

National Discussion Meet
on
Education, Work and Rural Development - Gandhian Educational Ideas in
Policy Perspective
(Venu: NUEPA, New Delhi; Dates: 3-5 October, 2017)

CONCEPT NOTE

Background

Mahatma Gandhi is one of the few thinkers, social reformers and political activists who not only propounded new ideas, but also put them into institutional practice. Although his whole life and work is educational in nature, he did make specific contribution to the area and discipline of education, in term of ideas, policy and institutional practice. Highlighting its holistic nature, Gandhi gave a very broad definition of education, *'By 'education' I mean, 'an all – around drawing out of the best in child and man – body, mind and spirit.'*(Gandhi, 1933:55). He was highly critical of excessive emphasis on 'literacy' component in the existing education system, as reflected in his remark, *'Literacy is not the end of education, not even the beginning. It is only one of the means whereby man and woman can be educated. Literacy in itself is no education'.* He emphasized the character building component of education. In fact, his experiment with education was a part of his experiments with truth. According to him, the school must be an extension of home. There must be concordance between the impressions which a child gathers at home and at school, if the best results are to be obtained.

Gandhi's experiments on education started from Africa, with his engagements in various activities in Tolstoy Farm and his working together with his companion and friend, Mr. Kallenbach. While emphasizing the significance of vocational training, he once gave a recount about his initiation into skill based training, *'It was my intention to teach every one of the youngsters some useful manual vocation. For this purpose Mr. Kallenbach went to a Tappist monastery and returned having learnt shoe-making. I learned it from him and taught the art to such as were ready to take it up. Mr. Kallenbach had some experience of carpentry, and there was another inmate who knew it, so we had a small class in carpentry. Cooking almost all the youngsters knew.'*

At Champaran, Gandhi made two experiments: Satyagraha and Buniyadi Shiksha. Alongside launching Satyagrah movement to free the Indigo planters/farmers from the exploitative condition, he also established a number of Buniyadi schools in the area to generate awareness and develop critical consciousness to fight against injustice and secure one's own livelihood. These schools in some cases later became the trend setting schools. The Gandhian philosophy of education is based on his ideas and scheme of basic education. The scheme of basic education is based on the following principles:

- Education means all-around development; it is best obtained through action.
- Education has to be through a craft, not merely through books and abstractions.
- The basis of true education is character building; an educated person should become an ideal citizen.
- Education should be self-supporting as far as possible and also equip the pupil to better his own economic conditions.
- Education should be based on non-violence and should work for communal harmony.
- The medium of instruction should be the mother-tongue, not English.
- Primary education should be free and compulsory for all children and should last for at least seven years.
- All educational planning should be undertaken with the rural Indian masses in mind; in other words, education should not be elitist, but popular in its character.

During freedom struggle and public discourse on education, Gandhi played a significant role in emphasizing the need to universalize basic education or elementary education and Right to Education. His unrelenting pressure on basic education to a certain extent was responsible for the incorporation of Universal Elementary Education (UEE) as constitutional goal in the form of Article-45.

Although almost all the major policies (1968, 1986 and others) formulated since Independence have recognized the importance of Gandhian perspective and approach of education, but in terms of outcomes not much has happened either in terms of expansion of Buniyadi Shiksha and pedagogic enrichment in terms of methods of teaching and learning. The Kothari Commission (1964-66) which argued the concept of linking education with work, later got extended to the idea of Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) in schools, but 'work' got relegated to a few allocated time slots in the school day. Later the National Policy on Education (1986) created two distinct streams at the secondary level-the vocational and the academic. The NCF (2005) in its position paper also tried to reposition some of Gandhian Ideas in terms of pedagogic practices, has not materialized as yet. On the whole, the policy initiatives of integrating education and

work had limited impact. Consequently, the general education system has become more literary, examination oriented, memory based, dominated by English language medium, with disdain for manual work and rural life. Moreover, the condition of the Buniyadi Vidyalayas established by Gandhi is pitiable. It is often argued that the modern formal education, due to its colonial legacy and linkage with globalizing forces, has not given due recognition and emphasis on imbibing the context specific knowledge and skills. The remark made by Gandhi about the existing education system, *'The greatest evil of the present educational system is that it has broken up the continuity of our existence'*, holds good even today.

However in recent years, with growing unemployment among the educated and eroding moral values reflected in youth delinquency, there have been revival of interest in Gandhian educational ideas. The current emphasis on skilling India, which talks about skill and value based education, takes us back to the core educational ideas of Gandhi. On the whole, there is growing realization about the systemic malaise in the education system and the need to examine the current and emerging educational problems and issues in the light of some of the seminal ideas and paths shown by great education thinkers and social activists, like Mahatma Gandhi. It is with this background that to commemorate centenary year of Champaran Satyagrah launched by Mahatma Gandhi, the Department of Educational Policy, is organizing a Discussion Meet cum Workshop on **'Education, Work and Rural Development : Gandhian Educational Ideas in Policy Perspective'** at NUEPA, New Delhi, on 3-5 October, 2017.

2. Objectives of the Discussion Meet

The main objectives of the Meet are as follows:

- To develop an understanding of relevance of the Gandhian Ideals in Education in the current and emerging socio-economic context, and their implication for revitalizing skill and rural education;
- To identify problems and constraints faced in the implementation of Basic Education Scheme through sharing of its institutional practices;
- To share innovative practices of education and work followed in different educational institutions; and
- To reformulate strategies and pathways for incorporating Gandhian Ideals into the existing and emerging educational programmes and schemes .

3. Tentative Themes:

Keeping in mind the objectives of the Discussion Meet, some of the themes identified tentatively are as follows:

- Gandhian Philosophy of Education: Meaning, Approach and Perspectives
- Gandhi's Experiments with Education in Africa and India: Tolstoy Farm, Nai Talim and Buniyadi Shiksha
- Role of Gandhi in Universalization of Elementary Education
- Functioning of Experimental Schools based on Gandhian Educational Ideals
- Relationship between Education and Work : Traditional Craft and Modern Skill Development Programmes
- Functioning of Buniyadi Vidyalayas – Problems and Prospects
- Education, Agriculture and Rural Development
- Curricular Reforms based on Gandhian Educational Ideals
- Implications of Gandhian Ideals for Higher Education
- Education of the Disadvantaged from Gandhian Perspective
- Alternative Schooling and Alternative Pedagogy
- Gandhi and Other Educational thinkers/reformers: Paulo Freire/Tagore
- Language Medium and Schooling:
- Shiksha evam Swachhta : Education, Health and Sanitation

Important Dates:

Submission of Abstract (200 words) : Within a week from the receipt of the first communication

Submission of Paper (5000 words) : 25 September, 2017

Venue: Seminar Hall (Room 113), National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA), New Delhi

Duration: 3 (2+1) Days (3-5 October, 2017)

Participants: 40 Resource Persons with expertise and experience on Gandhian Perspectives, Basic Education, Nai Talim, State Representatives, NGO representatives and other local participants concerned with the theme Principals /Teachers of Buniyadi Vidyalaya.

Programme Director:

Prof. Avinash Kumar Singh

Head, Department of Educational Policy,
National University of Educational Planning and Administration,
17- B, Sri Aurobindo Marg
New Delhi- 110016 (INDIA); Website: www.nuepa.org
91-011-26544856 (office); Fax : 91-011-26853041, 26865180
09971556501 (Mobile)