

SOME PERSPECTIVES OF EDUCATIONAL PLANNING IN INDIA*

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It gives me very great pleasure to inaugurate the seminar on "Educational Planning: Its Legal and Constitutional Implications in India." Problems that planners have got to face in all socio-economic fields are not capable of simple solutions. They remind one of the wisdom of the old saying that truth has many facets. Ultimately truth is one but wise men describe it in different words. And so, when you deal with problems of planning—whether it is related to education or any other socio-economic problem—you feel impressed by the problem that what you regard to be the true solution may ultimately not be the whole of the true solution. This is a justification for seminars of this distinguished character where participants, each one having a status of his own in the academic world, come together and bring into the common thought pool their own approaches and ideals. No prophet is required to anticipate that the consensus which will evolve at the end of these discussions will be of considerable assistance to the educational world.

The concept of democratic planning is an integrating, progressive, dynamic concept and is not based on any belief in dogmas or any absolutes. It purports to adopt a kind of pragmatic approach. It faces problems and tries to evolve solutions to those problems on a rational basis. Reason inspires all efforts of planners and all planning cheerfully submits to the test of experience. Trial and error is the watchword of planners irrespective of whether planning relates to education or any other socio-economic field. Planning in this sense is not inflexible; it is flexible. Provisional character of the conclusions is always writ large on every consensus that is evolved as a result of the discussion on planning. There is one postulate in which all planning believes and that is, that it has before its eye some kind of dedication to a goal. To be effective and purposeful planning must be goal or ideal oriented. When you think of educational planning in relation to its legal and constitutional implications this seminar will have to determine first of all the goals and ideals which education in modern India is intended to serve.

In an inquiry about the goals and ideals of education in modern India discussion about the syllabus and curriculum may be relevant but thinking has to rise beyond that level to the social

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purposes that they tend to subserve. Planning to be effective has no doubt to be comprehensive. But perfect planning reduced to an ideal consensus on paper would amount to no more than an exercise in futility if the implementation of planning is left in the hands of persons who are either indifferent to the ideals of education or worse still if they are cynical. And so planning must not only evolve its ideals and methodology imparting those ideals but should also think about how to bring into existence environments that will give educational planners the human material. No plan, however perfect, can yield any worthwhile results unless its implementation is entrusted to hands that are dedicated and to minds that have vision. And that will immediately take the planners to the problem of finding out how you can create responsiveness both in the teachers and the students. If the teachers are sullen, angry, frustrated, indifferent and the students are busy in the pursuit of affluence and are intent upon starting agitations on the most frivolous excuses even the best of plans will go awry. And so within the scope of the discussion of this seminar will fall the question of evolving the ideals and goals of educational planning, the methods and means which should be adopted to achieve those aims and ideals, and the creation of environment which will bring into existence and encourage effective teaching on the part of teachers who are dedicated to the work of education and have a vision of the purpose which education has to serve. That broadly stated would be the nature of the work that the educational planning in India has got to take into account.

When you think of educational planning, one note of caution is necessary to strike. It is customary in this country that education is regarded a problem on which every Tom, Dick and Harry is supposed to be able to express an opinion. It is forgotten that like all other special branches of knowledge education is very special subject and I would beseech that all persons interested in the future of education should refrain from entering into any controversy in the matter of education unless they have the know-how on the subject.

You will recall that since India became free it has become customary for all kinds of people—cultured, uncultured, educated, uneducated, political, non-political—to say that everything is wrong with our education. I do not subscribe to that view. I do feel that education served a very important purpose even in British days. I do not know whether those who introduced education in India in those days intended that it should serve the purpose which ultimately it in fact did serve. But nevertheless the fact remains that education that we received before our independence did serve to create in our minds a sense of unity of the country and feeling of fairplay, equity and justice.

I do not suggest that everything is well with that education. The

only plea I wish to make in this context is that the problem of evolving formulae for improvement of education and devising the aims and ideals of education and prescribing the methodology in that behalf are to be left to the academic people in this country. Non-academic people should keep themselves away from this problem. It is a problem in which they have no right to express opinion. As soon as I say that, I wish to emphasize that in the context of today it is absolutely important that we should revive our ancient set of values. Today politics and political power have assumed the utmost importance in the conscience of the public. In olden days when we had proper real Indian sense of values if any educated citizen was asked who is more important in the community's estimation whether the persons in political power or a scholar, the answer unambiguously would have been the scholar. It is time that public conscience and the press should realize the significance of scholarship and learning in the evolution of socio-economic life of this country. Martin Luther's warning that "the strength, the glory and the might of the nation depends not on its armaments, not on its political power but on the number of its enlightened cultured citizens" is worthwhile recalling. So, in this context, I would like to emphasize the fact that the world of scholarship must be given the place of precedence in the scheme of national things. The first duty of the education would be to restore scholarship and learning its place of pride in the scheme of national values.

Allied with this problem is the problem of the autonomy of academic opinion. This problem has recently become somewhat controversial. When we speak of the autonomy of academic opinion, this autonomy has two aspects—one negative and the other positive. The negative aspect of the autonomy of academic opinion lies in the demand that academic opinion should not be allowed to suffer any interference either at the hands of the state governments or the union government. We know that education happens to be one of the entries in the state list and so state has competence to deal with the matters of education and the union legislature has competence to deal with matters in relation to coordination of standards of certain parts of education. But the point is not one of legislative competence or sovereignty. The point is one of the wisdom or propriety of a society's use of the legislative power. Legislatures undoubtedly are sovereign and just as they are trying to solve the socio-economic problems by adopting legislative means to meet the challenge of poverty, they are entitled to present solutions to educational problems as well. But in doing so, it would be prudent on their part if they did not think of interfering with the exercise of academic opinion in matters which are primarily educational. That is one negative aspect of the autonomy of academic opinion. When we speak of this autonomy let it be clearly understood that academic opinion does not resent interference only from the state legislatures; it equally resents interference

from the union legislature as well. Whether the legislature is the union legislature or the state legislature or whether the executive is the union executive or the state executive the demand of academic opinion for independence and autonomy is aimed against both. Academic opinion merely says we are qualified, we are determined to solve our problems in the best way we think proper ; please leave us in peace to solve our problems.

The second aspect, again negative, of autonomy is that academic opinion in teaching institutions must be protected from interference from non-academic executive organs of the teaching bodies. In all universities the executive council or the syndicate, by whatever name they are called, are predominantly constituted of non-academic opinion. I would appeal to these executive, non-academic governing bodies of educational institutions to be prudent like the legislature and the executive and not to interfere with the freedom of academic opinion. When we make a claim for the autonomy of academic opinion in matters relating to education we are not asking for any privilege as such. We believe that for the proper functioning of academic bodies independence and autonomy are conditions precedent. Unless you have given to the academic people complete autonomy and independence to experiment in the way they like in matters of education they will not be able to discharge their functions satisfactorily. I would, therefore, appeal to the academic opinion in this country first to demand autonomy, then to deserve autonomy and lastly to exercise their autonomy in the interest of the progress of education. Let it not be forgotten that autonomy in the academic opinion is not a fight for a political right as such; it is a fight for liberty to serve the cause of education. And it is only if teachers are dedicated to the cause of education and have a vision of the ideals which education has to serve that the claim for autonomy would be justified. That is why negative and positive aspects of the autonomy show that the demand for autonomy has to be conceded in the interest of education itself.

Once we agree that the academic opinion alone should be allowed to discuss these problems, we come face to face with the problems of educational planning. It seems to me that what happens in the next five years is going to decide the future of democracy in this country. Let us remember well that the future of democracy in India is tied with the fate of education. Education and educational planning are in a sense at crossroads at this hour of India's destiny. Unless policy-makers in the field of education are able to evolve an inspiring ideal which education is intended to serve, all planning will be futile. Planning does not require regimentation but does involve some regulation. It does not involve uniformity but requires some kind of unity. The unity which planning requires is based on two considerations. The unity which planning in

educational matters wants to establish derives its inspiration from the unity of the cultural and national inheritance which we have evolved, which history has developed, and a unity of purpose which inspires us all in pursuing the commonly accepted national goals. It is this two-fold unity which must be the basis of all educational planning. The three words democracy, secularism and socialism would sum up the accepted goals and ideals of Indian democracy.

Now people of my generation and even people of a younger generation who were young enough when India became free are virtually drawing their lives to the end. Some may be in the afternoons of their lives and others may be in the evenings of their lives. There are problems which have eluded the people of my generation and in this sense my generation has failed. Now this challenge has to pass on to younger generation. And it is here that education has to play a very important role. If education is able to impart to the young students studying in the universities of India today, that enthusiasm, that sense of dedication and purpose, that pursuit of the ideals of India, then alone education will serve its purpose. Democracy does not thrive merely because significant provisions are made in the Constitution of India. Democracy will not thrive merely because the Supreme Court and the High Courts, from time to time, pronounce heart-warming judgments in favour of fundamental rights. Democracy can thrive only if every individual citizen deems it his duty to assert his fundamental rights and, what is more important, what is more often forgotten, to submit to the fundamental obligations of Indian citizenship. Harmonious synthesis between the fundamental rights which the citizens are bound to claim and the fundamental obligations the discharge of which alone will lead to progress in this country is the main objective of education in India.

If I were asked as to which was the single concept which would play decisive role in the history of India, I would unhesitatingly say it was secularism. It is on secularism that the future of this multilingual country depends. Now, unless education is able to convey not only to the people who come to universities for education but to the masses at large, the real, comprehensive, creative, positive character of the concept of secularism, all our talk about democratic process, all our talk about welfare ideals, will be futile. Now secularism is a matter not to be talked about on platforms. It is a matter which you and I should begin to preach in our lives.

And the third ideal, of course, is socialism which involves bringing about an equalitarian society according to the democratic way and is sometimes called the ideal of a welfare state. Basing ourselves on the fact that democracy, secularism and socialism are the universally accepted ideals of this Indian democracy, it is not difficult to realize that education will play a decisive role in the achievements of these ideals. That decides

the problem of the ideals and goals to which education in India must in the context of today be irrevocably and irretrievably committed.

As soon as educational planners will think of defining the methodology to achieve these ideals, law will inevitably step in. Legal and constitutional implications of educational planning, therefore, will raise their heads. In that context, may I in a very humble way but very earnestly appeal to the judges, lawyers and jurists to consider this problem not as a matter of legal formality, not as a matter of legalistic quibbling, but as a matter of a creative, constructive legal philosophy. If, when educational planners and planners in all socio-economic fields attempt to regulate education, attempt to evolve some methodology to achieve the objects and aims which the education places before itself, any challenge is made to the constitutionality of the measure, the courts will be reluctant to uphold the constitutionality if fundamental rights are violated. But in dealing with the question of the violation of fundamental rights the approach should not be traditional, conservative, legalistic. It should be the approach of those who share the philosophy of the ideals which the country has placed before itself. Naturally, as in matters of law so in matters of education, you will have to face the conflicts between two rival claims. And, as I am never tired of saying, a judge alone realizes how difficult, how delicate, sometimes how agonizing it is to prefer one to the other.

Let me illustrate this point by taking some conflicting situations which educational planners will have to face. First problem is of expansion of education versus quality. I have often heard it said by educationists who know more than I do that in order that the quality of higher university education should not be spoiled we must introduce some selective tests for admitting boys and girls to colleges. As mere academic proposition there can be no objection to it. I realize that the level of higher education by its very definition must be higher and must serve certain purposes so that if you water it down and make it less effective, less good, the interest of the country will suffer. Sometimes, I wonder that unless you provide for the young boys and girls struggling to get admission into higher university centres some alternatives, would it be right to stop entries of these boys and girls into colleges on the ground that they do not satisfy the selection tests? I would, therefore, ask this distinguished gathering to consider whether they will not think it right to suggest that while applying selective tests for admission and thereby improving the quality of higher university education demand must be made for the institution of diversified courses and for the starting of vocational centres. You and I who are better placed in life will not be justified in the name of democracy to stop young boys and girls coming from humble families from seeking admission just because as a result partly of their environments, a result partly of depressed circumstances from which they suffer, they

are not able to satisfy the selective test we impose on them. Give them some alternative source of educating themselves. Give them some alternative source of finding vocation, alternative employment if necessary. Diversify education, start more vocational centres and vocational branches and then you would be justified in insisting upon the selective test. The demand of these young boys and girls who want to learn cannot be totally ignored because it will create an amount of discontent in the economically and socially weaker sections of the community. And discontent in the minds of boys and girls is a source of danger to democracy. That illustrates how when you are face to face with a problem you are in a dilemma and have to find a harmonious solution to it.

Take the other part, equality before the law and protective discrimination. That is the problem the courts, legislatures and executives have been dealing with. Undoubtedly, it must be conceded that in the structure of the Indian community there are a very large number of educationally and socially backward people. And there can be no doubt that unless you give them some special protection and discriminate protectively in their favour so as to give them a chance to come to par with the rest of the community they have no future in this country. Whether you determine the social and educational backwardness of persons by reference to their castes or by other tests is a matter of great significance. Moreover, the problem which sometimes troubles me in this connection is that when you go on giving special protection to the socially and educationally backward communities, unwittingly, unknowingly, unintentionally you create in the minds of these a desire to continue to be educationally and socially backward. I do not blame anyone at all. It is a subtle psychological process so that when we think of evolving some measures of a protectively discriminatory character in order to atone for our sins, we have got to find out the degree to which this protective discrimination could be allowed to create further insoluble problems for our democracy. The sooner the socially and educationally backward communities are able to find themselves able to compete with the rest of the community the better. How does one evolve a formula in order that the socially and educationally backward communities should not perpetually continue to be socially and educationally backward? In trying to be impatient about putting an end to the provisional steps, we may do harm. Here again, you are faced with a problem which is not capable of an easy solution. You cannot apply a formula. No formula can do the trick of solving this complex socio-economic problem at one push. Educational planners have got to think about it again and again because at the root it is an educational and cultural problem.

Let me take yet another instance. What part should education play in the moral improvement of the race? While this generally

relates to the field of religion and rests upon religious freedom, educators on the other hand feel that unless you inculcate in the minds of the young students a sense of ethics, the lack of discipline that you see all round will not disappear. Both views are possible, reasonably possible. How do you solve the problem? Would it be open to you in a class of ethics to tell the boys and girls that considered socially from the modern point of view, monogamy is absolutely essential? Would it be hurting the Muslim feelings because the Muslim law allows polygamy? Would it be open for another teacher of a class of ethics to tell the boys and girls that belief in caste is most immoral, most unethical, most uncivilized? Would it trespass on the traditional conservative Hindu notion that caste is a part of his religion? Where will you stop? Where will you draw the line? You have to be brave and courageous in dealing with these situations because after all the traditional sense of values has got to be regulated and, if need be, revolutionized. While trying to change the traditional sense of values, how will you either by legislative or executive means evolve a formula which will obey the legal, constitutional injunctions and yet persist in achieving its object of creating in the minds of young boys and girls of this country a sense of ethos, a sense of civic responsibility for the betterment of the country as a whole? How does religious freedom work in relation to attempts made by education to improve the ethical outlook, the spiritual ideology of the students?

Take yet another problem. What about the union government and the state governments? How do they act and react on each other? There has been some controversy. The union government desires that education should be made a concurrent list item whereas the states reject such a claim. So far as I can think of this problem the one solution appears to me would be the same solution which I have respectfully suggested to the lawyers and judges—the solution of not being legalistic or dogmatic about it. It is not a matter of putting one item on list I, list II or list III; it is a matter of evolving some healthy and rational conventions which will guide the destinies of legislative matters in this country. After all education does not want interference either from the state legislatures or the union legislature and so it does not matter really where education is listed. And, in a country like India, which is a federal country, I think, states would naturally resist parting with their powers to deal with education in their own respective fields. Uniformity of education is unreal, and if I may say so, undesirable. Concentrating ourselves on the basic unity of the national and cultural inheritance, and the basic unity involved in the pursuit of commonly accepted ideals, we must allow an amount of diversity, an amount of experimentation. Rigidity which always involves uniformity is completely foreign to the concept of educational planning. These are some of the problems which this distinguished seminar may have to consider. And since the seminar will be primarily concerned with correlating educational reform, educational planning within the four corners of legal and

constitutional limitations we come back to where I began. The need of the hour for the judges, lawyers and jurists is to evolve a constructive, progressive, forwardlooking philosophy of constitutional law. Constitutional law is a dynamic branch of law. It is not static. It should not be imprisoned within the four corners of a traditional conservative concept. It must be allowed full scope and full liberty to function as a creative force in this country. And so, I personally feel, the jurists of today and for the jurists I look for among teachers of law, must in a dedicated manner, consistently evolve a doctrine of constitutional law which can be properly regarded as a progressive constitutional philosophy. Constitutional law is going to play an important role not only in regard to educational planning but in regard to planning in all sectors of socio-economic activities of today. I often like to describe law as a mighty weapon. Law and education both are going to turn out to be flexible instruments of socio-economic change. Law must realize its mighty destiny, its glorious destiny, the part that it has to play in assisting education to find its way to the attainment of the ideals to which I refer. Like education and law the rest of the socio-economic life in this country is on the march and the next five years are going to decide whether this march will bring democracy to fruition or not. Let us not be complacent. Let us realize that we are facing great difficulty in the pursuit of democratic ideals. The problem is urgent and brooks no delay. And if the solution of the problem is unnecessarily delayed, impatience will overtake us. And impatience always makes man angry and anger makes a man blind. Before the blind fury of angry men overtakes the democratic way of life of this country let us plan education well enough so that it does not transgress the constitutional limitations but while doing so the great and avowed ideals of a socialistic pattern of society must not be lost sight of.