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“Illusory” fighting against illiteracy among adults in India – the educational policy

„Iluzoryczna” walka z analfabetyzmem dorosłych w Indiach – polityka oświatowa

Streszczenie. W myśl teorii reprodukcji społecznej P. Bourdieu system nauczania w Indiach utrwała istniejący porządek społeczny i poprzez własną reprodukcję dokonuje reprodukcji systemu kastowego. Funkcjonowanie tak pojmowanego systemu oświaty nie byłoby możliwe bez zastosowania przemocy symbolicznej ze strony władzy, która ma na celu faworyzowanie grup uprzywilejowanych przy wykorzystaniu instrumentów ukrytego programu szkolnego. System szkolny dąży do wpajania określonych wartości kultury indyjskiej, tj. kształtowania habitusu. Jak zauważa B. Śliwerski, „mechanizmy reprodukcji ubóstwa i bogactwa, m.in. intelektualnego, kulturowego i stratyfikacji społecznej są poza zasięgiem zmian każdego systemu oświatowego, nawet gdyby lokowano w nim ogromne środki finansowe na najrówniejsze programy profilaktyczne i wyrównawcze” (Śliwerski, 2012, s. 179). W ten sposób selekcja szkolna staje się mechanizmem awansu społecznego.

W Indiach od 1946 do 1964 r. największą rolę odegrała koncepcja edukacji fundamentalnej, która promowana była na szeroką skalę przez UNESCO. Naukowcy skupili się na opracowaniu metod i technik nauki czytania oraz pisania w rodzimych językach, z poszanowaniem tradycji i zwyczajów lokalnych plemion. Jednakże wkład tych programów w zwalczanie analfabetyzmu był ubogi. Nie wzięto pod uwagę wielu czynników zakłócających proces nauczania. Był to jednak wielki krok w sposobie myślenia o masowej edukacji społeczności zmarginalizowanej.

Kolejną koncepcją była edukacja funkcjonalna (ang. EWLP – Experimental World Literacy Programme), którą Indie wprowadziły w latach 70. pod egidą UNESCO. Główną jej ideą było połączenie rozwoju edukacji z rozwojem ekonomicznym kraju. Nauka była zorientowana wyłącznie na rynek pracy i potrzeby przyszłego pracodawcy, edukacja sprowadzała się zatem do nauki rzemiosła, a nie do rozwoju osobowości, samoświadomości czy wyzwolenia, które pedagogia uciśnionych w tym czasie promowała w Ameryce Łacińskiej. Niestety i edukacja funkcjonalna nie odniosła sukcesu w Indiach, ukazała natomiast, że kształcenie

techniczne bez rozwinięcia kompetencji społecznych, kulturowych i politycznych nie przynosi wymiernych korzyści. Alfabetyzacja musi być skoordynowanym planem połączonym z reformami społeczno-ekonomicznymi.

Warto zauważyć, że odkąd edukacja w Indiach, funkcjonujących w kulturze kolektywistycznej, została umasowiona, władze zaczęły ją traktować jako jeden z elementów utrzymywania porządku kastowego. Dzięki niej mogą przygotowywać rzesze słabo wykwalifikowanych Hindusów do wykonywania mało płatnych zawodów, dokonywać precyzyjnej alokacji, nagradzać, karać i utrzymywać w przekonaniu, że to wszystko zawdzięczają systemowi edukacji. W swojej istocie edukacja stała się elementem adaptującym do zastanych warunków społecznych, mającym jednak sukcesem edukacyjnym i lepszym statusem społecznym. Celem wszystkich indyjskich programów edukacyjnych nie jest zmiana społeczna, ale przystosowanie, transmisja kulturowa. Jak podkreśla P. Rudnicki, edukacja w wydaniu systemowym jest zainteresowana utrzymaniem *statusu quo*, a nie zmianą. Nie ma w niej miejsca na emancypowanie się z opresyjnych przestrzeni, nie dostarcza kompetencji krytycznych ani nie przygotowuje do zaangażowania w działalność edukacyjną (Rudnicki, 2012, p. 350–352).

Słowa kluczowe: Indie, edukacja dorosłych, polityka oświatowa, kultura.

Summary. The main objective of presented research is to show the educational policy in India after 1947. The goal of the Adult Education, in collectivistic cultures such as India, is to establish a fully literate society through improved quality and standard of Adult Education and Literacy; to creating citizens who are able to make educated and well informed decisions about their lives and for their families. This is crucial for everything from fostering healthy families to making political decisions, such as who to vote for.

Keywords: India, adults education, educational policy, culture.

1. Introduction

According to M. J. Szymański, “culture is an important, but often overlooked frame of reference for education. Its nature and level establish an important framework for educational practice, as well as pedagogy and educational policy” (Szymański, 2002, p. 189). According to M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz, in collectivistic cultures such as India, the social world is a value and it is the duty of an individual to conform to it. Belonging to a social group, a particular caste provides an individual with the sense of security for the price of personal freedom (M. Nowak-Dziemianowicz, 2012, p. 309).

Since ancient times education has been run for the purpose of retaining power by the ruling elites. As T. Lewowicki underlines, it is the ruling elites that decided about the access to education, about its goals and missions, and controlled its content. Knowledge became a tool for gaining and

retaining power. Priests and Brahmins realised that and therefore did not want to let go of the control over education. In the 20th century in India the need for education to become public good was born. Unfortunately, the hierarchical social order, caste-based society, inequality of rights have made and are still making it difficult for the Indian society to make use of education. Nowadays economic development, emancipatory aspirations of women and Dalits, treating literacy as a means of communication of ruling elites with the society are conducive to the dissemination of education. T. Lewowicki stresses that "social and economic changes contributed to important changes in educational policy and, as a result, in education. Dissemination of education and the awakening social awareness as a consequence, all affected the change of social structures" (Lewowicki, 2012, p. 27–28).

With respect to the social reproduction theory by P. Bourdieu, the educational system in India preserves the existing social order and through its own reproduction contributes to the reproduction of the caste system. The system of education could not function in such a shape if it were not for the application of symbolic power by the authorities which strive for favouring privileged groups with the use of instruments of a hidden curriculum. The aim of the educational system is to inculcate specific values of the Indian culture, i.e. developing the habitus. As B. Śliwerski observes, "the mechanisms of reproducing penury and wealth, in terms of the intellect, culture and social satisfaction among others, are beyond reach of any educational system, even if enormous financial resources were invested in preventive and compensation programmes" (Śliwerski, 2012, p. 179). This way school selection becomes a mechanism of social advancement.

"The structural violence of education is reflected in imposing organisational structures of adult education which are subjected to economy and politics, top-down defining and limiting of legal knowledge and imposing the paradigm of pedagogy transmission, transfer from those who know better and sooner, and demand of those who do not know, learn and acquire" (Kwieciński, 1995, p. 125). As Z. Kwieciński stresses the school effects the structural violence and symbolic power which serve the reproduction of social structure, relationships of production and political domination' (Kwieciński, 1995, p. 123). Since the colonial times the highest castes in India have been using education for maintaining or increasing their social position. Educational reforms were helping the underprivileged groups in breaking from isolation only virtually. In reality, private education justified social inequalities. The paradigm of a neopositivist cultural transmission defended the interests and the position of the top castes. The symbolic power poli-

cy towards Dalits and tribal communities aims at pushing them away to the cultural margin, imposing the language and the perception of the world by dominant groups. Schools on the other hand 'became an instrument used for the implementation of such educational policy. Through its hidden functions of indoctrination, supervision and selection it enables various actions against ethnical and religious minorities (Gmerek, 2013, p. 60).

Using the model by T. J. LaBelle and P. S. White*, India has a vertical structural and cultural segmentation. It means that "diversity between groups in the society is related to and conditioned by the hierarchical system of structural and cultural relationships". The top castes have a monopoly in most social spheres, which leads to denying the access of lower castes to higher positions in the social and professional structure. Educational policy in India heads towards preservation of the differences between castes. Dalits have considerably worse opportunities to use education and achieve educational success. It is reflected in the inaccessibility of certain educational forms for the poorest social strata, uneven distribution of social institutions and underdeveloped didactic and technical base. Schools for Dalits are based on the so-called "blind pathways" which enable obtaining only low-paid jobs. Educational programmes reflect the divisions in a caste-based society. Dalits and the inhabitants of rural areas frequent schools whose educational programmes are vocationally-oriented and prepare for taking up employment only after a few years of education. However, educational programmes for higher castes have a more extensive content, usually based on the Western model and their purpose is to prepare them for education on higher levels. Language policy also aims at perpetuating the divisions in the society. Classes held in the languages of ethnical minorities are not capable of transferring the linguistic competence of the dominant groups (Gmerek, 2013, p. 49). According to the theory of language code by B. Bernstein (Bernstein, 1980, p. 95), the language can drive an individual to development or bar him or her from it. According to the language code concept a social position is a result of reproducing and transmitting culture. The language is then a means for positioning the individual within the social structure (Przybylska, 2014, p. 275). As Z. Kwieciński observes, the poorest families experience the mechanism of a vicious circle of educational poverty. Chil-

* One may distinguish the following types of relationship in this model: A) vertical structural and cultural segmentation; B) vertical relation of cultural segmentation and structural community; C) cultural and structural segmentation in a horizontal relation; D) cultural segmentation and structural community in a horizontal relation. (LaBelle, White, 1980, p. 158).

dren of less educated people in their adulthood have lower competence and educational aspirations towards own children. On top of it all there is the learned helplessness syndrome, that is "making yourself at home in crisis" (Kwieciński, 2000, p. 178).

In the period prior to gaining independence nobody really cared about education in India. The country suffered due to the economic crisis, throngs of young men were forced to fight battles for Great Britain. In 1926 in entire India, which covered the area of present day Pakistan and Bangladesh, 100 schools, called night schools, for adults were in operation and they were run by different sorts of organisations. In Punjab in 1926 over 3 700 schools trained nearly 100 000 adult illiterates. Unfortunately, ten years later, in 1937 only 189 schools for adults were in operation, which were frequented by nearly 5 000 pupils. This testifies to an enormous negligence of schooling and a regression as compared to 1920s.

In the period between the two World Wars the following organisations in the territory of India were responsible for the literacy among adults:

- Rural Reconstruction Association,
- Adult Education League,
- Literacy Association,
- Seva Sadan Social League.

Except for the abovementioned organisations, moving libraries and 'rural cultural centres' were organised in rural areas. In the 1940s, as a consequence of political struggling for regaining independence and lack of decision-making of local governments, education was going through apathy (Rao, 2004, p. 15–21).

From 1946 to 1964 the key role in India was played by the concept of fundamental education, which was widely promoted by UNESCO. Scientists focused on developing methods and techniques of reading and writing in mother tongues respecting the tradition and customs of local tribes. However, the contribution of these programmes in combating illiteracy was minimal. Many factors that interfere with the educational process were not taken into account. Nevertheless, it was a giant leap in the manner of thinking about mass education of the marginalised society. In the first few years after regaining independence all educational activities were focused on the elimination of illiteracy and dissemination of basic education. The curricula were based on the educational concept developed by M. Ghandi. The "Nai Talim" school was supposed to be suited to the needs of the rural community and it was linked to the labour market. The stress was on teaching practical skills.

The purpose of the school was to build an egalitarian society without castes (Łodziński, 1993, p. 103).

The Indian educational system came under contradictory influences after 1947. On the one hand it was the legacy of the past – the caste system and educational inequalities that arose in the colonial period, on the other, education came amidst the egalitarian social aspirations of the Indians. After 1947 a vision of building the infrastructure of the society of knowledge. On the eve of liberation, the development of science was part of the ethos of Ghandi. In the 1950s preferential programmes for castes and most disadvantaged tribes were created. The constitution of India, which came into effect on the 26 January 1950, guaranteed certain statutory privileges to “disadvantaged groups”, such as quotas of primary, secondary and tertiary school places, grants, provision of meals, halls of residence and guaranteed occupations in the public sector (Potyrała, Skobrtala, 2009, p. 84.). At the same time it forbade ethnic, religious and caste discrimination, guaranteed the secular nature of the school and the right to education in mother tongue. Primary and secondary education was given to state authorities, whereas the responsibility over higher and technical education was held by the federal government (Łodziński, 1993, p. 103). Education as a carrier of democracy became the chief slogan. The largest possible number of people were to be educated in order to equal opportunities.

After regaining independence in 1947 the Indian government ran a number of literacy campaigns addressed to adults. One of the first campaigns that was run in early 1950s was called the Social Education Programme. The government of India established the Institute of Social Education which aimed at developing educational programmes for adult illiterates, preparation of textbooks and teacher training geared to teach adults. What characterised all programmes of social education and made them distinct from others, was the orientation towards the preparation of socially useful citizens. It was believed that this should lead to social solidarity, which was of utmost importance in the 1950s.

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The next concept was functional education (the Experimental World Literacy Programme), which was introduced by India in the 1970s under the auspices of UNESCO. Its main idea was to connect the development of education with the economic growth of the country. Education was geared towards the labour market and the needs of the future employer exclusively, therefore it boiled down to the mastery of craft rather than personal development, self-consciousness or liberation, which were promoted by the pedagogy of the oppressed in Latin America. Unfortunately, functional education was not successful in India, but it showed that technical education devoid of the development of social, cultural and political competence does not bring measurable benefits. Literacy must be a coordinated plan linked to social-economic reforms.

Table 1: Stages of literacy in the world

Stage	Years	Main inspirations	Dominant concept
I	1945–1964	Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, I World Conference on Adult Education in Elsinore in 1949	Basic education as an unwaivable right of each adult and child
II	1965–1974	The Conference of Education Ministers in Teheran in 1965 "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" by Paul Freire (1972)	Paradigm of functional literacy or building awareness
III	1975–1980	The Declaration of Persepolis 1975	Literacy as a condition for liberation
IV	1981–1989	The Udaipur Conference of 1982	Mass literacy campaigns as a political priority while at the same respecting the Freire idea
V	1990–2000	World Conference on Education in Jomtien in 1990	Basic education as an element of general strategy for satisfying basic human needs
VI	After 2000	World Conference on Education in Dakar in 2000 The Millennium Development Goals 2000-2015	Literacy as a source of development for life skills, people geared to labour market and employability

Source: E. Przybylska, *Analfabetyzm funkcjonalny dorosłych jako problem społeczny, egzystencjalny i pedagogiczny*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe UMK, Toruń 2014, p. 114

The most important official confirmation of the need for improving adult education services in India came in the form of the National Policy Resolution of 1968. The first important project in adult education – the National Adult Education Program (NAEP) – was not established until 1978. In 1980, the program was renamed (AEP – Adult Education Program) and expanded from a 10-month to a 3-year program with accent on health, family planning, and functional programs. Unfortunately, the AEP was not extremely successful either (http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/144/18/09_chapter2.pdf).

“Each educational system is a political instrument which enables the establishment and modification of discourse forms that are deemed appropriate, together with the knowledge and power it entails” (Ball, 1994, p. 13–14). As Z. Kwieciński wrote: “a systemic approach treats the school as one of the subsystems of global society or local community. This subsystem, next to other subsystems “works” for the sake of the achievement of social objectives, in particular: it reconstructs culture, prepares personnel for the purpose of local and supraregional economy, introduces people to values they came across. School as a subsystem should adapt as well as it possibly can to the remaining subsystems that achieve social objectives in order to act in the most efficient way and in contradiction towards other subsystems” (Kwieciński, 2011–2012, p. 111–112). I. Illich’s observation that within the framework of the school system, teaching melts together with assigning social roles, perfectly reflects the essence of the caste system reproduction (Illich, 1976, p. 44).

At this juncture a Spanish anarchist F Ferrer needs to be quoted who thinks that: “in the past schools were available for elites and the control was exercised to keep the people in ignorance [...]. Today education is universal, and yet the constraints have remained, the scope of control has not changed. The introduction of general education is linked to the new conditions of production. The state did not ensure the organisation of the general system of education in order to give people the possibility of full development, but because it needed a large number of workers adapted to the system of the division of labour. The old system has been abandoned as it did not guarantee economic growth. Under the new system control over schooling is essential in order to preserve the beliefs which give foundation for social discipline” (Laskowski, 2006, p. 484–485). Emile Durkheim suggests that when the deviation from norm disappears, the educational system redefines its norms in order to reconstruct the deviation. When all citizens gain education, the nation will redefine anew in such a way as to re-

construct the margins. Institutional marginalisation, under which term education indubitably falls, is therefore systemic in nature and is characteristic of the modern social system (Wallerstein, 2004, p. 144).

Conclusion

"Radical, basic changes in the educational system and schools are only possible when they are accompanied by concomitant radical changes in the entire economic and social macrosystem" (Kwieciński, 2011–2012, p. 111). The educational system cannot be reformed without changing the Indian society. As long as dominant groups have a vested interest in the fact that masses remain illiterate, do not know their rights and live in material and cultural poverty, schooling in India will never be successful and achieving universal education will remain a remote dream.

It is worth noting that ever since education in India was massified, it has been treated by the authorities as one of the elements of maintaining caste order. It allows to prepare large numbers of underqualified Indians to do low-paid jobs, perform an accurate allocation, praise, punish and keep them under the impression that they owe everything to the educational system. Education has become an element that allows to adapt to the existing social conditions, and yet it tempts with an educational success and a better social status. The aim of all Indian educational programmes is not a social change, but adaptation, a cultural transmission. As highlighted by P. Rudnicki, education in its systemic version is interested in maintaining the status quo, and not changing anything. There is no place for emancipation from oppressive environments, it does not provide critical competence or prepare for the involvement in educational activity (Rudnicki, 2012, p. 350–352).

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