

**Educational and Social Reforms and Reconstructionism to Address Social Issues for Contemporary Societies in Theodore Brameld's on *Education as Power***

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**Abstract**

Social and educational reforms emphasize the addressing of social questions and a quest to create a better society and worldwide democracy. Reconstructionist and educators focus on a curriculum that highlights social reform as the aim of education. The curriculum involves students in school and community life to help them become adults who can reconstruct and improve contemporary societies. Brameld's philosophy of education is most useful in reforming the exploited contemporary societies. He is not the first to come up with this idea, but he is one of the first to support it publicly. In response to the existing crisis of the period, he believes reconstructionism in schools is the solution to the problem. In his book, *Education as Power*, he clearly outlines the two major roles of reforms, Education has two major roles: to transmit culture and to modify culture. When American culture is in crisis, the second of these roles—that of modifying and innovating—becomes more important. Educational, economic, or social reform depends on the education ratio, Brameld affirmed is a crisis philosophy; the reconstructionist is “very clear as to which road mankind should take, but he or she is not at all clear as to which road it will take”.

**Keywords:** Democracy, Curriculum, Contemporary societies, Reform, Reconstruct

**Introduction**

Theodore Brameld (20 January 1904 – 1987) is a philosopher and educator who supports the educational philosophy for social economic and educational reforms of exploited communities. He explored the conditions and issues of exploited societies and the necessity of education through his book *Education as Power*. It was originally published on 1 August 1965, his philosophy originated in 1928 when he enrolled as a doctoral student at the University of Chicago in the field of philosophy where he trained under the progressive philosopher and politician, T.V. Smith. After becoming intrigued by John Dewey's philosophy of education, Brameld developed his theory of schools being the ultimate source to bring about political and social change in his book *Education as Power*. During his

long career as a philosopher and educator, Brameld held lectures in the United States and across the globe. He became the author of more than a dozen books that have to do with his philosophy of reconstruction and reform. In 1945, he wrote *Minority Problems in the Public Schools* which confronted social unfairness like prejudice, discrimination, and economic exploitation in schools. Continuing his philosophy, he published *Patterns of Educational Philosophy: A Democratic Interpretation* in 1950 which helped cultivate his view of four philosophies of education: essentialism, perennialism, progressivism, and reconstructionism. He decided that of the four philosophies, reconstructionism was the philosophy that responded best to the period. It is his major theme that only the power of education is sufficient to

control the other powers and reform the societies. According to Brameld issues of society bother the progress of the society but education solves all problems and conditions of the people. He focuses on the plasticity of cultures, pointing out the illiterate people who cannot complete their basic needs. He believes that school helps the individual not only develop socially, but to learn how to be responsible and literate citizens as well. The central idea is that education reflects a transformative force in society. He leading and promoting reconstructionism, argues that education not only gains knowledge but actively develops and reforms the society to address social issues and increase democratic values.

There are major themes explored in the book *Education as Power* by Theodore Brameld, these are –

- 1) Role of education for social, economic reform and reconstructionism
- 2) Democratic and value-based education
- 3) Empowerment through education and knowledge
- 4) The role of educators is to encourage people to question the authority about their problems
- 5) To reform the social issues and social injustice in contemporary societies
- 6) Education is the most useful tool for social change
- 7) Education is helpful not only in transmitting culture but also in modifying the culture

About 500 years before Christ, a Chinese Philosopher, Kuan Tzu (551-479 B.C), rightly declared, ‘If you plan for a year, plant a seed. If for ten years plant a tree, if for two hundred years, teach the people.’

When you sow a seed once, you will reap a single harvest, when you teach people, you will reap a hundred harvests. We are looking at the world and can claim that the nations and cultures committed to education have made greater strides in both intellectual and social growth. Education plays a vital role in shaping our lives in society. It is a fact that education is a catalyst of social reconstruction. In today’s world, natural resources or military strength do not determine the space of a nation’s progress. Education does. Education is about raising the confidence of an individual to think of a worthy dream and to translate that dream into reality by high-performance action. It is about opening up one’s mind to accept new ideas, to evaluate them, and to use them for progress. The concept of education and the system in Indian education will be discussed in the brief. Brameld (1904-1987) was another influential figure in inviting reconstructionism into the field of education. He initiated social reconstructionism in reaction to the realities of World War II. He has several important books such as “Towards a Reconstructed Philosophy of Education”, “Education as Power” and “Patterns of Educational Philosophy”. Osmon & Craver (1992) state their views on Brameld as “Brameld viewed reconstructionism as a crisis philosophy, not only in terms of education but of culture as well”.

Moreover, Kai (1994) argues that Brameld urged the prospective teacher not only to acquire professional knowledge but also to take responsibility for becoming a world citizen. Brameld consistently insisted that teacher education should consider and approach cultural issues and ways of exploring descriptive and normative cultural values.

## Objectives

1. To transform society for the better
2. To focus on social and educational reform
3. To improve society people should reflect on life rather than be isolated from it.
4. To cultivate curiosity and disposition through education for social reconstruction.
5. To solve the problem of contemporary societies and livelihood.
6. To develop the values of life or values promoting good conduct
7. To process of learning, teaching, and discussion in acquiring proper learned results of knowledge, skills, values, and beliefs.
8. To develop the individual's ability to contribute to society. The right to an education should be guaranteed to every member of society, regardless of their financial situation.

The term 'education' is utilized in the three senses knowledge, subject, and process. When we talk of education, we talk about education as a process. Education as a process will develop both the individual and the society to a higher and higher position of glory and cultural eminence. Education is a cautious effort and, as such, it has definite aims and objectives. Social and economic issues serve as determinants of educational objectives. In the process of social reconstruction, education plays a key role. The philosophy of social reconstruction emphasizes on the social questions and quest to create a better society as the aims of education. This paper

aims to understand the role of education in the process of social reconstruction in various phases of life and different segments of social conditions. Nigerian educationist Aderemi Olutola (1981) describes education as "a process of socialization, of change and innovation, of preservation and dissemination of social values and the total development of an individual from birth to death". In each society, the educational system is one of the most effective agencies of societal control, either in its static or in its dynamic aspect. Without committing ourselves to B. Russell's overstatement that "education is, as a rule, the strongest force on the side of what exists against fundamental change." It must be admitted that education is largely concerned with the transmission of the social and cultural heritage to the new generations, in this sense, it is a conservative agency. Kothari's report on Education and National Development aptly declares education is one of the main instruments of change especially when it is organized into a national system. Education has a great bearing on social structure, mode of living, thought and behavior patterns, and personality structure of individuals. Mahatma Gandhi rightly proclaimed, 'Education must be of a new type for the sake in creation of a New World. For human reforms, we have to rethink the system in education – not only in India but all over the world. The theory of social reconstruction is a firm belief that it is not only possible but imperative for the rational community to apply itself to the altering of faulty social situations and conditions and such altering is based on confidence in the ability of the thinking community to understand the reasons why social problems exist.

## Conclusion

Education has played an important role in social reconstruction in our country and it will continue to do so in the future as well. However, more is desired in this direction as social inequality will persist in our country. We need to provide easy access to education to the weaker sections of society, particularly to the poor, SCs and STs, minorities, and especially women and girls. Education is a prerequisite for progress and development. In India, education has been accorded high priority as an integral part of the country's development process. It is a grim situation that today we have more illiterates than our population was at the time. In our journey to social reconstruction, our first step should be in the area of education. In this connection, our education system for social reconstruction calls for at least five new linkages, firstly we should try to link our great and authentic past with the living present of existing realities and the

emerging future of goods and aspirations in the search for a national identity. Only then, do we know what kind of a person we should nurture through life-long education and what lifestyles and values should be projected and cultivated, secondly, a linkage between the urban elite and the rural people through educational opportunities. Thirdly, the youths need a closer sense of belonging and fuller involvement with the making of the larger society. Youth – --power and people power can together achieve development as tasks for a new quality of life. Fourthly, a linkage of science and spirituality implies that living traditions from the past should function along with the appropriate technologies of modern science that we choose wisely for our way of life. According to Theodore Brameld finally, formal education should be linked with the realm of practical work

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