

University Education in Knowledge Society

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Ideally, education is knowledge in totality about human habitat. But in a structurally divisive society it is a contested domain. It performs, primarily, two roles: first, of preservation of existing social relations or of its transformation, and secondly, it creates new technology that sustains different classes in particular and humanity in general. While the dominant class, in different forms, attempts to impart an ideal replica of its social relations to maintain its hegemony, the subalterns counter-act it with reformative measure in the existing system or develop their own parallel education either consciously or which emerges subterraneously. In this process there may be an admixture / inter penetration of few thematic aspects of the two. But their structural / social requisites keep their domains autonomous and contradictory.

One of the most contested public spheres is school and university education. To imprint the formative minds with the idealized expressions of their worldviews the contending classes use this ideological apparatus for their designed objectives that may change as per their requirements. The dominant class uses it to perpetuate their hegemony that in course of time also permeates the domain of the labour. It builds a case for its governance. The labour on the contrary, adopts three measures to counter it : first, it initiates reforms within the existing framework; secondly, it creates its own parallel education, and thirdly, it replaces the 'other' education. If the reforms suit the state then it gets spurt in its process. The education in the knowledge society belongs to the genre of the first kind. It's a reform within the framework of the global market economy required for the new Indian labour. Or in other words, the knowledge society is an academic metaphor for developed market society that has initiated reorientation of its product portfolio as per its new reorganized production process that capitalist economy keeps on re-ordaining from time to time after the old technology, old products and production methods have outlived their utilities, its essential ingredients may be delineated as follows : (a) development of infrastructure (b) education as quality product / services and (c) right to education. Derivatively, it meant creation and development of qualitative institutions, at large scale in different parts of the country, to generate quality / provide quality products / services (d) to retain / generate large educational market and (e) to compete with the global institutions. The recruitment of the faculty, the intake of the students and their subsequent training for future requirement, the efficiency and the civility of the supportive / administrative staff must be open, 'objective', merit based and must maintain certain degree of quality. The system must be open, at least to a degree and must maintain its credibility. The faculty must be assessed and reviewed regularly by the students and by the colleagues to judge their production calibre and to update its quality. In other words, the university education in India must be commensurate in its production process with the new globalized market. It must re-ordain itself for the new labour in order to survive which essentially means to remain competitive and must discard the old methods that have outlived their utilities. Secondly, for

education as quality product / services the curriculum must be in tune with the market, objective and in vogue. It must be secular, merited and sanitized from the vestiges of the past. For, the transfer of this knowledge to the students must not be determined by the personal prejudices and religious / emotional requisites. The faculty and the students must have knowledge-based identity rather than the identity being determined by the primordialities of the past. Further, education as services must be efficient and like market must promote individual freedom and right of choices. It is well acknowledged that market has played revolutionary role in the break up of the primordialities to create the freedom of choice for its products. It broke the inscriptive, hierarchical structure of the pre- capitalist social formations. It created private and public space for customers, and for advertisement of products and for expansion of business. In fact, it transformed the village community into individual consumers. And in the process of this development there has been ever widening sphere of individual and public freedom. Similarly, in search of resources and customers it has transcended the barriers of cultures and regions and in turn has created a universal, integrated uniformal attributes in the society expedited by globalization which facilitated the expansion of civil society and of citizenship rights. In other words, the market society, to use the Macphersonian phrase, facilitated the development of democracy and its liberalization. This must be replicated in an idealized form in education which must perpetuate expansion of culture of toleration in civil society and of integrated global citizenship rights that prohibits denial of political rights to individuals in any part of globe. Of course, in the integrated global market, it is inevitable but then like market it must keep a tab on the emerging trends.

Finally, from the labour point of view, every individual must have the right to education which has two implied meanings; first, it is a protest of the labour against the state which denies them education due to their existential condition. In other words, it prohibits the denial of education to any labour. Or it compels the state to divert the resources for the realization of this right. In this process, any individual who desires to enroll for university education gets educated and develops better cognitive power, the power to comprehend the social functioning of the system; and the more the labour develops such power, and in larger number, the better it becomes for their self-emancipatory movement. Contrary to it, for the bourgeoisie, the incorporation of this right creates condition for the generation of new ideas that can be located in the labour. For, many of the new ideas have germinated from the labour. To them, it's the importance of the new ideas, of new knowledge that is more crucial not its germinal point. Whoever germinates the new ideas that facilitate expansion of his market, development of technology and accumulation of capital is more important not his social background. If the right to education provides him opportunity under new changed social condition to continue with his business expansion he has no objection to it. To compete in the global market he constantly needs new ideas for technical upgradation to make his products cheaper and better to expand his market. The possibility of such ideas from the largest pool of educated people, after all, is a good venture.

To sum up now, education like labour-power is a special product that is 'live' which constantly reacts to the social situation and must constantly replenish itself with the dynamics of the market. In contemporary India, it is poised for change. The globalized market-economy will propel it for better product / services and for better infrastructure as it had become anachronistic in the new economic order.

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