A Philosophical Approach for Challenges Prevailing in Indian Elementary Education System

Kusum Jain and Shelly
Department of Philosophy, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur, INDIA
E-mail: madanmohanmahawar@yahoo.co.in

Abstract

The elementary education is the foundation of the entire educational system. The education the child receives at the elementary stage lays down the foundation for his or her physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and social development. Since independence Indian elementary education system is facing many challenges i.e. incomplete enrollment, inequalities, poor quality, and ineffective school performance. In the modern, sophisticated and materialistic world, beside above challenges, many ethical, social, psychological, philosophical challenges are also prevailing in Indian elementary education system that needs to be discussing here.
Keywords: elementary education, Ethical, Moral, challenge

Introduction

Education is not simply imparting knowledge in a particular faculty or subject or making one fit for securing jobs or fair well in exams, but at the same time is also a training in logical thinking which helps the coming generations adjust to the ever changing environment. It also means opening the doors of the mind, cleansing the soul and realization of the self (Pabla, 2011). Education is a vital means for the potentialities of a human being to emerge in a positive direction so that a man can live in society with full of dignity and can mould the habits, tastes and character of individuals living in society by imparting knowledge and information (Ritimoni Bordoloi, 2011). Education should aim at making human life better not only through economic upliftment of individual but also through social, moral and spiritual strengthening. This will not only improve human life but also realize the "higher truth" i.e. "Tamaso Ma Jyotirgamaya" from darkness to light. Thus education is not only a way of earning but it also helps to develop human personality with skills, values, morals and enhancement of different attributes of man. So education is a vital means for the potentialities of a human being to emerge in a positive direction so that a man can live in society with full of dignity (Bordoloi, 2011). To make the people educated and to promote the welfare of the society as a whole, it is imperative to make education available for all the people of the country. The government of India has made education a fundamental right and it has become a birth right for every one living in the country. In this regards various provisions have been made under the Directive Principles and Fundamental Rights of the Constitution. In India, the Right to Education Act came into the effect from 1st April 2010. The right to education is now a fundamental right for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. Thus, the government will be responsible for providing education to every child up to the eight standards, free of cost, irrespective of class and gender. It has paved the way for building a strong, literate and empowered youth of this country.

The primary or elementary education is the foundation of the entire educational system. Elementary education is also the foundation of the entire superstructure of the nation that we are trying to build. It's crucial for spreading mass literacy, which is basic requirement for the effecting the functioning of democratic institutions, economic development and modernization of social structure (Pathak, 2012). Within the purview of overall education, elementary education is recognized as a basic human right, vital both to the development of individuals and societies(UNESCO, 2008). Elementary education has been described in the Encyclopedia Americana (1988) as "the period of formal schooling extending from admission to school- in kindergarten or 1st grade to completion of the 8th grade (Pathak, 2012)." Elementary education is categorized in pre- primary, primary and middle education. In India, Pre- Primary is consists of children of 3-5 years of age studying in nursery, lower kindergarten and upper kindergarten. At this stage student is given knowledge about school life and is taught to read and write some basic words. The Primary school includes the age group of children of 6-11 years studying in classes from first to fifth. The middle or upper primary school consists of children studying in classes from sixth to eighth. Generally speaking, elementary school organization refers to a combination of two stages of education- primary stage of education covering classes I to V (age group 6 to 11) and upper primary school covering classes VI to VIII (age group 11 to 14). The education the child receives at the elementary stage lays down the foundation for his or her physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and social development.

Since independence Indian elementary education system is facing many challenges i.e. incomplete enrollment, inequalities, poor quality, and ineffective school performance. Even today, despite progress, nearly

all the problems admitted in 1950 are still waiting to be tackled. Physical infrastructure is inadequate, not all children are enrolled, retention is poor with girls lagging behind boys, drop-out rates remain high, children belonging to scheduled caste, scheduled tribe, and Muslim communities are largely excluded, inequalities persist, quality is poor, and learning achievements are low (Kumar and Rastogi, 2010). Many other challenges also create hurdle in making the universalization of elementary education. Parents in the low income group have the willingness to send their children to work for adding to the family income rather than to school. Early marriages, migration of people for the sustenance, preferential attitude to the boys than the girls, taking care of the siblings at home, lack of infrastructure in schools, requirements of additional schools, single teacher school and finances are some other responsible factors for hindering the universalization of elementary education in India (Ritimoni Bordoloi, 2011). Beside above challenges, many ethical, social, psychological, philosophical challenges are also prevailing in Indian elementary education system that needs to be discussing here.

Changing the role of Teacher

In ancient India, the Teachers (Guru) were dedicated to achieve the highest ideals of complete human development that included physical, mental, spiritual development of students (Shelly and Jain, 2013).Teaching is a noble profession from ancient time in India. There is a respectful and healthy relationship between the teacher and pupil. The knowledge given by teachers has multifaceted aims to develop the student physically, morally, mentally, ethically, socially and spiritually in order to help the pupil fulfill his or her ambition. The teacher can identify the excellent attributes and qualities of the students. On the basis of these attributes and qualities, teachers provide guidance to the pupil to select the right direction or profession which he or she should adopt in their life. The teachers always aspire that their pupils should go in the positive direction in their life. The teacher keeps away the pupils from those subjects which can corrupt pupils' behavior. The transformation of knowledge between teacher and student is in behavioral limitations. Teacher has good proficiency and expertise on his subject. In the classroom, while teaching, he always uses examples, details, analogies, metaphors, and variety in modes of explanation to make subject not only understandable but memorable. A good teacher is an ethically strong, responsible and patience full person. He is not only given knowledge to student but also make him physically strong. The teachers are also concerned about total improvement of students which includes their intellectual level, understand their abilities, be aware of responsibilities, regards for elders, appreciation for cultural heritage, responsibility towards their classmates.

There was a time when an entire generation of dedicated teachers was presents in India, who was motivated by ideals and principles that were embedded in the social value system. The number of such teachers has substantially declined. In the modern, sophisticated and materialistic world the teacher also lost his original identity. The internal peace, satisfaction and eternal bliss of teacher are replaced by tiny materialistic things i.e. name, fame or money.

Teacher absenteeism is also a serious challenge in elementary education system of India. It greatly reduces the overall effectiveness of the school, diminishes pupils' achievements, damages the school's reputation, and induces pupil absenteeism (Bray, 2003). The UNESCO's International Institute of Educational Planning study on corruption in education state that there is 25% teacher absenteeism in India which is among the highest in the world. In Bihar two of every five teachers were reported absent, the figure in UP was reported to be one-third of the total teachers. Ghost Teacher does not just affect quality of education but it is also a huge drain on resources resulting in the wastage of 22.5% of education funds of India (Hallak, and Poisson, 2005).

Political interference is considered one of the most important causes for the declining in teachers. The policy relating to recruitment, promotion and transfer of teachers in the education system are yet not formed in many states and thus the human resource management in education is not well organized in India. The political interference is largely responsible for misuse of human resource management in education. Political parties often use many teachers as their party workers and these teachers also participate willingly in politics. Those teachers who are very close to political leaders have records of misconduct and unethical behavior such as irregularity in class teaching, becoming absent from the school without taking leave. Political leaders, high-level bureaucrats and members of the teacher unions also attempt to influence decision-making regarding the recruitment and transfer of teachers. Favoritism, nepotism and bribes are major types of misconduct in teacher's appointment, posting and transfer. So the moral and ethical commitment of teachers has gradually decreased over the years due to political interference (Nuland and Khandelwal, 2001).

There is urgent need to frame policies regarding recruitment, promotion and transfers as well as to curb political interference and absenteeism in the education system in all the states.

Unable to inculcate moral values

Values are the guiding principles of life that contribute to the all round development of an individual. Values also add a good quality to the life and it should also contribute to the welfare of family, the community and the nation (Pathania, 2011). Education is a tool for total development of human, if any one aspect of human

personality is ignored, it can result very adversely. So without imparting values and morals in education, human development will be incomplete. Values and morals are inbuilt in human being and Education should help in the improvement of human character and recognition of their inner purity, so the essential part of education system should emphasize the values and morals with other development.

If we look at ancient education system of India, we can realize that their education system was very prosperous, value-based, and skills were developed. In ancient time, the teachers were concerned about total improvement of students which includes their intellectual level, understand their abilities, be aware of responsibilities, regards for elders, appreciation for cultural heritage, responsibility towards their fellow classmates. However, these above qualities are not seen in the present education system. In present scenario, education means how to earn money or job and the aspect of values and morals is completely neglected. This attitude has a big challenge in Indian elementary education system. Today most of the unsocial activities are being committed by well-educated new generation. Students lack humanitarian attitude towards other persons, family, society and the nation. Thus, there is greater urgency to think about this challenge.

In ancient India, The family system has a long tradition right from the ancient practice of the Gurukul system. In that time people lived in compound families and elder taught stories to child at home that develops moral values and after that in Gurukul they also primarily taught value education. Therefore, ancient time value education begins at home and it has continued in schools. However, with modern developments and a fast changing role of the parents, it has not been very easy for the parents to impart relevant values in their wards. Today people mostly live in nuclear families and parents are involved in their jobs and they cannot sprout values at home.

Present School curriculum lack emphasize on value education. At present value education is not started at home nor taught at schools in India. Although value education is included in the primary education curriculum but at the adolescent or adult stage, which are the most sensitive stages to build the character of the youth, the curriculum finds no space to value education. However the present curriculum makes them perfect money makers, the best politicians, the well- known doctors, the skillful engineers, the greatest musicians, the marvelous actors but fails to make then realize a bit to their identity as human beings (Bala Harish, 2011).

However decline in moral values is a worldwide phenomenon. In the modern, commercial and materialistic world, people running for unlimited accumulation of wealth and moral values are generally neglected and declining in their behaviour. Due to declining moral values, the violence and unsocial activity arise all around the country. However education is not the only factor that can take total responsibility but it has major responsible factor. The education policymakers also have responsibility to check the violence and unsocial activities by incorporating needful change in curriculums. 'Peace education' can be one of the alternatives for preparing children to internalize the strength of non-violence in schools and institutions of higher learning. Truth, Peace and Love are essential ingredients of a nonviolent approach of peace education (J S Rajput). The peace education can helps the students to adopt the path of right direction and non violence.

Educational institute structure

There is need for major changes in educational institutes. At present all the management and administration services of these institutes are maintained by the principal alone with help of some clerks. Principals also use teachers in management and administration of institutes. It is a fact that educational institutes cannot run without teacher's supports because teachers better know the institute's atmosphere. Teachers are mostly busy in admissions, scrutiny of examination form, student union election, examination works etc, but these management activities result in loss of academic session of students. There is a need to free teachers from these administrational and management duties and all the management work of educational institutes should be done by professionals as is being done in private hospitals. Institutes should run with the full recommendations of teachers and professionals support as well as with organized facilities for students and teachers. Teachers should always be mentally and physically free for teaching in the classrooms, not for distribution of scholarship, examination form, and maintenance of school buildings. It can be a good idea to privatize or *outsource* certain services, such as the maintenance of school buildings, preparation of school meals, school transport systems, etc. To ensure that the privatization of services does not open the door to new corruption, the procedure and policies behind the privatization procedure must be carefully devised and rendered "watertight" in this regard. These professional must be under the control of government.

Conclusion

In the modern, commercial and materialistic world the present education system not full fill the overall development needs of human being. In the changing scenario the role of teacher is also change. Teacher qualities are affected by not only by materialistic, commercial thought but also due to political interference. So, there is urgent need to frame policies regarding recruitment, promotion and transfers as well as to curb political interference and absenteeism in the education system in all the states. However decline in moral values is a

worldwide phenomenon. In the modern, commercial and materialistic world, people running for unlimited accumulation of wealth and moral values are generally neglected and declining in their behaviour. So due to materialistic, commercial thought, the violence and unsocial activity arise all around the country. 'Peace education' can be one of the alternatives for preparing children to internalize the strength of non-violence in schools and institutions of higher learning. The peace education can helps the students to adopt the path of right direction and non violence.

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