



A PHILOSOPHICAL REVIEW ON CONTEMPORARY EDUCATION

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Abstract: *This paper discusses the contemporary educational thoughts. Various Modern educational thinkers, thoughts, methodologies and concepts are analyzed under the light of current educational system. There are different schools of thought which focus on different concepts of education and those are critically studied in philosophical perspective. In India, during and after the freedom struggle there were varieties of education systems. Education was viewed as a way to attaining goals in the life but now it is a way to get a job in competitive world. Definition of success is variable and it is changed every decade. Philosophical concepts are base for any type of education. The scenario is changed every time based on day to day requirement in the life. Monetary needs are high at present. The role of education in an individual to the nation is studied under different thoughts.*

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SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Many thoughts are being followed across the world in this regard. Today debates are going among educators on issues like whether the students should study either in relation to virtue or in relation to the best of life (materialistic benefits), whether their education ought to be directed more towards the intellect than towards character of soul? In these thoughts five are highly discussed and those are; essentialism, progressivism, perennialism, existentialism and behaviourism. Essentialism refers to the traditional approach to education and a positive aspect of this is, it is academically rigorous for all kind of learners. Essentialists believe in test scores as a means of a way to evaluate their students. Progressivism was created in the American environment and it refers to a broad school of international social and political philosophies. It is highly problem solving in nature. Perennial means everlasting, its roots lie in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. Perennialists follow religious and secular approaches. The study of philosophy is a crucial part of the curriculum. It emphasizes on seminars and discussions. Existentialism rejects metaphysics, epistemology and ethics. Instead, individuals are responsible for determining for themselves what is true, false, right, and wrong. There is no universal form of human nature; each of us has free will to develop as we see fit. Behaviourism is derived from the belief that free will is an illusion and human beings are shaped by their environment. It asserts that the only reality is the physical world. According to this thought there is no free will and autonomously acting man. It prefers scientific observations not philosophical [1].

GENERAL PROBLEMS, THEORY AND IDEALS OF EDUCATION

Philosophers find many problems in the area of education. In their purview education is a field in which the philosophical concepts can be applied and tested. So they always approach the field of education with various thoughts and philosophies. They evaluate the entire educational system or philosophy continuously and suggest much advancement in time to time. Generally they handle education with concepts of epistemology, metaphysics and ethics. Specifically they evaluate educational ideals based on its impacts on mind and action of students. Social changes made by those educational ideals and thinkers. From the sayings of many educational philosophers some factors are identified as problems of philosophy of education. Different aims and ideals of education are evaluated critically and these are propagated by various thinkers in various times. Character building, man making,



human resource development, utilization of leisure, training for material life, coaching for international living, social and national integration, development of science and technology, and strengthening political order are some of them. These are all evaluated and scrutinized by different thinkers. Thus critical evaluation of aims and ideals is a main role of philosophy of education. How could a system be adopted by people? How it is relevant to the human nature? These questions are raised usually but must be answered before the start of implementing of such ideals. They are purely psychological things. An analysis has to be done on student's behavior before thinking of any new ideal of education. Human behavior must to be understood for better progress. Principles, morals and standards of education are needed and to be identified. It is a typical philosophical subject and universal. Educational values are determined by philosophical values and scrutiny of many beliefs, views and outlooks. Treatment of philosophy is necessary for these values. The main problem of values is, it differs from place to place, country to country and time to time. Setting up an educational system and set of values which are suitable for the entire world is impossible.

THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO EDUCATION

Education is related to knowledge and determined by knowledge. There are so many theories of knowledge. The one which confuse the people is which to be selected and which to be avoided. If a theory is selected, it is necessary that thinking of its relationship with educational ideals and its role on education. So, metaphysical approach to education is necessary. But it should be explained clearly to the common people. Sources of cognition have main role in theory of knowledge. Hence, cognition is important for learning and understanding. It is has direct connection with education. Making them clear to the people is highly preferred, because nobody is ready to discuss philosophical concepts. Without having done this, any philosophy could not be reached even a single man [2]. Connection between country's economic system and education implies the monetary value of education. In developing countries such as India and some other countries education is an impact factor for society, economy and politics. They depend on the field of education for their further growth. In another way, some systems of education are not affordable for all the people. Some could be afforded by only rich people. Normally poor people prefer government schools because of their poverty only. What is the place of school? Urban or



rural, how the atmosphere should be? Surrounded by nature or artificial buildings, which is right kind of environment to teach and to learn. These are all significant in education. In addition to these, the importance of school or college must be well defined in an educational system which means what will be the level of knowledge in each level of education is more crucial. What to be taught and how to be taught. The lesson plans, content of lessons, and methods of teaching play vital role in education. Content is the most important because it initiates the learning in the schools. Contents of higher education must be rational and it should not be one sided. Well balanced, uniformed curriculum is advisable throughout the country. In schools which have been running by religious institutions, they teach religious thoughts too. It creates conformity. Different institutions have contents of different religion based on with which they are related. The foremost aim of education is progress of individual and social elements. How current systems of education help for social and individual progress? This is a question for discussion. Some systems encourage religious education. Some ideals prefer scientifically proved education which is highly rational. Some institutions offer the mixture of above two systems. However, the individual and social benefits through the education are expected. A common man wants benefits for himself which may or may not be useful for the society. On the other hand, governments want social benefit and favorable outcomes for themselves. Education must lead to both the benefits. The system which could cultivate such benefits might be an acceptable one according to recent thinkers.

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHIES OF MODERN INDIA

The educational thought of modern India has absorbed the modern European Educational trends and it wanted to present it to suit Indian conditions. If a scheme of education has to be successful in any country it must suit to the national needs and aspirations and yet giving priority to the scientific approach to education. Among the contemporary Indian philosophers of education Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.Roy strike a different note giving importance to scientific temper, rationalism. Their ideas also must be given due importance in the scheme of Indian educational policy. Indian thinkers like Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo, Dayananda, M.K.Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore and Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan, on the other hand, followed the traditional Indian educational thought modifying and adjusting it to contemporary situations. These thinkers represent the spirit of contemporary



Indian Philosophy of Education. M.K. Gandhi and Sarvepalli Radha Krishnan hold similar ideas and their contribution to Indian Educational Thought is surprising. In contemporary Indian Philosophy of Education we find mostly the following trends, they are Revivalism, Rationalism, Humanism, Neo Vedanta, Integralism, Positivism, Nationalism, Cosmopolitanism, Eclecticism, Idealism, Realism and Pragmatism.

REVIVALISM AND RATIONALISM

In 19th century, we find a sort of revivalism in India. Everything that is old and traditional has some good and it should be revived. Revivalism is the trend which shows a religious fervor, a reawakening, and a reinterpretation in the light of the ancient wisdom. When revivalism is also ready to accept new concepts and trends there is nothing wrong in it. Such revivalist attitude and spirit is found in the philosophies of Vivekananda, Dayananda, M.K.Gandhi, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath and Radha Krishnan. All these thinkers have basically accepted the ancient Indian ideal of education as that which liberates the human soul out of the bondage. Thus the aim of education is to set free the learner from all shackles of bondage. All these thinkers wanted inclusion of ancient scriptures, the Vedas, the Upanishads, and the Bhagavad-Gita in the curriculum. All these thinkers laid emphasis upon close relationship between the teacher and the student as has been hinted by the term Upanishad⁶. All these thinkers praised the glory of ancient India, the ideals of Rama and Sita, the Varna Ashram System, the Purusharthas, the theory of Karma and Rebirth. They condemned castes but they praised Varna system, which is based on Guna and karma. Some Dharma Sastras disallowed education to certain castes. But these thinkers supported universal education. They did not agree with the view that women and backward castes should not be given access to education. All of them supported the view that all sections should be given opportunity to higher education. Their philosophy of education is based upon the ancient Indian concept that one Brahman manifests in all the diversity of society and nature. This spirit of universality is clear from the sayings and writings of Swami Vivekananda, Sri Aurobindo, and M.K. Gandhi and other thinkers. M.K. Gandhi wanted to revive the moral values of truth and non-violence in every field of life. Dayananda wanted to bring back the noble values of Sanathana Dharma in everyday life. All of them wanted that contemporary Indian Education should follow the ancient Ideals, values and models of social relationships, curricula, and teacher taught relationship, methods of teaching etc., they also



wanted the modern means of communication, Audio-Visual instruments should be used for more effective teaching. Thus revivalism is for ancient noble values and the medium is modern means of teaching and communication.

The influence of western thinking upon contemporary Indian thinkers is more explicit in the trend towards rationalism. The importance of reason is accepted as valid source of knowledge by all modern thinkers. Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.Roy considered that only rationalism is the best method in knowing things. Dayananda, Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Radha Krishnan follow the ancient tradition according to which while aims and ideals goals and values are intuited, the means are supplied by reason. Swami Dayananda Saraswati adheres to the rationalistic principle. He says he will not accept anything which is not supported by reason. In Indian tradition reason and intuition are given equal importance and role. But one should not transgress into other domain. Thus in the field of educational values, intuition is the primary means, while reason has to follow the dictates of intuition. Western rationalism makes reason a slave of passions, the Indian thinkers make it subordinate to intuition. In Indian tradition the primary function of reason is to control the infra rational passions and tendencies. Thus the rationalist trend in contemporary Indian philosophy of education is part of the fundamental integral approach. In the educational philosophy of Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.Roy, one finds a tendency towards western type of rationalism. But they have also agreed about the value of intuition and other source of human knowledge [3].

HUMANISM

The word humanism is derived from Latin term 'Homo' which means human being. Humanism is the philosophy in which man occupies central place. The use of term in the historical tradition gradually unveils the different aspects of the concept, whatever has been found to be useful for human welfare has been attached to the concept of humanism such as the concept of social welfare, scientific attitude, development of democratic institutions etc. Humanistic trends are found in ancient texts. Indian thought has its roots in Upanishads. These Upanishads show humanistic trends. The Bhagavad-Gita is considered as the essence of the Upanishads and the spirit of Gita is also humanistic in nature. The six systems of Indian philosophy also derived many of their concepts and ideals from the Upanishads. Even the heterodox systems like Buddhism and Jainism and Charvaka have developed their



thinking on the basis of ancient Upanishad thought. Thus Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Rabindranath, Gandhi and Dayananda have presented Neo Vedanta Philosophy.

According to contemporary conditions in India and in the context of development of thought in the East and the West, almost all these philosophers have accepted integral humanism as the philosophy of our age. To solve the socio economic political and other problems of the modern age, every society – it is felt – should accept integral humanism as the doctrine- suitable to all nations and communities. The humanist trend in contemporary philosophy of education is clearly seen when Swami Vivekananda says that the aim of education is man making. Sri Aurobindo also clearly states that the aim of education should be making of superman. Rabindranath Tagore wanted cosmopolitanism in education; Swami Dayananda considered that human welfare as the aim of education. Radha Krishnan also in his innumerable writings stressed the need of man making education [4]. Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.Roy mainly stressed on the human aspect of education. M.N.Roy philosophy, itself is called Radical humanism. While these thinkers supported naturalistic humanism based on western social thinking, others supported Humanism which comes from ancient Indian philosophic tradition of Vedas, Upanishads, Gita and other scriptures. Though there are two traditions of humanism. As we have seen the traditional humanistic approach, gained wide acceptability in India because of their inherent love for tradition and it is the main stream of Indian educational thought.

NEO – VEDANTA AND INTEGRATION

The very term Neo-Vedanta indicates it is Vedanta in the modern Garb, interpreted in the light of modern knowledge. It is the basis of emphasis upon education of science and technology, the realistic interpretation of the world and the reformist trend. It is also the basis of spiritual nationalism preached by all contemporary Indian philosophers. It has become the basis of the synthesis of spiritual and material values. The spiritual interpretation of human nature advanced by Vivekananda, Dayananda, Sri Aurobindo, M.K. Gandhi and Radha Krishnan is due to Neo-Vedanta trend. The Neo-Vedanta system postulates unity in diversity. Contemporary philosophers of education propounded that the curriculum should be diverse and multisided. This concept is the outcome of Neo-Vedanta concept of Reality. Contemporary philosophers of education, Sri Aurobindo, Vivekananda, Rabindranath, Gandhi and Dayananda depict an integral approach in philosophy. Aurobindo



said “the work of philosophy is to arrange the data given by the various means of knowledge, excluding none and put them into a synthetic relation to one truth, the one supreme and universal reality”. These philosophers believe in a monistic, idealistic and integral philosophy. There is one spirit underlying matter, life and mind in the world. This spirit is the reality and man, nature and God are its triple manifestations. Radha Krishnan observes “It is the basis and backbone of our being, the universality that cannot be reduced to this or that formula”. To realize the spirit, Indian philosophers have utilized intuitive method. This is spiritual intuition, distinct from physical, mental or vital institutions. According to Bhagwan Das “it is immediate condition or rather awareness of the self by the self, eternal, self-consciousness”. Radhakrishnan also says that “the deepest things of life are known only through intuitive apprehension”. Thus we find that contemporary Indian Philosophers of education gave prominence to intuitive method in order to arrive at an integral philosophy.

Thus we find, contemporary philosophers of education, looking at human personality from an integral perspective. Because of this perspective, we find these thinkers advocated multisided scheme of education. According to this scheme, education should give equal importance to the physical, mental, social, moral and religious development of the students. With the integral Indian values with the western concepts of educational theories and practices, they have suggested number of methods and practices. In this direction serious and successful efforts were made by Rabindranath Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Dayananda expressing this view, Sri Aurobindo says, “the aim and principles of true national education are not certainly to ignore modern truth and knowledge but to take our foundations on our own spirit” [5]. Integral trend in education has led to synthesis and harmony between education in science and humanities. R.N.Sharma observes “thus social studies such as economics, political science and sociology, together with ethics find an important place in the curriculum because the integrality emphasizes social more than individual aim of education” [6]. The teaching of science and mathematics is also encouraged. This does not mean any set back to education of humanities. Integral curriculum, includes literature and art, writers and artists are given due importance. Emphasis is also laid on folk culture and folk art. Thus the integral trend in education has led to almost a revolution about the aims



and ideals, curriculum, extra-curricular activities, school administration and other fields of education.

POSITIVISM AND NATIONALISM IN EDUCATION

Positivism believes in the scientific method and they think that through this method man will be able to control his environment, get leisure for cultural life. Thus they give importance to science in human development. The Indian humanists, however, while admitting the value of science for human life, also point out to the dangers – arising from science worship. Thus Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath, Vivekananda and Gandhi have realized the value of technical educational and the place of science in curriculum. They at the same time insisted that the education of science and technology must be supported by education in humanities, art morality and religion. Of all the contemporary thinkers, the national spirit in education may be found more in the educational theory of swami Vivekananda and Sri Aurobindo. Both these thinkers called patriotism the highest religion. They worshipped their mother land. Their reformist schemes in education were inspired by love of the fellow countrymen. They inspired the students to be united, disciplined and live for the country. Their nationalism is not narrow. It's in tune with internationalism and universal brotherhood Sri Aurobindo called it as subjective nationalism. It is free from the defects of western nationalism, which is aggressive. It is based upon the ancient Indian ideal of Swadharma. According to this ideal, each nation and each human being has a particular status and role to perform in life. It includes respect for the others Dharma and the understanding that for every one, his own Dharma is most sacred as it is based upon his fundamental nature. Contemporary Indian thinkers, mainly Vivekananda, Dayananda, Sri Aurobindo and Gandhi are influenced by this spiritual nationalism based upon Swadharma [7].

COSMOPOLITANISM AND ECLECTICISM

Cosmopolitanism is the main approach of the educational philosophies of Rabindranath Tagore, Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.Roy, the founding of Viswabharathi by Rabindranath was mainly to fulfill his dream of universal India. Jawaharlal Nehru University represents the spirit of Nehru. M.N. Roy stood for cosmopolitanism and hoped to make his radical humanist movement a world movement. In a way Vivekananda's Vedanti movement, Dayananda's Aryasamaj colleges, Sri Aurobindo's Auroville, Radha Krishnan's Internationalism represent the same universal spirit, though their approaches are different



[8]. The eclectic tendency in education implies the tendency to create an admixture of earlier tendencies. In the field of science and technology we find that this method is useful, for the advancement of science. Every civilization develops on the basis of Eclecticism. The world civilization itself has taken all the developments that have taken place in the world. Any new invention or innovation in a particular country will become in due course a property of the world. If we take India, one finds that contemporary Indian culture is composite culture; which clearly reflects the influences of the races living within the country, as well as the races which migrated to this country. The principles of evolution, proves that every new situation is the outcome of a mixture of earlier situations. In education also many educationists feel that in the curriculum, teaching methods, educational aims etc. we should take all that is best and suitable to our Indian situation. These methods and aims may be from the past or from the present. Even in other advanced countries this education is accepted and they take and absorb new ideas and techniques as it is the most rational and scientific approach. This approach is more comprehensive, liberal and extensive. The contemporary Indian philosophers of education have looked on human personality from an eclectic perspective to discover the inner nature of man, which is generally not given due importance in the present day social sciences. Contemporary Indian philosophers excluding Nehru and M.N.Roy emphasized the spiritual aspect of man as an integrating principle which alone can boost his future evolution. These thinkers also advocated a scheme of education which includes physical, moral and religious education which is in tune with the spirit of Indian culture. Sri Aurobindo, representing the spirit said “the aim and principles of a true education is, not certainly to ignore modern truths and knowledge but to take our foundations on our belief, our mind and our own spirit” [9].

Thus we find contemporary Indian philosophy of Education has been characterized by eclecticism. It is because of the fact that these thinkers had wide and deep knowledge of western science, art, literature and culture, some of them Sri Aurobindo, M.K.Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru spent many years studying in western educational institutions and they also had wide understanding of Indian culture and ethos. Their ideas are a happy blend of Indian values and western principles and concepts like Idealism, realism, nationalism, internationalism, individualism, socialism and myriad other ideas. They drew their inspiration from Upanishads and the Gita and wanted a happy blend of Indian spirituality



and western science. They wanted a world government and a world state, without ignoring, local and national needs and aspirations. These thinkers wanted to reconcile modern activities with renunciation. Thus in all branches of knowledge- like Metaphysics, epistemology, psychology, ethics, religion, education, social and political sciences they wanted a blend of the East and the West.

IDEALISM AND EDUCATION

Indian philosophy gives much importance to idealism than other systems. According to Adams "Idealism in one form or other permeates the whole of the history of philosophy". Indian educational philosophy is mainly influenced by Idealism explaining the Idealist philosophy of education, Rusk said "it bestows dignity and grandeur upon human life by emphasizing the distinctiveness of man's nature, attributing to him powers not possessed by animals, which issue in ideal, logical and aesthetic; it admits the existence of a supreme being, by its respect for human personality". It provides the basis for democracy except Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N.Roy whose metaphysics may be called scientific naturalism, all the other notable Indian philosophers of education, followed Neo-Vedanta philosophy, which is contemporary version of ancient Indian Idealism [10]. Therefore they presented a teleological explanation of the world with harmony between man and nature and they provided central place to man in the universe and presented axiological explanation of the world enigma. According to them, ideas and ideals are the aims of education, this idealist trend, however, was not opposed to realism, positivism and pragmatism. Therefore a synthesis between all these is possible".

REALISM AND PRAGMATISM

The philosophy of realism is almost opposed to that of Idealism. According to Realism the world is material in nature and the object and its qualities exist outside the mind and without any necessary relation with it. Thus the Realist Metaphysics lead to materialism and its epistemology to positivism and its axiology leads to pragmatism. In contemporary Indian philosophy of education however one finds a meeting of the extremes of idealism and realism. This extreme may be found in the educational philosophy of Vivekananda, Dayananda, Sri Aurobindo, Rabindranath Tagore, Gandhi and Radha Krishnan. In their aims and ideals of education they were idealists, while their detailed plans of education were based upon realism and pragmatism. Pragmatism is this worldly and it is against all other



worldly goals. It is pluralistic. It is utilitarian. It lays emphasis upon change as a necessary element of life. It is individualist, yet it emphasizes on the social aspect of man. It is humanist and experimentalist. In education, pragmatism laid emphasis upon economic, cultural and ethical progress of the individuals, so that they may develop qualities of world citizens programs and schemes for social services at different stages of education today find an important place in educational institutions. The students in the schools render social service to the community, outside the educational institution so that they may develop the qualities of service and altruism. To modern Indian Education pragmatism is the need of the times. Its aim is to provide a national system of education, suitable to a free country. The contemporary Indian thinkers are aware of the socio- economic conditions of the Indian people, their poverty and illiteracy, therefore while drawing the details of their educational schemes they have paid attention to making education a means of livelihood while being a means of development of Integral human personality. This approach is evident in the advice of Swami Vivekananda to the students, asking them to care more for body building than even spiritual development. Mahatma Gandhi's scheme of Basic education and its purpose is to teach some vocational job skills to enable them to secure work even with limited skills [11].

AN IDEAL PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

From the evolution of the educational philosophies of these contemporary thinkers we can draw some conclusions regarding their suggestions for evolving an educational policy which is suitable to the present conditions and which will make the Indian education, effective and more efficient and which will make it highly functional and value oriented. After a critical analysis of these thinkers, we can arrive at some agreement to attempt for possible synthesis. There is the general agreement among the Indian philosophers of education that the aim of education must be integral. The educator should keep in his mind all the aspects of education. Thus it should aim at all round development of all the learners without distinction of caste, creed, race, sex, social or economic status etc. Indian philosophers have given an all round and integral picture of human nature. Man must be seen from every perspective and it should be remembered that each element in his nature has right for full freedom and development. The rational, infra rational and supra rational aspects of human nature must find a place in humanist scheme of education. These thinkers (the



traditionalists) accept that man has a soul, a body, a mind and an intellect and therefore, education must provide opportunities and facilities for the fullest development of all these different aspects of man.

The curriculum should be wide. There should be teaching of science, arts, literature, and technology, along with moral religious and spiritual teaching. They have not only accepted the value of sense training and physical education, along with academic moral and religious education, but emphasized it as necessary for the all round development of the education. Humanism and internationalism do not contradict nationalism, but in fact fulfill them. The wider the circle of human relationships the more it fulfills the narrow circle and does not contradict it. Therefore the education everywhere should fulfill local need. The best medium of the early and even secondary education should be through the mother tongue. Education through the mother tongue helps the students understand better way and can develop originality. Taking these factors into consideration our contemporary philosophers of education have unanimously supported the need of early education through mother tongue. They have also emphasized the need of the growth of national language. They also supported the view that one can learn an international language. In fact some of them are also well versed in foreign languages. But they have always given primary position to mother tongue and the national language. Humanist culture is democratic culture. In order to be a humanist one must know how to live democratically. It is possible only when one grows up in democratic tradition. Apart from home, the child grows in the culture of the educational institutions, where he grows while learning. So the educational institutions must be organized in democratic fashion. In this pattern the student and the teacher will participate in all the aspects of school management, like the method of teaching which is suitable, extracurricular activities etc. the educational institutions must be absolutely democratic, so that the students may develop democratic values [12].

Humanism stands for Internationalism. But this does not mean Humanism is against Nationalism. Sound and healthy Nationalism everywhere fulfills the humanist aim of the growth of rich human culture. In the community of human culture, each nation has to contribute its share through its own culture. The synthesis of the National and International ideals should be developed through educational institutions. The impact of freedom movement is found on all contemporary educational philosophers. Every facet of human



endeavor, politics, economics, culture, literature and education etc., are influenced by the freedom struggles of various hues. They worshiped the nation and yet in a true humanist spirit they supported Internationalism and cooperation. The university at Santhiniketan founded by Tagore, Auroville bears testimony to this fact [13]. The educational Ideals of Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda, Rabindranath Tagore and Dayananda and Mahatma Gandhi, Radha Krishnan and certain aspects of Jawaharlal Nehru and M.N. Roy's, thought will be most useful in formulating a scheme of National Education, which is based on moral principles and noble values and at the same time a high quality, modern scientific education which is suitable to the needs of the twenty first century.

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