Philosophy of Education

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In an earlier review in the Fourth Survey of educational research the present author had lamented the depressing state of affairs that characterized research studies in philosophy of education, such as a highly restricted paradigm with "study of the educational philosophy/ideas/ contributions of" type of researches virtually defining the domain of the field; lack of methodological rigour; indifference (philosophical?) to ongoing educational happenings; an almost pathological obsession with the past; and absence of enterprise to explore the new or the "here and now". In an effort to illuminate the broad spectrum of issues and problems that philosophy of education deals with and to indicate its rich research possibilities, the author also presented the state-of-the-art of the field, highlighting the nature and scope of the philosophy of education, the methods of philosophical inquiry, the range of concerns of philosophy of education and its social relevance and usefulness and the promise it holds out for the enlightenment, understanding and even resolution of many of our current educational problems. Carrying out the same exercise, that of analysing research trends in this area, after a lapse of five years the author feels dismayed that not only has there been no visible improvement in the overall situation but also that the quality of the output during the intervening years has deteriorated further.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Evaluation of scholarly research in philosophy of education like in any academic field of study involves reference to certain basic criteria: Is the object of the research a characteristic concern of the field? Has the research been carried out with rigour and in accordance with the method(s) of the concerned discipline? Does the research give us anything worthwhile? — new knowledge? enhancement of our existing understanding?

Before looking at the studies from the point of view of criteria distinctive to philosophy of education, attention should be drawn to the general deplorable lack of research rigour that characterises most of the 38 research studies reviewed in this report. The review has been made on the basis of the abstracts of the studies made available to the author. This is, of course, a limitation. But it should not detract from the seriousness of the observations that follow and their significance.

In one study nowhere have the objectives been clearly stated. However, a footnote about the study is added. "I am sorry to say that I have never come across such a poor thesis ... which has been presented like the monthly magazine of a school, with coloured pages decorated with various designs." Even the titles of the theses are not properly formulated. One

would expect the title of a research thesis to clearly indicate the topic or object of the study, its scope, and the method adopted, as precisely and elegantly as possible. As an illustration, the following titles indicate the vagueness in terms of their object, scope, method, etc.

Upanishadic philosophy of education and Vivekananda's philosophy of education

Educational philosophy as found in Islamic Culture

A study of the philosophy of Acharya Vinoba Bhave and its effect on education in the light/ reference of New Educational Policy

Critical study of the philosophical, psychological, social and cultural relation between education and religion

Value education in the light of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy with special reference to Home Science education (sic)

A critical study of the literature of Sane Guruji from the educational point of view

One could go on but the point has been made.

Even more distressing is the kind of "findings" of these studies. Now, what is it that we expect as the end product from a research study in philosophy of education? Obviously, it cannot be factual statements or empirical laws or generalisations. What we refer to as 'philosophical wisdom' consists of such things as increased and deepened understanding of and fresh insights into educational concepts, theories, principles, issues and problems, or normative judgments on and evaluations of educational practices and recommendations for doing things in a better way. One expects research studies to contribute towards such wisdom. If this expectation is to be realised, reporting of philosophical research should employ the proper philosophical idiom and be at a level of generality and abstraction befitting philosophical research. But what does one find? Take a look at some of the "Findings/ Conclusions".

According to him (Radhakrishnan) education should be organised in a logical sequence.

Vinoba said that education system should be changed immediately.

Home Science education is not value oriented. If we follow the basic ideas of this philosophy we may be able to develop a complete and ideal man.

Man should take simple food for acquiring pure knowledge.

There is similarity in the idealism of Plato and Sri Ma.

Different aids should be used by the teacher. In educational process there should be a balance in material, spiritual, individual and social aspects.

The aim of education should be the development of the personality of the child and through individuals we should try to develop the society.

Most schools were single teacher schools and the system was flexible, and the monitorial. system was in prevalence.

TRENDS INDICATED IN THE NEW STUDIES

The 38 studies classified as philosophy of education research include studies of different types and foci. The bag also includes a few studies which are of the survey and historical research type and a couple of research articles.

The dominating category, as usual, is the study of the educational philosophy/contributions of individual thinkers, philosophical schools, scriptures, historical/cultural periods. Nearly 70% of researches (26) account for this type. Some of these (7) are studies that are set in a comparative frame. Researches that focus on philosophical/educational themes account for the remaining.

STUDIES OF EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY/ CONTRIBUTIONS OF ...

This genre, as already mentioned, accounts for three-fourths of the research output in this area. It was so in the last survey and the trend of sticking to the trodden path continues both with respect to statement of the research problemstudy (critical/comparative) of the educational philosophy/ contributions/ideas of ... and also its objects-thinkers, schools, scriptures, cultural periods. Studies also continue to be repetitive. On Aurobindo alone we have an additional five research studies, others who continue to enjoy favouritism are Gandhi (4), Krishnamurti (2), Vedas and Upanishads (2), and Tagore (1). The new "educational philosophers" figuring now are Vinoba Bhave, Dolararai Mankad, Samartha Ramdas, Ram Tirth, Manubhai Pancholi, Sane Guruji, Vidya Sagar, Radhakrishnan, Rajendra Prasad and Sri Ma. While most of the thinkers have been studied individually and their ideas explored with reference to the current educational situation, Aurobindo is studied in a comparative frame with Tagore, Gandhi, Rousseau (separate Upanishads with Vivekananda; studies); the Radhakrishnan with Russel; and Sri Ma with Plato.

There are as many as five studies involving Sri Aurobindo. One of these that focuses on value education will be referred to separately. Of the remaining four, Dash, G. (1989) has focused his study on the educational philosophy of Aurobindo and "its experiment" in Orissa. The study, apart from highlighting the main features of integral education analyses the practices through a survey of some integral education centres in the state of Orissa. The findings, however, do not reveal how effectively the philosophical principles of integral education are translated into practical educational action in the schools.

The other three studies are set in a comparative perspective. Kaur, R.J. (1992) compares the educational philosophies of Aurobindo and Gandhi with reference to the aims of education, curriculum, methods of teaching and the role of the teacher, and concludes that they are relevant in the modern context also. The work is based mainly on the analysis of relevant literature.

Dhal, P. (1990) has compared the educational philosophies of Tagore and

Aurobindo with reference to the very same aspects of education. The conclusion is that the ideas of these two educators, especially on education through the mother tongue, universal brotherhood, psychological teaching methods and all-round development of the child, can be of great value in the present context. The study is based on literature analysis.

Shankar, H. (1991) compares the philosophical and educational views of Aurobindo and Rousseau. The findings are a set of general and superficial statements lacking in depth. On the educational thoughts/philosophy of Gandhi and Basic Education, there are three studies. Mahalingam, K. (1992) centres his study on "the impact of the educational views and principles of Mahatma Gandhi on Education Policy and contemporary educational systems in India." There is no match between the objectives and the research problem. The findings are too general ("Gandhi's views are reflected in various forms in the reports of the Zakir Hussain Committee, etc.,") and do not reveal the specific impact of Gandhi's thoughts.

Dwivedi, K. (1991) in her D.Litt. study compares the educational philosophy of Gandhi "in the world perspective". This is too wide a canvas (comparison of the educational ideas of Gandhi with those of Aristotle, Kant, Hegel, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Dewey, Marx, Lenin, Mao Tse Tung, Darwin, Freud, Russel) for indepth research and it is by no means clear what one wishes to achieve through such research. The finding that "Gandhiji's thinking did not suffer from limitations of time and space and it identified itself with the whole of mankind" is too vacuous to be of any use.

Rao, S.S.'s. (1988) study is entitled: "The concept of Gandhiji's Basic Education—its theory and practice." It is not clear what further light the researcher wants to throw on this much researched topic. The statement of the problem, objectives and methods are deplorably vague and confusing.

There are two studies on J. Krishnamurti.

Sharma, I. (1992) attempts a critical evaluation of Krishnamurti's thoughts on education and their "practicability in contemporary India". The methods adopted are the study of the literature supported by field observation of practices and information collected through questionnaires and interviews. The study summarises the main educational ideas and principles of Krishnamurti, but does not enlighten one on their practicability on a wider scale.

Tewari, U. (1989) embarks on a similar exercise, that of making an analytical study of the educational philosophy of Krishnamurti and examining its practicability. The objectives stated are too sweeping and broad ("To critically analyse the modern system of education in India"). The methods adopted by her are content analysis and survey of views of the teachers, students and non-teaching staff of two Krishnamurti residential schools. The findings are general statements of the educational ideas and principles of Krishnamurti. implications she draws from her research are too prescriptive for a philosophical study. ("For Classes IX and X his book This Matter of Culture and Life Ahead can be recommended.")

Samartha Ramdas' educational philosophy/ contributions have been studied by Gogate, V.V. (1991) and Lohakare, S.S. (1990). objectives are to study the educational thoughts of Ramdas, evaluate them in the present context and assess the educational contributions of the Mathas founded by him. The author claims it to be a historical study based on a study of the literature supplemented by information collected through interviews. The findings bring to light the ideas of Ramdas on several aspects of education like the concept and aims of education, content, methodology, role of teachers and students, learning, discipline, moral education, and so on. There is however no mention of the contributions of the Mathas founded by Ramdas.

Lohakare, S.S. (1990) states his problem more specifically as "study of the educational philosophy in Samartha Ramdas Swamy's Dasbodha with reference to the values of life".

The study is based on literature analysis supplemented by interviews. The findings are an admixture of listing of values and superficial statements.

Bhagwanti (1988), Agarwal, K. (1992) and Patel, M.U. (1990) have, respectively, studied the educational philosophy of Radhakrishnan, Ram Tirth and Manubhai Pancholi. All the three studies are products of library research and the "findings" are a jumble of inane and vacuous statements. The last mentioned work has been executed so atrociously as to draw the ire of the reviewer (not this author): "I have never come across such a poor thesis."

Bharote, A.C.'s. (1992) topic of research is "A study of the philosophy of Acharya Vinoba Bhave and its effect on Education in the light/reference of New Education Policy" (sic). The study is based on analysis of relevant literature and the author naively concludes that the 'New Educational Policy' carries the influence of Acharya's philosophy.

Nand, V.'s (1992) problem is to identify the educational ideas of Rajendra Prasad and determine their contemporary relevance. The study is based on the writings and speeches of Prasad supplemented by other relevant writings. The conclusions do not reflect any new insights or ideas on education but present a biographical summary of Rajendra Prasad, too general to be of any use.

Chavda, J.P. (1991) has studied "the educational thought of Dolararai Mankad and its implementation" but the method he adopted was to obtain the opinions of 52 "persons" on the educational thoughts of Mankad and their implementation in his institution, Gangajala Vidyapith. The mismatch between the stated object of the research and the method is obvious. The findings are again broad, vacuous generalizations.

Samadder, S.'s (1990) study seeks to estimate Vidyasagar's educational contributions with respect to humanism, materialism and "scientism" through library research but the findings read like a biographical note and do

not at all enlighten the reader about Vidyasagar's stand on these aspects.

Prabhune, R.G. (1990) has analysed Sane Guruji's literature to identify the educational values and objectives and explore its educational philosophy. The literature analysis is supplemented by information obtained through a questionnaire. The findings do not mention what the questionnaire information revealed (An objective of the questionnaire was to find out the influence of Sane Guruji's literature "on the adolescents' minds.") They are just general pronouncements on different aspects of education by Sane Guruji.

Sharma, U.R. (1989) has compared the educational ideas of Radhakrishnan and Russell but the comparison lacks a frame of reference and is highly superficial.

Atharva Veda, Shankara Vedanta, Bhagat Bani, Islamic Culture, Buddhistic philosophy and the Upanishads have been explored in a series of studies to study their educational ideas and contributions. Mathur, S.'s (1989) problem is to examine the relevance of the educational ideas of Atharva Veda. There is no clarity and specificity in the objectives, and the findings are superficial and empty. Singh, P. (1992) has studied the concept of Vishwa Bandhutva and education in Shankara Vedanta. The findings again are too general and superficial to be of any scholarly use. Singh, D.'s (1992) problem is to study the contemporary relevance of the educational views of Bhagats as entailed in Bhagat Bani. The findings reveal the metaphysics and ethics of Bhagat Bani and its recommendations on the different aspects of education. The research is based on an analytical study of Bhagat Bani and commentaries, etc., on the work. Ansari, A.A.'s (1988) research is entitled "Educational philosophy as found in Islamic Culture". The study woefully lacks focus. Its objectives are too wide and vague and its findings and conclusions do not give us anything new. Tewari, R.C. (1991), titles his research as "Educational Implications of Buddhistic Philosophy" but his findings do not reveal what

these implications are. They are mere repetitions of tenets of Buddhistic philosophy and descriptions of Buddhist education that are already well-known. Dutta, S.K.'s (1991) research carries the title "Upanishadic philosophy of education and Vivekananda's philosophy of education". The scope and objectives of the study are not clear. The findings again are a jumble of general assertions.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STUDY THE EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY OF ...? SOME CRITICAL COMMENTS

The observations made previously on research studies of this type need to be reiterated here as, it appears to the author that we continue to flounder in handling studies of this type. In the first place mere collection and compilation of the ideas and thoughts of a thinker would not amount to philosophy in its true spirit. To organise the ideas in terms of philosophical presuppositions and assumptions and to synthesise the different ideas into a coherent system are some of the tasks involved in the study of the educational philosophy of an individual or a system. Whether it is the study of the educational philosophy/ ideas/thoughts of Ramdas or Krishnamurti, or of Bhagat Bani or of Islamic Culture, essentially the researcher is expected to present a consistent and coherent account of the ideas, and their basic assumptions and validity. If it is an appraisal of an educational philosophy, the framework or criteria with reference to which such evaluation is carried out should be clearly set forth. It is most unfortunate that a systematic, rigorous, philosophical study of educational thinkers, practices and systems is conspicuous by its absence despite the proliferation of research studies of this type.

Even more disturbing is the fact that the researcher sees an educational philosopher in anyone who has had something or other to say about education and hypostatise an educational philosophy where none exists. A mere collection of stray sayings on education does not make an

educational philosophy. It requires much more sustained, systematic thinking on educational matters, the firm foundation of a philosophy of life, knowledge and value, and a conscious, committed articulation of one's position on the means and ends of education. Going by these stringent criteria one wonders whether sufficient and considerable care and thought are exercised while choosing the subject for philosophical scrutiny.

Often, researchers state the thrust of their study to be 'comparative'. Even when it is not explicitly mentioned, the comparative dimension is brought into many of the studies. Generally, what is compared is referred to as 'educational philosophy', 'ideas', 'thoughts'-all omnibus expressions that lack specificity. Comparative studies prove to be of value when the point of comparison is a specific aspect of the educational philosophy that is of vital concern to the theory and practice of education. This could be an educational/philosophical concept like 'education', 'teaching', 'creativity', 'discipline', 'learning', or a theme, such as women's education, educational equality, nationalism in education, and so on. Such narrowing down of the comparison to specific issues and concerns would also give the research a depth and rigour which would be lacking if the comparison is kept at a general level. Further, comparative studies should have a clearly conceived and well defined frame of reference. Unfortunately, the comparative studies that are reviewed here lack such a frame of reference and focus.

RESEARCH CENTERED ON THEMES

Under this category the themes that have been explored are 'experience', 'phenomenology', 'existentialism', 'personality', 'dialecticism', 'idealism', and 'value education'.

Mehta, N.'s (1990) research study is titled "Experience as a major premise in Education". Her philosophical investigation into this concept seeks to analyse experience *per se* and in its ontological and epistemological aspects, taking into account the assumptions of the

representative schools of philosophy, and to synthesise the viewpoints to provide premises for education. The method is analytical and interpretative. She has drawn the conclusion that an acceptable theoretical construct is possible only when education is based on a pedagogy that makes 'experience' the starting point. This is an exceptional study from the point of view of rigour and philosophical sophistication and deserves commendation.

Dhiman, S.'s (1988) research theme is 'phenomenology in relation to education'. This is a study in philosophical methodology. It seeks to analyse the distinct features of phenomenology (with the focus on Husserl's version) and explicate its applicability to education. The researcher concludes that any study of education as such must lead on to phenomenological analysis of what constitutes the essential structure of an individual's inner consciousness. This again is a study that appeals from the point of view of the philosophical rigour in its design and execution.

Saxena, S. (1988) has studied the existentialism of Sartre and its educational implications. The study is based upon analysis of relevant literature. The abstract does not indicate clearly either the objectives or the findings/conclusions of the study. Pandey, V. (1991) also has dealt with the same theme ("A critical study of existentialist philosophical thoughts and its educational implications"). The objectives stated are too sweeping and broad and the study lacks focus. The findings are, again, a collection of views and statements of the philosophers studied.

Sharma, A. (1990) has studied the nature and development of the personality in the Bhagawad Geeta, and its educational relevance. The study is based upon library research on the original text and its commentaries. The nature and attributes of personality according to the Geeta in a summary form, constitute its 'findings'. The implications are that the educational aim and method depicted in the Geeta "can serve as a beacon light for the present educational set up. ..."

Sharma, S. (1990) has studied dialecticism in Indian education. Although the venture is laudable, the objectives of the study are too wide and diffused. The findings which are a series of pithy assertions and statements do not illuminate properly the outcomes of the philosophical analysis carried out.

Singh, V. (1992) has made a comparative study of idealism in education as perceived by Plato and Sri Ma. The conclusions drawn are vacuous and trivial.

Manay, S.N. (1991) has entitled her research, "Value Education in the light of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy with special reference to Home Science education" (sic). The study is not properly conceptualised. Neither its objective, nor its description in a separate 'abstract' make coherent reading.

OTHER STUDIES

There are two other studies which do not belong to either of the above classifications and need to be discussed separately.

Mehta, A. (1988) has entitled her research, "Study of Socio-psychological factors related to teachers' Philosophical Orientation and Educational Output". The objective was to investigate the teachers' philosophical orientation (PO) and educational output (EO) and their relationship with some socio-psychological factors. The method adopted was a kind of survey, using tools to measure the different variables and test the formulated hypotheses. A major finding was that PO and EO are not significantly related.

Kanchan, L.R. (1988) has made a "critical study of the philosophical, psychological, social and cultural relation between education and religion". This too, it appears, is a survey type of study although the method and tools are not mentioned. The findings are presented in the form of what students, teachers, parents and others feel about prayer, secularism, science and religion and several other aspects.

There are also two journal articles by P.M.

Collins. "Prolegomena to research in philosophy of education" (1992) is a kind of analysis of philosophy of education research and graduate studies in philosophy of education. "History of Philosophy of Education" (1991), presents the author's model of a four-courses basis in the history of philosophy of education for a graduate programme.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The scene characterising philosophy of education research is indeed dismal. That it should be so when there is a tremendous upsurge of interest and enthusiasm throughout the nation in issues of educational policy and practice is indeed an irony.

Truly, the debates and discussions on education during the post-NPE years have been unprecedentedly lively and stimulating, so much so that the NPE itself has undergone two revisions, and a new programme of action has come into being. The plethora of national schemes and projects relating to pre-school and elementary education, secondary education, vocational education, teacher education, adult education and higher education floated in the initial flush of the NPE have, inspired by the new insights generated by the national debates, all undergone substantial revision, both qualitatively and quantitatively. Never before, in living memory, had the country witnessed educational policies, prescriptions, institutions and practices exciting the imagination of the people and involving them in debates and discussions on such a grand scale.

What, one can ask, has this to do with philosophy of education? Plenty. Philosophy of education is concerned with a much wider range of problems and issues than the mere study of an educational thinker or system in a general holistic way. Philosophy of education should raise important issues having relevance for education, and tackle them philosophically—offering arguments, clarifying concepts, putting forward metaphysical views with intellectual support and offering grounds for normative

assertions. It should provide a frame of reference for orienting ourselves and for gaining a sense of direction in education, a set of standards for the validation of our aims and values, justifying our curricular activities in terms of intrinsic and instrumental criteria and enlightening us about concepts like democracy, equality, secularism, freedom, authority and social justice as they operate in education.

Almost every aspect of education-its meaning, aims, content and process-holds out exciting possibilities for logical and conceptual examination. Apart from these, there are also philosophical insights to be gained about the relationship of education itself with other spheres of human activitity, social, political, economic and religious. Educational discourse is highly complex in nature and cuts across the empirical, a priori and normative forms of inquiry. Clarification of concepts; analysis and appraisal of arguments, statements and theories; synthesis and integration of such understanding with substantive issues of curriculum, systems of schooling, the process of learning and teaching, school management and educational institutions; and issuing normative guidelines on aims, curriculum, methods, institutions and teachers-can all be legitimate functions of philosophical inquiry in education.

With specific reference to educational policy decisions, presenting a critique of policies and practices and their appraisal and justification is a fundamental task of philosophy of education. Educational policy decisions cannot be based, by the very nature of the educational enterprise, solely on the factual findings of the concerned empirical fields of enquiry. They also need philosophical inputs to make explicit the whole range and depth of the meaning of the issue at stake, its ramifications and logical implications and to clarify the kinds of decisions that have to be made in dealing with them. One would also look to philosophy to deal with value disputes in educational issues and also for rational justification of the goal, ideal or value being pursued. Further, to deal effectively with educational controversies, one needs the philosophical temperament and rigour of thought to lay bare conceptual confusions, hidden assumptions and fallacies of reasoning.

Indian education today is pulsating with life, with practically every aspect of it-theoretical moorings, policies, practices and institutionscoming under critical review and examination. To cite a few examples: the challenge of 'education for all' and the concept of basic education, access, equity and learning achievement vis-a-vis universalisation of elementary education; learner-centered education and minimum levels of learning; equalising educational opportunity; gender justice and positive discrimination in education; the notion of general education; the concept and aims of secondary and tertiary education, issues related to learning, teaching, curriculum integration and curriculum load, merit and excellence in education; the meaning, scope and methods of value education, role conception of teacher: evaluation of student learning: talent and its nurturing; and competitiveness in education.

These are but a few of the educational issues that are currently engaging the attention and the interest of the people. It is such, ongoing happenings that should provide grist to the philosophers mill. Philosophy of education should not restrict its concerns only to the study of events and personalities of the past only. If the objects of philosophical inquiry are limited to ancient lore alone, philosophy to that extent distances itself from living reality, weakens its link with emerging concerns and becomes just an academic exercise. This, of course, is not to say that the past is to be ignored altogether. Surely, research into the past to discover new insights which may help in the understanding of the present, and possibly its betterment, stands in no need of justification. The point is that one should not look for enlightenment to the past alone taking what "was" as a reservoir of such wisdom. Philosophy of education will have functional value only when its concerns emerge from the events and problems that are experienced here and now. Sadly philosophy of education research continues to be imprisoned in the constricting paradigm of study of the past.

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