the learners is in relation to the body, the mind and the surrounding circumstances. We grow and develop actively participating within an environment. We need to be in alignment with the changing circumstances which includes all those factors, that comprises our living. Awareness in taking care of our body, in being fit and firm and understanding our mind, will enable us to cope with the challenges of life. Our growth is in relation to the changes occurring not only within but also without.

Our educational system needs redirection from time to time according to social, cultural, economic and technological changes. Are we 'living' the education that we are getting in the educational institutions? When there is progress in the field of science and technology, why is there so much of confusion and conflict in the mind of the educated? The fierce nature of competition at all levels is an alarming situation. Are we ignoring the 'philosophical' aspect of learning? Education is nothing but a Philosophy of life which means the outlook of life, how we regard things, events, relationships and values. Every branch of life like science, law, economics, political science, sociology, literature depends for their flowering upon philosophy that provides a vision. Individual and corporate lives need a solid philosophical base of values, if it is to reach its full potential and function harmoniously.

Among the many drawbacks in our present educational system, we may note that we have given importance to a model without comprehending the inner spirit and strengths of the traditional structure. We can have a philosophy of education that we can call our own in connection to the cultural ethos, which could answer best to the requirements of the current social realities as well as our future needs.

Our concern is to sharpen and deepen our understanding, of significant philosophical teachings that underlie an educational system and to investigate several broad topics relating to educational practices. Considering the discontentment that exists in the minds of the younger generation a new system of education in a philosophical perspective is required that would be promising, enliven the learners, bringing in peace and contentment.

2. Education & Environment

A vital influencing factor in the field of education, the environmental factor, is affecting and interacting with the learning mind. Environment includes atmosphere at home, social environment - relationship with others in the society and the physical environment –with hills, plains, trees, gardens, lake as well as roads and flyovers. In the present context, we need to take into account the changing nature of our environment in terms of urban spaces and changing nature of the family and Social structure. We live in an environment that is constantly interacting with our interests. We must provide the best of environment from the very early days of childhood, in which the child is budding, for learning and development. It has been noticed that small children have an inborn love for nature. They love water, soil, trees, birds and animals. They are curious about everything in nature and find happiness in its proximity. They draw positive attitude from the surroundings and those are reflected in their activities. Children have more interest in birds, their feathers, and nests, their sounds, the clouds, rainbow, the Sun, the hills and the mountains. They like to play amidst nature more than in closed compartments. In this way, their body and minds are naturally fresh and healthy. Disturbances, in the environment, due to the pollution, over population and the restless political scenario all of these add to disturbances in the learners mind.

In education, it is the thoughts in the learners' mind and the inherent source of energy playing vital roles. We are part of the universe having the capacity of getting cosmic energy, to enliven ourselves. We need to develop tools through education to understand the nature of our thoughts. Only a mind that is in silence can draw energy from the cosmos. We have to be watchful about not wasting our energy as whatever that is happening outside affects directly or indirectly our thinking processes. What sort of thoughts would lead to restoration of energy? Our thoughts distorted for many reasons are a waste of energy. Philosopher and educationist J.Krishnamurti said, "To bring about a good society, human beings have to change. You and I must find the energy the impetus the vitality to bring about this radical transformation of the mind, and that is not possible, if we do not have enough energy. We need a great deal of energy to bring about a change within ourselves, but we waste our energy through conformity, through acceptance, through obedience. It is a waste of energy when we are trying to conform to a pattern. To conserve energy we must be aware of ourselves and how we dissipate energy. If we become aware of this indolence, this deep-rooted laziness, and try to quicken the mind, the heart, the intensity of it again becomes a conflict, which is also a waste of energy. Our problem, one of the many that we have, is how to conserve energy, the energy that is necessary for an explosion to take place in consciousness: an explosion that is not contrived, that is not put together by thought, but an explosion that occurs naturally when this energy is not wasted. Conflict in any form, at any level, at any depth of our being, is a waste of energy."¹

The study of philosophy can provide a valuable base, to help us think clearly. Can we apply philosophical principles and teachings in everyday living? Many of the world's problems result from poor thinking. Philosophy of education is the application of philosophical ideas to the educational problems. To think philosophically is to reflect upon who we are, what we are doing, why we are doing it, and how we justify all things. The foundation of thinking on strong moral values, will give strength in the person's character. There is a scientific way of thinking as well as a holistic and a spiritual way. For a balanced functioning both should go simultaneously, and then appropriate actions, will follow from those thoughts. The left part of the brain analyses, organizes and processes. The right is for emotions, for holistic thoughts and imaginations. How one uses and balances, the two halves are shown in his actions. For example, one with a more scientific way of thinking will be practical and will think of those skills that will help him in building his career. Those with more of the spiritual side developed will think of those actions that will benefit others, the society at large resulting in peace and harmony. In advocating a change in the present educational system, we are looking forward to those ideas and thoughts that will be both scientific and spiritual. The result of such thoughts will give rise to those actions, which will benefit the students in their personal life and in building of one's career. I think every learner is a leader. He has to have in him the culmination of the scientific and the spiritual, enabling to develop within him a balance, aiding in maintaining cordial relationship through better communication and interactions. This will not only affect him as an individual, but also his family, the Society and the entire human race.

In highlighting the changes required in the present system in the formative years, what is required is a natural way of getting educated. To understand the child and direct him accordingly is the work of parents, and the best counseling that a child requires at the early stage of life, is within the family. Learning begins at home. Family thus provides a link between emotions and intellect and passes on values and standards of conduct. We require a general mode and pattern in our present system. For an overall development much depends on whether the education given in the educational institutions is backed up by the education given at home. There are many constructive allocations as well as distractions in ones daily life. We have to think of a self – education system, which will be self - evaluative. The learners are to use their minds in self-knowledge and understanding. If there is discipline, there will be total focus in ones thought actions and less of confusions. Over the century new and new discoveries have added more and more gadgets in the lives of human beings. Machines have become man’s first friend. The modern gadgets have disturbed the mind, making it inattentive. J.Krishnamurti said, paying attention is a difficult process – “you may know the superficial layers of your mind, but to know the unconscious motives, drives, fears, the hidden residue of tradition, of racial inheritance – to be aware of all that and to give it close attention is very hard work: it demands a great deal of energy. Most attention to these things: we have not the movements of the mind. However, it is only the mind which has understood itself in itself in its totality and is therefore incapable of self-deception, it is only such a mind that can free itself of its past and go beyond its own movements within the field of time. This is not very difficult, but it requires a great deal of hard work.”²

Each individual in society has physical, social, environmental and spiritual problems. Due to lack of self knowledge and understanding there exists no harmony and peace in social relationships. The learners are learning in fear and hardly are they experiencing freedom in the journey of education. When we are looking for an unconventional form of educational system, we are looking for “freedom” in the field of education. According to John Dewey, ideas are instruments in the solution of man’s problems. He had said that the world is like a garden and each individual a different plant. Each will freely develop in its own way and bear fruit different from the other. This should be the fundamental idea behind education. Let there be freedom in the learners development, taking off all limitations and this is possible only when we are participating in something, which interests us. The Observation in the present scenario is this that a child from the very beginning is dragged in the Curriculum-based education that soon becomes a bore to him and soon he becomes impatient and tries to occupy his mind in an easy mode of entertainment and an escape from the drudgery of the so called ‘education’. This calls for parents and educationists to divert the mind of the child towards something productive. May be a child would like to play with musical instruments lying in his house used by the elders. Preferences from the very childhood days give indications for the future. Child going into a kindergarten classroom where there are all kinds of toys, music – boxes, pictures for painting and drawings. If anyone were attracted to the music – box then he would be trained such that he would be best in that. John Dewey had tried to solve the problem of education in a truly practical way. The child according to him must learn through action. If knowledge is nothing but an instrument for action mere theoretical knowledge is not worth the name. He considered school must be life, not a mere preparation for life, the student must ‘learn by doing’. The activity school that John Dewey talked about trained its children to choose their own purpose, to fix upon their own objectives and then search for the means of accomplishing them, and to do these things co-operatively, that is with and by the help of their fellows. The school thus becomes a place for learning, play and work. John Dewey had a gift for suggesting activities that captured the centre of what his classes were studying.

A stereotyped way of getting a degree should not be the restricted ideal of education and by doing so; we are ruining the future of our learners. Influenced by the outside factors the aim of education is not only to learn to think, but to think objectively, without fear. We have to have an educational system, where the minds will be without fear.

3. How Can Education provide for an Individual Social Transformation?

Education is not only preparation for a good living but for inner refinement. Pioneers in the field of education are those who have introduced a new system of education bringing in a change in the society for the better. Education is the background of all nations. A nation’s ideal and its sense of duty everything depends upon her education.

The progress of a country among all classes much depends upon the practical side of education, in all branches of knowledge. When we talk about education and the changes that have to be in the existing system, we have to consider the present social and political scenario.

The recent crisis in the world, the disorder in the society, the fear of terrorism draws our attention towards the need of peaceful coexistence. This is calling for a holistic form of education, an educational system which will keep us united.

Only when we understand relationships in a global context, will it enable us to connect us with the other nations. Our thoughts are related. Education exists in relationship and not in isolation. We learn in relation to one another and come to realize that we share the same one life in the world. A new pattern must take care of all branches of learning, catering to all levels of students in the rural and the urban sides. We have ignited minds and educators have to give wings to thoughts and ideas. We need organizing skills from the very beginning in order to avoid crisis in the professional and in the personal life and face the inevitable role of competition in a constructive manner.

4. A New Educational System

New education requires more attention to progress in technique that also involves an imaginative vision. Going ahead in the field of education is not disregarding the past, but accepting all its good & keeping this in mind is how an educator plans. What is it in the present system, which can be a 'torch light' for the coming generations? Keeping in mind that education is not concerned with the immediate present but a 'vision' for the coming period, every educationist as well as learner has to come up with something, which will be of use in the future. Every major philosopher since Plato has recognized that the primary function as a philosopher is as John Dewey says – 'to shed some light on the path ahead'. We require a visionary educational system where the learners are made cognizant about their interests and goals.

An educational institution bubbling with new ideas, maximizing organizing skills from the very beginning in order to avoid crisis in the professional and personal life and enabling learners to face the inevitable role of competition in a constructive manner. The choice and combination of subjects should be in accordance with the inclination, as well as the ability of the student. We have had a common syllabus for all students in the classroom pattern of teaching. The present scene is classrooms are crowded with students learning the same combination of subjects in disparity. In order to facilitate learning according to ones individual capacity, students should be given an opportunity in choosing combination of subjects. Their learning in interests in their choice of subjects would make the learning stress free. John Dewey, in his book 'How We Think', mentions – "There is no greater enemy of effective thinking, than divided interest. This division unfortunately is often produced in school. A pupil gives an external, perfunctory attention to the teacher and to his books and lessons while his inmost thoughts are concerned with matters more attractive to him."³ Children are cognizant about their image. They have to discover their own interests by themselves.

Education same as life is in continuation of the past to the present and will be carried over to the future. It is a gradual process occurring in rhythmic continuity, in a dynamic and energetic pattern. In a global learning system an educator having good insight into the effects of experiences have to provide quality education, which is relevant and meaningful for the students in the coming years of their lives.

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