

*Attempts to explain the failure of educational reforms in developing nations have the characteristic of descriptive checklists with the result that they do not discriminate between the more and the less significant causes. This paper discusses the reasons given for the failure of basic education in India under three categories and suggests that the third category which lists reasons arising out of the incongruities of education and other social institutions is more fundamental than the reasons in categories 1 and 2. A further analysis attempts to explain, on the basis of Rinehard Bendix's *Nation-Building and Citizenship*, the failure of basic education in the relationship of "public authority" (government) and the people.*

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Public Authority and Village Reconstruction: The Case of Basic Education in India

Some of the writings in the growing literature on the role of education in modernization have dealt with attempts to modify a part or the whole of an educational system. When such attempts for reform have failed (which have happened too often)¹, the proferred explanations for the failure have been depressingly similar: there was confusion among administrators and teachers about the objectives of the reform, financial support for the reform program was grossly inadequate, there were not sufficient numbers of truly dedicated and properly trained teachers etc. Often, the crucial weakness of these explanations has been that they did not answer the question: in a given case which explanations were more fundamental than others in explaining a failure? Unless case studies of the failure (or the success) of reform attempts in education differentiate between the more significant from the less significant causes, our understanding of the relationship of educational change to other social, political and economic changes will remain at a descriptive level.

In this case study, after briefly discussing the fundamental principles of basic education and the vicissitudes of the attempt by the Government of India to promote it, the reasons commonly given for the admitted failure² of this Gandhian scheme of education in India will be mentioned under three categories. Following this survey, the failure of basic educa-

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¹See, for example, several of the case studies including the one on India in R. Murray Thomas, *et al*, *Strategies for Curriculum Change: Cases from Thirteen Nations* (Scranton, Pa.: International, 1968).

²For one candid admission of failure see "Basic Education Can Succeed", in K. L. Shrimali *Education in Changing India* (London: Asia, 1965) pp. 254-256.

tion will be discussed in terms of the interaction between public authority — as embodied in ‘government’ — and the people in the villages.

Fundamental Principles of Basic Education

In October 1937 Mahatma Gandhi called a national conference before which he placed a new scheme of elementary education for India. The conference accepted most parts of the proposed scheme which came to be known as the Wardha scheme of basic education or *nai talim*. Gandhi, firmly believed that the place to start India’s reconstruction was in her villages. He repeatedly stressed that the villagers who felt helpless in the face of the overwhelming odds of life had to learn to help themselves and develop self-confidence and self-respect. Gandhi was strongly opposed to centralization, mechanization (which accompanied industrialization), urbanization, and representative politics on a mass-scale. His vision of a new India was based on thousands of self-sufficient and self-contained villages.³ The schools in these, as it were, cooperative village democracies would create in the younger generation the desire and the ability to serve the community. Thus Gandhi’s scheme of basic education had an organic tie with his vision of a new India.

The principles on basic education were not only based on such a vision but also grew out of Gandhi’s criticism of the existing system of education which he once put in the following words:

I am convinced that the present system of primary education is not only wasteful, but is positively harmful. Most of the boys are lost to their parents and to the occupation to which they are born. They pick up evil habits, affect the urban ways and get a smattering of something which may be anything but education.⁴

How will basic education prevent these harms?

It will be free and compulsory for seven years. (The number was later changed to eight).

The medium of instruction will be the mother tongue so that the English language as medium of instruction would not alienate the people from their own culture.

³“An ideal Indian village will be so constructed as to lend itself to perfect sanitation. It will have cottages with sufficient light and ventilation of material obtainable within a radius of five miles of it. The cottages will have courtyards enabling householders to plant vegetables for domestic use and to house their cattle. The village lanes and streets will be free of all available dust. It will have wells according to its needs and accessible to all. It will have houses of worship for all, also a common meeting place, a village common for grazing its cattle, a cooperative dairy, primary and secondary schools in which industrial education will be the central fact, and it will have panchayats for settling disputes. It will produce its own grains, vegetables and fruit, and its own [homespun material]. This is roughly my idea of a model village.” Louis Fischer, (ed), *The Essential Gandhi: An Anthology* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1962), p. 295.

⁴D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* (8 vols.), Vol. 4 (Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India, 1962), p. 191. Also see M. S. Patel, *The Educational Philosophy of Mahatma Gandhi* (Ahmadabad: Navjivan, 1956).

Education throughout these years will center round some form of manual and productive work related to a handicraft such as spinning, cabinet making, etc. Thus every child will learn a productive skill which he can use in his village life. In addition, all the children will learn to appreciate "the dignity of manual labor" which would eliminate one important basis for invidious caste distinctions.

Children will be spared the drudgery of learning school subjects by and for themselves. The subjects will be related to the handicraft as well as the child's physical and social environment. This is known as the principle of *correlation*. For example, after a couple of hours of spinning, the teacher asks, say, five children the length of the thread each one has spun. Taking advantage of the different lengths each child reports, the teacher discusses the concept of average. On an earlier occasion he would have taught linear measurement to the class in a similar fashion. On an appropriate future occasion, he will discuss conditions under which cotton grows or relate the properties of circles to the spinning wheel. Extending the same principle, the child learns the rules of hygiene in the context of cleaning his classroom or school.⁵ The principle of correlation rests on the psychological insight that active learning can be more interesting and relevant than passive learning.

By selling or bartering the products of children's manual labour basic schools can defray at least a portion of their costs. (This controversial idea was dropped despite strong theoretical arguments that the self-supporting feature would hasten the universal provision of elementary education).

Promotion and Decline of Basic Education

Although basic education was introduced on an experimental basis in the provinces in 1937, it was not actively promoted until after India's independence in 1947. From 1948 to 1956, a great deal of government energy at the federal level was expended to reform elementary education according to the principles of basic education. These efforts did not meet with success:⁶ compared to the rate at which new three-R-type schools were being established, very few new basic schools were opened; the conversion of traditional schools into basic schools fell far short of targets, and, observers noticed no significant differences between most basic and traditional schools in operation. The principles of basic education were also constantly challenged. Under these attacks, the proponents of basic education modified the principles to such an extent that by 1965 there

⁵For these and other examples, see Ministry of Education, Government of India *Syllabus for Basic Schools* (Delhi, 1950).

⁶Ministry of Education, Government of India, *Report of the Assessment Committee on Basic Education* (Delhi, 1956).

was hardly anything left to differentiate between the principles of basic education and those of modern elementary education in advanced nations.⁷

REASONS FOR THE FAILURE OF BASIC EDUCATION

The reasons usually advanced to account for the failure of basic education can be classified into three groups.

1. *Reasons based on the present state of elementary education in India*

The teachers and administrators who were to spearhead the reforms were often confused about the specific objectives of basic education under school conditions.⁸

As late as 1961, "the standard of general education required of a basic school teacher was not even high school pass" in several states and "the period of professional education was only one year in most areas."⁹ Poorly qualified and badly trained teachers could not deal imaginatively with the instructional problems associated with a new type of education. Finding the right type of teacher of handicrafts proved to be exceedingly difficult. Children had difficulty learning the crafts at the level expected of them, and, in view of the numbers involved, individual attention was impossible.¹⁰ Moreover, curriculum guides were often not available on time; the available ones were not of much constructive help. The administrative machinery also handicapped the progress of basic education. For example, "basic schools [were] supplied with ridiculously inadequate quantities of raw materials and equipment needed for productive work."¹¹ All of these factors adversely affected teacher and pupil morale.

The costs of establishing and maintaining basic schools were much higher than those of operating traditional schools.¹² The states were unable to meet these costs especially in light of the demand for, and rate of growth, of traditional elementary schools.¹³

2. *Reasons based on the relationship of the elementary level to other levels of education*

The existence of both traditional and basic schools at the elementary level created problems of integration for the second and third levels of

⁷N. V. Thirtha undertook a content analysis of, among other things, Government of India publications on basic education which ably documents this point. See his "A Comparative Study of Gandhi's Educational Ideas and the Government of India's Basic Education Programs — A Study in Values" (Stanford: Unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, 1959), pp. 310-311. See also note no. 19.

⁸Salamatullah, "Basic Education: Retrospect and Prospect," *The [Second] Indian Year Book of Education: Elementary Education* (New Delhi: National Council of Educational Research and Training), pp. 310-311.

⁹*Ibid.*, p. 314.

¹⁰J. P. Naik, *Elementary Education in India* (Bombay: Asia, 1966), pp. 39-40.

¹¹Salamatullah, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

¹²See the comparative table in Mohinder Singh "Ideology and Practice of Basic Education," *The Yearbook of Education* (London: Evans Brothers, 1957), p. 292.

¹³Salamatullah, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-309.

education which continued to emphasize academic education. One questionnaire study revealed that many high schools were unwilling to admit graduates of basic schools because of the suspicion that academic standards were low in these schools.¹⁴ As Dr. K. L. Shrimali, former Union Minister of Education, pointed out, successful graduates of basic schools could only go to post-basic schools which were not recognized by the universities.¹⁵

Basic teacher-training institutions had even more trouble than traditional teacher-training institutions in attracting people with high aptitudes and talents.¹⁶

Basic education was principally an attempt on the part of the Government of India to improve the quality of elementary education. State governments, however, had to heed the public clamour for more places at all levels of schooling. Thus there was a head-on clash between the claims of quality and quantity. State governments which have constitutional responsibility for school education and could ignore public pressure only at their electoral peril, opted for quantity although they continued to promote basic education, shall we say, in a mild fashion partly out of respect for the memory of its originator and partly to get their share of federal funds for promoting it. The net effect of this half-hearted promotion, of course, was that traditional elementary schools proliferated while basic schools made very slow progress. In the Indian context, the decision to concentrate on quantitative expansion may have been pedagogically sound as well. C. E. Beeby claims, on the basis of his experiences in New Zealand and Western Samoa, that "there is a recognizable progression in the life-history of most education systems and . . . one stage with its special characteristics is a necessary prelude to the stage that follows."¹⁷ If the traditional elementary schools are seen as belonging to Beeby's stage of "Formalism" (characterized by emphasis on 3R's, memorization, strict discipline, etc.) and basic schools are viewed as belonging to Beeby's stage of "meaning" (characterized by emphasis on understanding, variety of content, flexibility of teaching methods, etc.),¹⁸ then it could plausibly be argued that the spread of traditional elementary education must precede widespread attempts at qualitative improvements.¹⁹

¹⁴T. S. Avinashilingam Chettiar, "Birth and Growth of Basic Education (1937-61)," in *The [Second] Indian Year Book of Education: Elementary Education, op. cit.*, p. 79.

¹⁵K. L. Shrimali, "Evolving An Integrated Educational System," *Problems of Education in India* (Delhi, 1961), p. 37.

¹⁶Salamatullah, *op. cit.*, p. 314.

¹⁷See C. E. Beeby, "Stages of Growth of a Primary Education System," *Comparative Education Review*, Vol. VI, No. 1 (June, 1962), p. 2.

¹⁸*Ibid*, p. 11.

¹⁹Note the following statement: "We can fervently hope that after the Fifth plan, when the problem of universal education will have been mostly solved, the expansion of basic education as an improved type of elementary education would take place by leaps and bounds." Salamatullah, "Basic Education: Retrospect and Prospect," *The [Second] Indian Year Book of Education*.

3. *Reasons arising out of the incongruities of the basic education reform with the functions of other social institutions*

Incompatibility between the functions of any two major social institutions would create tension and affect the pace of change in at least one. The failure of basic education, in part, can be traced to several such tensions.

One of the many interesting contradictions of contemporary Hindu social life is that castes in the lower reaches of the hierarchy are taking over, as far as possible, the customs, rites and beliefs of the Brahmins which the Brahmins are busily discarding in favor of westernization. "As far as these castes are concerned, it looks as though [this process known as] Sanskritization is an essential preliminary to westernization."²⁰ Basic education, which was anchored in the notion of "dignified" manual labor would, therefore, be suspect to members of the so-called lower castes. This specific factor contributed to the general feeling associated with sanskritization, but which is not unique to India, that manual labor, as opposed to mental labor, is a mark of low social status. Since almost all basic schools were established in rural areas while urban areas continued to successfully resist such schools, rural people of "lower" castes (who also generally belonged to the lower classes) opposed basic education as an attempt to prevent their children from acquiring a lottery ticket for rising in the social ladder.²¹

There were implications in the Gandhian philosophy of basic education of returning to a golden age of the Hindus. This made non-Hindus somewhat apprehensive²² and non-cooperative in promoting basic education. (However, it is a matter of record that certain distinguished Muslim educators such as Dr. Zakir Hussain helped promote basic education from its inception).

In 1951, the federal government embarked on a series of national development plans whose goal was to raise the standard of living of the people through rapid industrialization. Basic education, on the other hand, had an organic relationship with Gandhi's vision of self-sufficient, cooperative village democracies based on a revitalized peasant economy. It should not be surprising that the people were wary of a national government which accepted a *gemeinschaft* approach in basic education while promoting in every other endeavor conditions which would create a *gessellschaft* in India.²³ It is important to note that, as pointed out earlier, the Government of India modified its approach as time went by. The modification,

²⁰M. N. Srinivas, "A Note on Sanskritization and Westernization," *Class, Status and Power*, (Second edition) R. Bendix and S. M. Lipset, editors (New York: Free Press, 1966), p. 557. Also see Ch. 1. "Sanskritization" in *Social Change in Modern India* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1966).

²¹Salamatullah, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

²²On Muslim opposition, see Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. 7, p. 177.

²³See Ferdinand Toennies "Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft," *Theories of Society*, Talcott Parsons *et al* editors (New York: Free Press, 1961), pp. 191-201.

of course, was in the direction of making basic education more *gessellschaft* oriented thereby implying that the *modernization of rural life* is more practical as well as preferable to a retreat to pre-industrial communitarianism. The contradictory approach of the national leadership in the early years of independence also indicates the agonizing ambivalence of India's westward-looking modernizers who nonetheless accept the idealized theory that in the hoary past India consisted of unified, self-regulating, village republics.²⁴ (It is, by the way, interesting that Gandhi wanted to use the relationship of education as an institution to other major institutions of society — a relationship which was established in the wake of industrialization — to make society into a pre-industrial albeit harmonious one.)

The established village elite could not be expected to cooperate willingly in ushering in a casteless, classless society. To mention this does not contradict the point made earlier about the resistance of so-called lower caste/class persons to basic education. On the contrary, it calls attention to the fact that when a reform is proposed from "the outside," it may be opposed at the local level by different — even antagonistic — factions for different reasons.

ASSOCIATIONS, AUTHORITIES, AND THE FATE OF REFORMS

All of the reasons²⁵ mentioned above are valid. However, as mentioned earlier, it is important to try to establish the *relative* validity of these reasons.

The reasons listed under categories 1 and 2 may be called "system reasons". They have to do primarily with the educational system itself. One of the interesting things that emerges from an examination of the literature on basic education in its early years is that the possibility of difficulties arising from unprepared teachers, poorly constructed syllabuses and so on was known to the initiators of the reform.²⁶ Despite the likelihood of failure, the reformers moved ahead in the hope that difficulties could be overcome by a government which succeeded in arousing the people's enthusiasm for national reconstruction.²⁷ This hope was not realized and basic education failed despite the fact that it contained many valuable insights on the causes of India's underdevelopment.²⁸ Why was

²⁴Rinehard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (New York: Wiley, 1964) p. 240.

²⁵Certain other reasons which appear in the literature (e.g.: there wasn't sufficient evaluative research on the effectiveness of basic education) have been omitted as relatively irrelevant in the Indian context.

²⁶See Tendulkar, *op. cit.*, Vol. 4, pp. 185-203; Vol. 7, pp. 177-179 for some expressions of concern.

²⁷See Bureau of Education, India, *Proceeding of the Educational Conference held at New Delhi in January, 1948* (Delhi, 1949) and *Proceedings of the Thirteenth, Fourteenth and Fifteenth meetings* (1947, 1948, 1949) of the Central Advisory Board of Education for some expressions of this hope.

²⁸For a credible defence of Gandhi's economic ideas see Kenneth Rivet, "The Economic Thought of Mahatma Gandhi," *British Journal of Sociology*, vol. 10 (1959), pp. 1-15.

this hope not realized? In searching for the answer it begins to become apparent that the failure of basic education is similar to the failure of several central-government initiated reforms in other levels of education and other sectors of action. Three well-known examples will suffice: the abortive attempt to create multi-purpose schools at the secondary level; the total bankruptcy of prohibition, and, the failures of many community development projects.²⁹ The recognition of a common pattern in these failures makes it necessary for us to go beyond the educational system itself for an explanation. If such an explanation can be shown to have validity, then, the system reasons may indeed become the trees so that one misses the proverbial forest. Any such explanation, of course, must accommodate the reasons listed in category 3. Everyone of the reasons in category 3 could be seen as differences in perception about basic education between the ordinary villagers, religious groups and the established local elite on the one hand and the federal government on the other. It is this discernible commonality of differential perceptions which leads us to seek the explanation of basic education's failure in the relationship of "public authority" — as embodied in national government — and the people. In doing so, I shall draw heavily on Chapters 1 and 7 of Rinehard Bendix's *Nation-Building and Citizenship*.³⁰

To begin with, a distinction must be made between formal *authority* which entails relations of command and obedience and customarily or voluntarily established *associations* which involve "relations based on affinities of ideas or interests"³¹ or, in short, state and society. The link between state and society is usually maintained by a *political community* which is defined as a relationship in which the rulers and the ruled — the authorities and the associations — share understandings concerning the exchange of private rights for public gain. These understandings are based on some measure of agreement.³²

Throughout history, political communities have mediated the relationship between state and society regardless of the size of either. When a state embarks on a program of development, this new fact changes the existing nature of the state/society relationship. In India, for instance, the state "counts on, or hopes for, much more than the rather passive compliance or confidence which helps to sustain a policeman's authority or a bank's credit."³³ The success of India's plans for social and economic development depends in considerable part upon the degree to which

²⁹See Mathew Zachariah, "India: Government Strategies for Secondary-Education Reform, 1952-65", in *Strategies for Curriculum Change, op. cit.*, pp. 190-193; David C. Potter, "Bureaucratic Change in India", in *Asian Bureaucratic Systems Emergent from the British Imperial Tradition*, Ralph Braibanti, editor (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1966), pp. 187-193.

³⁰Rinehard Bendix, *Nation-Building and Citizenship* (New York: John Wiley, 1964). There is no implication that Bendix would necessarily approve of the particular line of reasoning developed in the following pages.

³¹*Ibid.*, p. 15.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 19.

³³*Ibid.*, p. 265.

the Indian people respond to the incentives and opportunities provided by the centrally directed drive toward modernization. Central direction is essential in order to overcome the deep divisions that characterize Indian society.

In view of the existence of the deep divisions, the question arises: how did the central government hope to overcome these divisions in its attempt to promote reforms such as basic education? The answer is that it attempted to promote reforms through administrative means which, by themselves, were grossly inadequate in the Indian context.

A historical perspective is necessary to explain that answer. The federal government leadership, immediately after Indian independence consisted of what we may, with considerable reservation, call a modernizing elite.

The reservation arises partly on theoretical and partly on empirical grounds. The theoretical problem is whether in maintaining the distinction between state and society (as is done in this paper), the fact that the state and its actions are also products of the forces arising from the social structure is being ignored. The federal government leadership, as will be shown later, belongs to the upper castes and/or upper classes. This fact must be kept in mind in any complete discussion of the federal leadership as a modernizing elite. I have chosen to underemphasize it in our present discussion (as I have *not* done in other discussions)³⁴ because in promoting basic education — regardless of the rights and wrongs of doing so — the federal government was *acting* as a modernizing agent. The empirical problem arises from the preceding statement. It would be legitimate to ask whether it was acting sincerely or simply as a sop to the determined Gandhians and so on.

In ideal-typical terms, this modernizing elite was, in one sense, a continuation of those upper stratum Indians of the nineteenth century who learned the English language and western knowledge under British rule. The acquisition of western learning separated this elite in its *weltanschauung* and style of life from the rest of Indian society. If, in one sense, this elite was a continuation of western-educated Indians, in another sense it was part of the independence movement which swept the country in the first half of the twentieth century. It shared, in a general sense, the vision of a socially just and economically rejuvenated India which inspired the independence movement. It was also able to achieve a certain identification with the ordinary people through the link that Gandhi, as charismatic leader of the movement, provided. In the case of basic education, for instance, several upper caste or upper class India were able to associate themselves with it despite its organic tie to the vision of a casteless and classless India. But Gandhi died in 1948. As Bendix says:

³⁴As in my paper "The Resiliency of Academic Secondary Education in India" *Comparative Education Review* vol. XIV (June 1970), pp. 152-161.

His combination of reforms which could enlist modernists and traditionalists under his banner, was too esoteric a creation to provide an enduring basis for compromise among . . . warring factions of the independence movement.³⁵

Gandhi's leadership had not removed but had put a gloss over the deep divisions within the independence movement. These divisions became prominent after his death. Also, with Gandhi's death, the modernizing elite and the masses lost the special contact his leadership had provided although it is fair to claim that the elite, led by Nehru who still had a (different) kind of mass appeal, did not recognize this loss until much later. (Gandhi had unfortunately made no attempt to institutionalize this contact.)

What were the divisions which characterized the independence movement? Without in any way pretending to be comprehensive, this paper will focus on three: (a) the modernizing elite whose claim to elite status was primarily based on western education, (b) the established elite at the local level whose status was well-grounded on caste and wealth and (c) the masses. In terms of locus, after independence, the modernizing elite, as previously mentioned, was most visible and most numerous at the federal leadership level; the established elite and the masses were in the villages.³⁶

If in a society, there is a strong and broad political community — that is, if the area of shared understanding between authorities and associations is large — then the authorities can reasonably expect associations to carry out administrative commands. But this is precisely what is difficult to count on or observe in India. Due to the strength of the caste system, the relationship between the local community and government is a particularly acute hiatus. As Bendix says:

Almost a century ago Sir Henry Maine pointed out that this difference was due to the absence in India of the rule of law in the sense in which the rule is understood in the Western tradition. Laws for us are *commands* which political *sovereigns* address to the subjects of a country. As citizens we have an *obligation* to abide by the laws of our country and are threatened by *sanctions* if we do not. Particular members of the community possess *rights* in so far as they are invested with the power to draw down sanctions on neglect or breaches of duty.³⁷

Maine's observation that it is impossible to apply the italicized terms to the customary law under which Indian villages had lived for centuries still has sufficient validity. Thus the shared understanding that exists between the federal government as a modernizing elite which accepts and counts on the rule of law in the western sense on one side and the village leadership as well as people who have lived by customary law on the other is minimal. A good deal of the federal government's difficulty in promoting successfully certain reforms can be attributed to the lack of a strong political community as defined earlier.

³⁵Bendix, *op. cit.*, p. 243.

³⁶Two limitations of this approach are acknowledged: the category "masses" being so broad probably conceals more than it reveals; the state-level leadership is by-passed although a case can be made that it represents or is part of the established elite, except in Kerala from 1957-59.

³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 226.

Under these circumstances, administrative efforts initiated at the federal level to bring about changes at the local — in this instance, rural — level could succeed only under one of two conditions: either the established elite had to support these efforts or the federal government had to organize the ordinary villagers and maintain a continuing liaison with them which would bypass the established elite. Neither, of course, occurred.

It would have been naive to expect the willing cooperation of the established elite at the village level — where most of the basic schools were opened — in undermining its own position. In fact, the elite which is extremely well-represented in village *panchayats* (councils),³⁸ could be counted on to thwart such efforts, and, in addition, to make itself the beneficiary of any federal government funds provided for village reconstruction as has happened on numerous occasions.³⁹

It would have been unreasonable to expect the federal government to bypass the established elite at the state and local level to organize the ordinary villages. That would be a revolutionary action. The modernizing elite which is represented at the federal level, be it remembered, also come from the upper strata of Indian society. Although it differs from the established elite in that it desires social and economic development, it wants such development in an evolutionary and not in a revolutionary fashion.

Thus, the federal government which wants modernization is administratively dependent on the established elite to carry forward the program; it seeks to steer forward between the Scylla of revolution and the Charybdis of the status quo but as in the case of basic education, it has so far ended up impaling program after program on Charybdis.

Villagers, even illiterate ones, are not ignorant of the ways of the world. As Max Weber pointed out:

Peasants become "dumb" only where they . . . face a presumably strange, bureaucratic machine . . . of a great state, or where they are abandoned as serfs to landlords, as happened in Egypt, Mesopotamia, and in the Hellenist and late Roman states.⁴⁰

Villagers will treat as so much mumbo-jumbo the rhetoric about the glorious possibilities of basic education until they see concrete measures being taken to change their conditions of living. Until then, the federal government would be hard pressed to enlist public cooperation for rural reforms initiated by it whether it be to dig new wells, to firm up dirt roads or to improve education. This suggests that the inability of the government to mobilize the ordinary people is perhaps the crucial reason for the

³⁸*Ibid*, p. 286-288.

³⁹*Ibid*, pp. 277, 280. See also M. R. Haswell, *Economics of Development in Village India* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 51; Sugata Dasgupta, *Social Work and Social Change: A Case Study in Indian Village Development* (Beacon: Horizon, 1968), p. 191.

⁴⁰Quoted in Bendix, *Op. cit*, p. 264.

failure of efforts such as basic education which are related to village reconstruction.

To say this is not to deny the great importance of the administrative (whether they be educational-administrative or administrative in the general sense) reasons that could be advanced to account for the failure of any government-initiated reform for rural India. No one who looks at the task of administratively reaching 840,033 rural communities in which hundreds of millions of Indians live⁴¹ can fail to be impressed by the staggering magnitude of the task. However, concentrating on administrative reasons, it must be repeated, is analagous to concentrating on the trees that one misses the wood altogether. Administrative problems arise out of a milieu which must be analyzed to pave the way for a more fundamental understanding of social problems.

At this point, we might go beyond the case study itself. If statements about new nations such as India having to achieve in decades the degree of development that most western nations have achieved in centuries are sincere, then, mass mobilization is a *sine qua non*. If such a goal is viewed as utterly unrealistic, then, it would be more honest to give up such statements and hope that *in the long run* democratic mechanisms such as the popular ballot will bring about needed changes,⁴² as indeed many serious students of modernization in developing countries have begun to claim.

At the outset of this paper, there was an implicit plea that those of us interested in the role of education in development should abandon descriptive (low level) patterned explanations focussing only on the educational system itself to account for the failure of attempted educational reforms and search for conceptual (higher level) patterned explanations which take account of more than educational phenomena. My search for the latter kind of explanation led me to (a) recognize a pattern in governmental failures in different kinds of reform activities which (b) led me to seek an explanation in the nature of the relationship between public authority and people in India. I arrived at the thesis that, of the three categories of reasons discussed in this paper, the third category which lists reasons arising out of the incongruities of education and other social institutions are more fundamental than the reasons listed in categories 1 and 2. Furthermore, in this particular case, the failure of basic education can perhaps most adequately be explained in terms of the relationship of government and the people. To say this, however, is not to identify *one* critical variable which we can manipulate post-haste and produce desired results. Social phenomena are much too complex for that kind of manipulation. Even if a government were able to mobilize the masses, problems will remain. (Hence the acknowledgement of the

⁴¹*Ibid*, p. 256.

⁴²*Ibid*, p. 296. See in this connection John Vaizey's comments in *The Challenge of Aid to Newly Developing Countries* (OECD Policy Conference on Economic Growth and Investment in Education, 1961), p. 84.

importance of administrative reasons). Indeed the quality and the manner of mass mobilization would also be important as the peasant resistance to collective farming in the Soviet Union teaches anyone who cares to learn. After allowing for all this, it must be said that a government which has been able to mobilize the masses for national reconstruction will be facing, in the words of Oscar Lewis, problems of hope and not problems of despair.