

# Unit 11

## Role of Education in Social and Human Development: Emerging Perspectives

---

### Contents

- 11.1 Introduction
- 11.2 Social and Human Development Indicators
- 11.3 Education for capacity Building of the Poor and the Marginalized
- 11.4 Education for Acceleration of Social and Human Development: International and National Initiatives
- 11.5 Innovations in Education at the Grass-roots
- 11.6 Conclusion
- 11.7 Further Reading

### Learning Objectives

After going through this unit you will be able to:

- explain the concepts of social and human development;
- discuss the initiatives at international and national levels that are geared to integrating education with social and human development; and
- describe experiments in education at the grass-roots that cross-link education with social and human development.

### 11.1 Introduction

For long education has been identified with progress and prosperity. In fact, the spread of education is treated as an effective solution to the problems of economic decline, hunger, and human poverty. Education appears as a core area of concern in public policies in national as also international circles. We find governments in different countries pursuing the goal of widening the spread of education at one level and international agencies such as the United Nations pursuing the target of universalizing primary education as part of millennium development goals which, in effect, means ensuring that by 2015, children (boys and girls alike) in all parts of the world are able to complete a full course of primary schooling. What is/are the major objectives of education? Apart from bringing in prosperity and material affluence, does education have any other role to play in ameliorating human suffering? Does it have a bearing on social and human development? You have studied the multiple dimensions of the concept of education and the viewpoints of major thinkers on education in Block 1. You have already learnt about the articulation of the ideas of some of them in specific settings as the Rishi Valley School which is founded on the principles and perspective of J. Krishnamurti. In addition, you are aware (from reading units 9 and 10) of the role of education in bringing about social change and social mobility. You would have realized that the scope of education is not confined to the 3Rs (reading, writing, and arithmetic). Education has a distinct role to play in society. In this unit we will explore the basic issue of education in the context of social and human development. We begin with acquiring an understanding of the twin concepts of social and human development. Then we will delve into the role of education within this framework. In the next unit you will learn about the role of education in the empowerment of the marginalized people which is a significant component of social and human development.

## 11.2 Social and Human Development Indicators

You have already read in detail about the twin concepts of social and human development in Block 1 of MSO-003 Course (Sociology of Development). The World Bank (2005) defines social development as the process of increasing the (i) assets and capabilities of individuals to improve their well-being, (ii) capacity of social groups to transform their relationships with other groups, and participate in development processes, and (iii) ability of society to reconcile the interests of its constituent elements, govern itself and manage change. As early as the 1990s, it was accepted that in its widest connotation, the concept of development had more to do with the general sense of human well-being than with the growth of material output. The annual human development reports have forcefully initiated the shift in focus from expanding incomes to non-income dimensions of well-being in understating human development.

### Box 11.1: Human Development Index

The UN Human Development Index (HDI) is a measure of poverty, literacy, education, life expectancy, childbirth, and the fact others. It was developed by the Pakistani economist Mahbub ul Haq in 1990 and has been used by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) since 1993 to measure the average achievements in a country in three basic dimensions of human development. These are (i) long and healthy life expectancy at birth; (ii) knowledge as measured by adult literacy and combined primary, secondary and tertiary groups' enrolment ratio; and (iii) standard of living as measured by gross domestic product (GDP) per capita at purchasing parity (PPP) in USD. Every year, the UNDP ranks UN member states in accordance with the HDI.

The Human Development Report 2005 clearly states that human development is about freedom and about building human capabilities which encompasses the range of things that people can do and what they can be. This range gets narrowed when conditions of poverty, illness, illiteracy, social and economic discrimination, and unrest prevail. The basic capabilities for human development are, leading a long and healthy life, being educated, having adequate resources for a decent standard of living, and social and political participation in society.

## 11.3 Education for Capacity Building of the Poor and the Marginalized

For long, it has been said that education seems to protect the poor and the marginalized from exploitation by generating awareness of their rights, capacities and capabilities. The role of education hence seems to be confined to awareness generation and at best opening opportunities for employment and in this sense providing security of income. Certainly, this is a limited and highly restricted view of the scope of education in society. What often remains unattended is the role of education in the empowerment of the poor and the marginalized for several reasons — the chief among them being the ease of governing the disempowered people. When people become empowered to make choices, take decisions for themselves, and challenge the decisions of administrators, governance becomes difficult. It is for this reason that despite the fact that plan documents do contain expressions such as, 'community participation', 'people's movements' that convey a sense of decentralization, they are prepared and implemented by the bureaucracy and those who have no understanding of the social reality of those for whom they plan and make policies. The participation of local communities is often for namesake. According to Dreze and Sen (1995), the education system has served to safeguard the interests of the privileged and powerful groups of people leaving behind the

socially and economically disadvantaged. Rampal (2000: 2524) writes, “If education is really to be a means of reducing social inequities and redressing the skewed course of development followed in the last few decades, it shall have to be reckoned as a site of struggle for power. The classroom shall have to relocate the power to critique and change — the power also to decide what shall count as legitimate content for curricula, to choose enabling pedagogies, negotiated when, where and ultimately for what purposes. The educational discourse would need to consciously give voice to the silenced majority and redefine its objectives by valuing their lives on their terms. Strong and visible affirmative action in favour of the disadvantaged and disempowered will have to redefine the educational priorities of the countries in this [South Asian] region.”

Equally important is to address the issue of the content of teaching. It is live that the curriculum is rooted in the urban middle class background of those who design the curriculum. There has been widespread acceptance of the need to develop curriculum based on the social context and life experience of the disadvantaged section of society. It is said that when this happens learning would be both joyful and meaningful to the children. What happens, however, is that the children belonging to the disempowered and disadvantaged families are treated as ‘backward’ and ‘inferior’. They have, therefore, to be made to ‘catch up’ with their counterparts belonging to the empowered and privileged families. Furthermore, they need to be ‘told how to conduct their lives, what to do, what not to do. All this is through the process of education in the course of which they are fed on bits end pieces of information. There are fragments of information may not be completely comprehensible to the children, for they do not relate with their life situation, neither are they able to make use of it. A natural consequence of bias in the education system itself and lack of interest of students is a rise in the number of dropouts.

Contrary to the understanding that children of marginalized families are deficient in basic capacities and capabilities of learning is the fact that they are more sensitive to, aware and conscious of the conflicts and complexities of life. It is unfair to judge them on the basis of their performance in standardized formats and centralized criteria of assessment of their capacities to learn and articulate information that is by no means close to their own lives. Consider, for example, tribal children who grew up learning indigenous ways of measuring rice. Now, when they are introduced to the modern counting system in elementary classes, there is a great likelihood that they would not be able to understand and perform well in examinations. If, however, their indigenous system of counting is integrated with the teaching process, it is expected that they would learn with ease and with greater comprehension. The need, therefore, is to (i) establish pedagogy of emancipation in place of the pedagogy of the oppressed and articulate Freire’s ideas on education, and (ii) develop faith among the people in their own rationale, and wisdom as worthwhile for perusal. In fact, traditional knowledge, for example, about water harvesting, local food processing, fish farming, metal casting, have significant potential for inclusion in the school curriculum. This would empower the people at the grass-roots and provide opportunity for enriching their living conditions.

**Box 11.2: World Declaration on Education for All (EFA)**

Human Development is clearly reflected in the World Declaration on Education for All which states:

“Every person — child, youth and adult — shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs. These needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy, and problem solving) and basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings

to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and to continue learning. Moreover, whether or not expanded educational opportunities will translate into meaningful development - for an individual or for society - depends ultimately on whether people actually learn as a result of these opportunities, i.e., whether they incorporate useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills and values. The focus of basic education must, therefore, be on actual learning acquisition and outcome, rather than exclusively upon enrolment and completion of certification requirements. Active and participatory approaches are particularly valuable in allowing learners to reach their fullest potential" (cited here from Rampal 2000:2525).

Incorporation of human rights into education prepares the children to accompany and produce desired societal changes, increase their capacity to participate in decision-making processes leading to social, cultural, and economic policies. The endeavour of making human rights a component of education brings in profound reform in the entire education system, more so because it has a bearing on curriculum framework, methods of teaching, classroom management, and assessment procedures. In its full sense, human rights education implies that rights are not only communicated as part of teaching but also implemented as part of the teaching-learning practice leading to decentralization, democratization of education as also respect for human dignity.

#### **11.4 Education for Acceleration of Social and Human Development: International and National Initiatives**

In September 2000, the UN Millennium Summit provided the forum for world leaders to commit their nations to strengthening global efforts for peace, human rights, democracy, strong governance, environmental sustainability and poverty eradication, and to promoting principles of human dignity, equality and equity. The result was the Millennium Declaration which was adopted by 189 countries. It was felt that the commitments in the Declaration could be made possible stating the goals, targets and indicators. Consequently, 8 goals, 18 targets, and 48 indicators were identified. Out of these one of the goals was: to achieve universal primary education, and the corresponding target was to ensure that by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling. The other goal that is of significance in this context was: promote gender equality and empower women, and the corresponding target was to eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005 and in all levels of education not later than 2015. It was realized that the cost of education hits the poor people hard, constituting as it does a large share of limited economic resources. School dropouts, hence, can be considerably lowered by bringing down the direct and indirect costs of education (Human Development Report 2003).

##### **Box 11.3: Ending Discrimination against girls**

Gender differences in enrolments and dropouts are acute in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa. Countries that have eliminated gender disparities offer the following lessons:

- "Getting and keeping girls in school requires that schools be close to their homes. School mapping can identify least-served locations, aiding the establishment of multigrade schools in remote areas.

- Lowering out-of-pocket costs prevents parents from discriminating between boys and girls when deciding whether to send children to school—and in times of declining household income, to keep children from dropping out.
- Scheduling lessons flexibly enables girls to help with household chores and care for siblings.
- Having female teachers provides girls with role models—and gives parents a sense of security about their daughters” (Human Development Report 2003:95).

Governments in most countries do tend to finance public services— basic health care, primary education, water and sanitation – in order that they become accessible to all. The spread of basic education, for instance, benefits not only the individual or group of individuals who acquire it but has a bearing on the well being of all the members of society. When poor people are coerced to pay for primary education of their children, many of them prefer or are forced by circumstances to stay away. In developing nations particularly several families cannot afford to send their children to school. It was found that where school fees have been removed in Africa, attendance in schools has risen considerably. Despite the planning, gaps in opportunities for education remain large. About 115 million children have no access to basic primary education. A large number of them belong to sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. Gradstein (2003) notes that political pressure results in bias in favour of the rich and powerful. Bias in political influence resulting from extreme income inequalities generates social exclusion of the marginalized. This is often followed by a deepening of inequality as public spending on education is severely hit.

In India, the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan represents the effort of the government to universalize elementary education based on community ownership of the school. Panchayati Raj institution, school management committees, village slum level education committees, Parents-Teachers Associations, Mother-Teacher Associations, Tribal Councils and other local institutions are assigned the task of elementary school management. The objective is to impart useful and relevant elementary education to children between 6 and 14 years of age. Children are encouraged to learn about the natural environment that envelops them, work for each other's well being and develop both spiritually and materially. It is expected that (i) all children in the relevant age group will complete 5 years of primary schooling by 2007 and 8 years of elementary education by 2010; (ii) the stage of universal retention of children in school would be achieved by 2010; and (iii) gender and social gaps at primary education level will be plugged by 2007 and at elementary education level will be plugged by 2010. Surely, a large number of educational reforms will be planned and executed. There would be community ownership of school-based intervention through decentralization.

The Tenth Five Year Plan has identified education as a critical factor in human resource development as also in the economic growth of the nation. Literacy rate was recognized as the major determinant of other indicators of socio-economic growth. The enrollment drive launched in the second year of the Tenth Five Year Plan with the mission to get all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years to attend school has resulted in considerable reduction in the number of out of school children from 42 million at the beginning of the Plan period to 8.1 million in September 2004. It is found that the gender gap in literacy has narrowed during the last decade. The government has, in addition to several schemes for spread of formal education, initiated schemes in the non-formal education stream.

Alternative schooling efforts under Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS), Alternative Innovative Education (AIE), Lok Jumbish, Shiksha Karmi, residential and non-residential courses bridge courses under District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and Sarva Siksha Abhiyan (SSA). These are particularly of use in groups that are very difficult to reach. Often, non-formed education is regarded as an interim arrangement in the phase of transition from out-of-school situation to that of attendance in mainstream school, The provision of vocationalization of secondary education ensures diversification of educational opportunities leading to enhancement of the individual's employment opportunities, and reduction of imbalance between demand and availability of skilled manpower (Mid-term Appraisal of 10<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan 2005).

With a view to empower women in rural areas particularly those belonging to socially and economically depressed groups, the Mahila Sankhya was initiated in 1998. It is implemented in 33 districts of seven states. The target in the Tenth Five Year Plan is, however, to enroll 240 districts in 17 states. The Mahila Shiksha Kendras offer residential bridge courses with components of vocational training including life skills for out-of-school children. Another recent endeavour to ensure access and quality education to girls belonging to Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and minorities in low female literacy districts is the Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV) launched in 2004-05. It operates through 750 residential schools with boarding facilities at the elementary level. There are also several programmes for adult education that combine formal education with vocational programmes.

#### Reflection and Action 11.1

Discuss the initiatives of the international agencies for employing education for social and human development.

### 11.5 Innovations in Education at the Grass-roots

Consider the rising trend in our own country to acquire competence in reading, writing, and speaking in English. A class of people that speaks English but thinks partially in English and partially in one of the Indian languages is emerging. These are culturally split personalities. This split seems to be the major handicap of Third World Countries which had been under colonial rule. This surely does not mean that one should not study, appreciate or assimilate other cultures. What is important is to study one's own culture too with rigour so that one may remain steadfast and not be swayed. It would also help to see one own culture in a broader perspective and promote indigenous scholarship (Naik 1998).

Indigenous vision of education in a general sense consists of expanding the spheres of existence by generating social awareness, initiating self-transformation, and developing creativity. This stands out in sharp contrast to modern education that envisages a way of life focused on consumerism, competition, and specialization often at the expense of integrity, peace and strength of character. In order to explore the possibility of promoting these elements and integrating traditional forms of education with the modern system, several experiments have been undertaken in different parts of the world. We will discuss some of them here.

#### a) Barefoot College in Tilonia

Tilonia is a small village in Rajasthan. Way back in 1972 a group of students from some of the better-known Indian universities established The Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC) under the leadership of Bunker Roy. This group was greatly inspired by Gandhian principles. They set up the Barefoot College in Tilonia with the mission of tapping local wisdom and initiative in order to

empower the villagers themselves. The Barefoot College does not draw on the expertise or experience of professionals from the formal education system, rather the villagers are encouraged to identify and use their own skills, knowledge and practical experience to make provision for drinking water, health, education, employment, fuel and other basic needs. The Barefoot College is committed to the idea that hands-on-approach and not educational degrees are effective in developing the means to meet people's needs and empower them. The Barefoot College prepares the illiterate rural poor to gain control of and manage technologies without input from outside experts. It challenges the need for formal education to develop and maintain technologies. The issue of availability of drinking water is a case in point. While the engineers and other technologists believe that the problem of drinkable water shortage is acute and requires bigger and deeper wells which is an expensive endeavour, the Barefoot College experts ask for simple, cost-effective ways of harnessing rain water and processing it for use. It is cheaper to construct a tank (using low cost, readily available resources) in a school located in brackish water areas than to exploit the ground water or pump water from a permanent water source through pipes.

The Barefoot College Campus is the only fully solar electrified one in the country. Interestingly, the Barefoot technologists have solar electrified several thousand houses in at least eight Indian states, installed hand pumps in the Himalayas (a task which could not be accomplished by urban engineers), and planned and implemented piped drinking water. Apart from the technologists, the Barefoot educators serve as trained pre-primary and night school teachers. About 3000 boys and girls attend more than 150 night schools run by the Barefoot educators. The schools are supervised by a children's parliament. The Barefoot communicators employ puppets to generate awareness about practices such as child marriage, rights and wages of women, child literacy and several others. Barefoot architects and masons have constructed the college out of low cost and locally available material resources. What comes out clearly is the understanding that the single conviction that local people are bestowed with insurmountable capacity to resolve their own problems that is articulated in the multiple tasks undertaken by the Barefoot College workers. The College operates on a decentralized and non-hierarchical basis wherein community issues are discussed in the village council. The Tilonia case challenges the need for formal education and managerial skills to operate as for example, health-care workers, solar engineers, hand-pump mechanics and teachers in local communities. The approach of empowering the people at the grass-roots by reposing faith in their wisdom and decentralizing power and control (i) brings together people belonging to different castes and classes (ii) provides engagement to rural youth who are labeled as 'unemployable'; and (iii) provides viable, simple, cost-effective alternatives to use sophisticated technology to improve the quality of life.

Against this backdrop, can the illiterate people working in the Barefoot College be treated as uneducated and backward? Perhaps there is a need to enlarge the concept of education itself to accommodate creative learning that ameliorates human suffering.

#### b) Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme

Anil Sadgopal (currently on faculty of the Central Institute of Education, University of Delhi) along with some like-minded scientists set up the Kishore Bharati Centre for Rural Development and Education at Hosangabad in Madhya Pradesh. They approached the Madhya Pradesh government with the proposal to develop alternative materials for teaching science (now better known as Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme) in government run schools. This was spearheaded by Sadgopal's firm belief that the curriculum needs to be decentralized, drawn from local physical environment and experience of the community. They invited the scientists from the Tata Institute of Fundamental

Research in Mumbai and the Indian Institute of Technology to visit Madhya Pradesh along with experts from the Regional Colleges of Education, the National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and government middle school teachers of the state to deliberate on new ways of teaching experimental science. They succeeded in decentralizing the curriculum and motivating the teachers to make use of locally available resources and experience in teaching. The inspiration came from Gandhi's idea of integrating work with knowledge in the educational system. What started as the science teaching programme expanded to include social science teaching and language teaching through increasingly creative ways. Work experience was woven with scientific theories. Students and teachers would experiment and participate in the teaching-learning process as partners. More importantly, the team sought to improve agriculture and cattle breeding, and to bring migration of distressed agricultural labour under control. Ringwell fabrication emerged as a small-scale industry; forest cover was restored; and environmental degradation was checked. The Hoshangabad Science Training Programme provided the model on which some statewide programmes were developed in Madhya Pradesh and Ekalavya — a centre for educational research and training, was established.

The Hoshangabad experiment demonstrates the possibility of democratization of education wherein meaningful education becomes accessible to all children irrespective of their caste, class, language, gender, or community. In fact, Sadgopal raises a basic issue of why government schools have not been able to evolve a common school system for all children in his oft quoted book, *Shiksha mein Badlaav ka Savaal* (2000). The concept of common school system mentioned here refers to 'Lokshala' or people's school which is founded by the state. Here each local community runs its own complex of elementary schools and high schools with provision of equal rights for all children. Sadgopal constituted the Bharatiya Gyan Vigyan Jatha (BGVJ) in 1991 which provided the forum for articulating the demand for 'lokshala' in collaboration with local communities. The endeavour brought together those working in the fields of education, health and technology. Anil Sadgopal was the convener. This was closely connected with the All India People's Science Jatha which involved 50,000 villages and several towns. The conference was held in 1994 in which more than 1000 delegates participated. One of the outcomes of this conference was the initiation of the 'lokshala' process in 1995. Lokshala combined academics and activism geared towards institutional transformation as part of social change. With support from the University Grants Commission, the BGVJ set up Advance Field Laboratories in at least 10 states out of which 4 lay in the north-eastern part of the country. The Advance Field Laboratories were engaged in preparing the ground for the development of 'lokshalas'. Here, people's perception was taken note of in determining priorities which provided the basis for intervention.

'Lokshalas' emerge as one of the viable resolution of the private-government schools dichotomy. Often government schools suffer from lack of funds, and red tapism. They are treated as places where children who are too young to work with their parents are deposited. These children are pulled out of the schools soon after they are able to contribute to family income. Those who are better off prefer to send their children to private schools. The dropout rate is high, expenditure on them is considered to be uneconomical and wasteful. Not surprising then, several of them are on the verge of closing down. In fact, government schools seem to have failed in both Madhya Pradesh and Kerala. The lokshalas acquire an edge over both government and private schools in that they involve not only scholars but also local people. Further, they are not governed by a singular, uniform pattern, rather, each one is specific to the social and geographical environment in which it is situated. It is hoped that 'Lokshalas' would attract more and more students to acquire knowledge that they will be able to put to use to enrich their lives.

#### Box 11.4: Lokshala experience in Jahanabad, Bihar

“The group worked on the premise that no effective intervention would be possible without understanding the political and socioeconomic context. They also underscored the need to win the support of the community and to build an interface between ground realities and educational ‘experts.’ Jahanabad is a district particularly prone to violence because of radical peasant movements. There was police presence in most schools, which was hardly conducive to their functioning. One initiative taken by the group led to the removal of policemen from schools. Local young men were encouraged to work on a project documenting local history. Some initiatives were also taken to raise questions on the appointment of part-teachers. This had some impact on policy makers.

Perhaps more important were the long-term changes in attitudes and ideas that had been generated by these activities. Education is now recognized as a political issue in the area and has generated a lot of debate within the community. People now understand the difference between education and mere literacy, and can raise these issues with their political representatives, like Members of Parliament, and Members of Legislative Assembly. Social activists have developed a deeper understanding of the political context and have created a space of critical analysis of the existing situation. This process has opened up avenues to search for alternative educational strategies in a region which is undergoing violent eruption” (Louis, [www.hurights.or.jp](http://www.hurights.or.jp)).

#### C) Poverty and Education: The Samanwaya Vidyapith

Dwarko Sundrani established the Samanwaya Ashram in 1954 at Bodhgaya. Here, apart from helping Musahar and Bhokta communities to fight illness, poverty, and violence, he undertook the task of educating the children belonging to these communities in a residential school. Here, development work is carried out for the benefit of families. Their children are educated in the Samanwaya Vidyapith following which they are established on the land that is given to their families. The purpose is to hold back the educated people in villages. This is important because there is widespread migration of educated villagers to urban areas. Now, it is not possible for each one of them to secure a job in cities. This leads to depression and frustration. Education in Samanwaya Vidyapith is entwined with activities such as cultivation, dairy farming, repair work, motor winding, and jeep driving. No certificates, degrees are awarded, rather, the thrust is on learning and developing the potential to earn. Children are taught language, arithmetic, and science in a way that ties up with growing vegetables and fruits, making compost and maintaining health and hygiene.

The approach of Samanwaya Vidyapith is two fold. It seeks to engage the students and teachers in village development work e.g. growing vegetables, disinfecting drinking water, and making compost manure from waste in villages. At the same time it takes complete responsibility of the social, and financial condition of the children as they grow up. No wonder then, children admitted at the age of 5 years grow up to be self-reliant and fully prepared to undertake manual work with a sense of pride. The Vidyapith takes upon itself the task of marrying these children after completion of education and of setting them up in villages. Equally important to note is the fact that religious harmony and cooperation prevails and are instilled in children of the Vidyapith. In the words of Sundrani (1998:38), “Samanwaya means harmony. The objective of this institution is to bring harmony. At present we are passing through a period of transition which is unprecedented in the annals of human history....There is a necessity to give education in harmony. Harmony can be established only through mutual understanding. Mutual understanding can be

created through service to one another. The Samanwaya Vidyapith is working on these lines. The poor children are being educated without any caste, colour, creed or religious considerations. They work together, and they serve together and they live together. The haves are sharing with the have-nots.... The Samanwaya Vidyapith stands for the education of the masses and not of the classes. It is through education that we can establish a classless and casteless society, which is the need of the hour.”

#### d) Rural Context of Primary Education

The Indian Institute of Education developed an action-research project, “Promoting Primary and Elementary Education’ for which the acronym PROPEL was adopted. The scope of this project extended to 137 villages. The basic assumption upon which PROPEL was founded was that a successful education system needs to relate itself to the needs and convenience of local communities basing itself on their lifestyle. Failure to establish the belongingness of children to the community in the educational system is a major reason for discontent with the system of schooling. PROPEL has been selected by UNESCO as a mobilizing showcase project which demonstrates a repeatable alternative which makes primary education accessible to all the children. Its importance is enhanced by the fact that it gives due regard to people’s lifestyle and their expectations.

#### Box 11.5: Significant aspects of PROPEL

“The culture-specific aspects of the PROPEL project are: (a) curriculum, which emphasizes (i) free scope to recite folk tales, sing traditional songs, and hold conversations about daily experiences, (ii) language and mathematics, beginning with local language and ways of calculation, leading to progressive assimilation of expected levels of learning of ‘standard’ language and mathematics, (iii) understanding of nature through exploration, analytical discussion, and reasoned argument, (iv) developing aesthetic sensitivity through observation, appreciation and use of colour, shape, sound, rhythm, with a view to fashioning of plastic and graphic art works in an untutored manner related to the learner’s natural surroundings, (v) health and hygiene in daily life, (vi) physical and mental relaxation through simple yogasanas, and (vii) explorations, with the help of the family and community elders, in local history and geography for discovering their relevance to local conditions and to the needs of local development; (b) class-climate for collaborative learning through verbal and non-verbal communication by means of (i) a circular, face-to-face seating arrangement in which the instructor too is included, (ii) shared learning materials which reflect the cultural ethos of non-acquisitiveness and unselfishness, (iii) songs and skits based on the community’s environmental and cultural contexts, (iv) learning to make speeches on local subjects, and (v) group work for participatory ‘peer-group’ learning along with regeneration of the individualized but non-competitive, stress-free pedagogy of pre-British indigenous character” Bapat and Karandikar (1998: 44-45).

Teachers in PROPEL are those, who belonging to the community, remain accountable to it. They tend the children with much affection and concern. It is ensured that a Village Education Committee is set up by each Gram Panchayat. This committee makes sure that the culture-friendly learning system is maintained without lapses. Pupils from several learning centres (referred to by them as *Apla Varg* meaning, ‘our class’) meet once in about 165 days to participate in Children’s Fair in which they not only sing, play games, present dramas, and tell stories but also engage in taking tests in language and mathematics which greatly demystifies the examination process even as confidentiality of performance gets exploded. The fair provides a relaxed environment for examination. It is found that girls perform better in curricular

studies, social skills, and understanding of environment than boys. They particularly enjoy reasoning exercises and simple experiments in science.

PROPEL has provided a means to bridge the gap between knowledge acquired by children as members of the community and that imparted in state-run schools. The expectations of the users of primary education in state run schools are seldom enfolded in the curriculum and pedagogy which creates a situation in which the full potential of the child is not tapped. The parents are not able to understand either the content or the relevance of what is taught to the children. The result is that many of them withdraw their children from such schools. The children are only too happy to return to the familiar familial environment. PROPEL obviated this problem by attending to cultural parameters in rural primary education, more so in the case of dropouts and of those who were never enrolled in the formal system of education. It is believed that this kind of education would preserve the culture and value system of the people.

### Reflection and Action 11.2

Do you think innovations in education at the grass-roots are worthwhile?  
Discuss with your co-learners at the study centre.

## 11.6 Conclusion

It is evident that the scope of education is no longer confined to the teaching-learning process in schools. In fact, the role of school in society is subject of discussion as much as the social context and content of education. It is being realized that meaningful education is not one that ensures economic security rather one that leads to the flowering of the complete potential of children and prepares them to lead a life of fulfillment. The foundations of this aspect of education were laid by several thinkers — Paulo Freire, Gandhi and others about whom you have read in earlier units. Here we have seen how traditional vision of education can be integrated with the modern system of education.

## 11.7 Further Reading

Naik, Chitra. 1998. "Prologue". In B.N. Saraswati (ed). *The Cultural Dimension of Education*. New Delhi: IGNC and D. K. Printworld

Rampal, A. 2000. Education for Human Development in South Asia. *Economic and Political Weekly*, July 22: 2523-2531

Sadgopal, A. 2000. *Shiksha mein Badlav ka Savaal — Samaajik Anubhavan se Neeti Tak*. Granth Shilpi