

Education as means of Emancipation

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A Report

The materialist doctrine concerning the changing of circumstances and upbringing forgets that circumstances are changed by men and that it is essential to educate the educator himself. This doctrine must, therefore, divide society into two parts, one of which is superior to society.

The coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-changing can be conceived and rationally understood only as revolutionary practice.

Thesis on Feuerbach by Karl Marx (1845)' mentioned by Carsten Krinn in the seminar

RLS, one of the Germany's biggest institution for civic and political education, organised a seminar titled – 'Education as means of emancipation' on 10th February 2015 in New Delhi to bring together some positive examples of civic education strengthening people's action towards social transformation. Education has been an essential part of left movement across the world. RLS is committed to promote critical analysis and organise political education and disseminate knowledge about social relations in a globalised, unjust and hostile world, shared Gabriele Kickut, Deputy Director of RLS-CID, Berlin, in her opening remarks.

Education must not become a mirror image of capitalist organisation, and its value systems. It needs to foster knowledge that looks at the possibilities of another world - free of exploitation, where creativity and imagination are not bound by the needs of the system and are not stifled by its limits. It is a world beyond classrooms, a world that teaches the art of dissent and hope, argues Ravi Kumar from South Asian University, Delhi. He further elaborated on revolutionary critical pedagogy and role of critical educators to delineate the agenda for subversion. It is important to create solidarities by destroying teacher-student hierarchies and democratise the classroom as against neo-liberal authoritarianism. The subversion of politics of fragmentation can be addressed by establishing educational sites as sites of production. The curriculum framework needs to be continuously contested by adding your readings in the class. The idea of education can be subverted by connecting with the people and their lives and bringing them within the education system. Connecting with community will politicise not only them but also the teachers and students.

Party-linked educational efforts based on left-wing dialogues as thinking factories highlighting new political issues, fostering new alternatives and transformational process as well as strengthening tools for political action play an important role in a democratic society, says Dagmar Enkelmann, Chairwoman for RLS, Berlin.



Public relations work in political sphere especially in the digital world and special focus on women and migrants should be an integral part of the transformational process.

State plays a critical role in education today. It decides for us what kind of education one can have, who will study what and till what extent, says Shankar Singh and Nikhil Dey from Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS), Rajasthan. Now-a-days real education takes place outside the classrooms. It comes with the realisation that whatever we learn in the schools does not make any sense in the real world neither does it really help in getting jobs for the majority of the population. That is why we, at MKSS, are fighting at the grassroots level for the right to ask questions. Everybody should have access to the information and capacity to ask questions because emancipation starts the moment one starts asking questions.



Bringing forward the experience of worker's education, Dithi Bhattacharya from Centre for Workers Management (CWM), Delhi, presented that the left movement failed in connecting the question of larger political issues with the problems in the shop-floor. There is a need of a new participatory method located at the workplace but capable of addressing larger political issues.

Nandita Dhawan from School of Women Studies, Jadavpur University, Kolkata, presented an interesting outcome of their research project on the culture and politics of worker's organisations with respect to auto-rickshaw operators. During the consultation and dissemination workshops with the auto-rickshaw operators, the researchers realised that it has created a new energy among the respondents and they are now not only facilitating further research but at the same time are trying to reorganise themselves to undertake further actions irrespective of their trade union memberships. This illustrates nicely that the educators can also be educated.

MayDay Café and book-shop presents an ideal space where a young people can be introduced to left ideas. Introducing the MayDay Cafe as a space where intellectual nourishment can happen along with games and entertainment, Sudhanva Deshpande from MayDay Bookshop and Jana Natya Manch (JANAM), Delhi, describes the challenges and the potential opportunities it has.

Foundation for Agrarian Studies (FAS) has a unique quality of engaging with youth in their field-research on agrarian relations in India. The young scholars, in the process learn to deconstruct the rural realities resulting in a radical reorientation of their socio-political understanding. Deepak, a young scholar from FAS, Bangalore, shared how these field-research compels them to ask questions and seek answers. This scholar-activist is the biggest asset the

Foundation have and in doing so FAS never compromise with the rigor of the research, claimed Madhura Swaminathan from FAS.

The seminar brought forward some good examples of civic education strengthening people's action towards social transformation. There is a continuous need to rethink the educational framework. New methods or alternative pedagogy is not only about learning but also for self-change, which should not be just limited to individuals but is also applicable to organisations. Many a times, seminars have a tendency to dump knowledge and information but what is more important is to ensure a constructive discourse and exchange, says Carsten Krinn of RLS South Asia, Delhi. He concluded the seminar by sharing some of his observations of political education in South Asia and emphasised on whom we relate to in our educational programmes – is the one who is already converted or are we able to reach out to others and say something new. Many times ideas remain at the level of theory only but more important is to convert them to practical, constructive models like 'health mapping' conducted by CWM. Here the question is not about the good intention but of the capacity to convert it practical models. If we don't dare to change ourselves and our organisations in the learning process, we will never be able to win the battle, said Carsten Krinn.

The seminar was followed by the reception-cum-farewell of Carsten Krinn, the Resident Representative of RLS, South Asia, as well as the welcome of Stefan Mentschel, the new resident representative of the New Delhi office. Carsten established the office in New Delhi, in 2010. His contributions towards the left and progressive politics has been significant and is highly appreciated by the partners and left actors in the region. He is succeeded by Stefan Mentschel who has a long experience of working in the region primarily as a journalist and as an expert. Carsten Krinn in his farewell speech expressed his gratitude to all his companions and gifted a book titled 'Rebuilding the Left' by Martha Harnecker to the designate Resident Representative. Stefan will formally take the charge of RLS New Delhi office from 2nd March 2015.

