

# Looking Further Ahead

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*The need to separate the educational function from the grading, qualifying and selection functions is necessary. The pedagogy of the rich countries has only confused and misdirected the educational practices of the developing countries. A new pedagogy has to be developed to meet the needs and solve the problems of the people of the Third World. Some elements of the new pedagogy are contained in the concepts of non-formal education and life-long education. The new education should not be time-bound, space-bound but lifelong and integrated.*

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Our culture attaches an overwhelming importance to education as a factor which determines the success of an individual and the well-being of a nation. It has instilled in our minds a faith in the efficacy of education as the major determining factor for economic and social development. In this respect, education was considered to be an "investment in human resources" and it was believed that such an "investment" would solve most of the economic and social problems in developing countries. This optimistic faith in the ability of education to perform the miracle of transforming an underdeveloped nation to a developed nation went unchallenged till recent times. However, many developing nations are today showing grave concern regarding the validity of this assumption.

Many countries have experienced difficulties in making education relevant and meaningful to the needs of pupils and in matching education by the employment opportunities available to the majority of the pupils who receive it. The undue optimism placed in education has resulted in the generation of a relentless pressure for expansion of facilities for secondary and higher education, the creation of fierce competition for places for higher education especially in the more lucrative professional fields and for the limited number of jobs available to suit the high academic qualifications. The result of such trends has been the tremendous increase in the cost of education and a rapid growth in educated unemployment.

In the above context it is clear that changes in the structure and content

of education alone are not sufficient to solve the major problems facing developing nations. More specifically, changes in the school curriculum, on which much emphasis was laid in educational reforms of recent times all over the world will have little impact on society unless such changes are accompanied by more fundamental changes in socio-economic attitudes and practices. Foremost amongst them are changes in social value systems and job aspirations discussed in detail elsewhere. The need to expand and diversify the economy has also been emphasised on all occasions, where this problem has been discussed. It is worthwhile discussing another aspect which has begun to receive the attention of educational planners in recent times. This is the need to separate the educational function from the grading, qualifying and selection functions.

## Unjustifiable importance to academic qualification

In developing countries, educational systems have been planned and selection for secondary and higher education has been done on the basis of certain basic assumptions which have remained unchallenged till recent times. The main assumption was that there was a certain level of general education needed for a given job which must be achieved before the specific skills for that job could be acquired. This belief gave an unjustifiable importance to academic educational qualifications in job-recruitment. A further implication of this belief which had a devastating effect on school education was that the qualifying function tended to be-

come exalted at the expense of the educational function. Educational qualifications and not real and meaningful education emerged as the major determinant of success in life. The most damaging effect arising from the above situation was that academic achievement tests were considered as the only acceptable tools of selection for higher and professional education. It was accepted without argument that academic achievement tests were just, valid and efficient criteria for predicting success both in academic and higher professional fields in education. It is only during the past few years that educational planners and administrators in developing countries have begun to question the validity of the assumptions regarding pre-service qualifications for a job and achievement test performance for selection for higher education. As a result of the above assumptions, learning has deviated from its major intended objective—as a means of acquiring general 'life skills' and 'job skills' to that of simply acquiring 'qualifications' and thereafter a job.

Such a situation has grave implications especially for a developing nation of the Third World. Firstly, the function of education is reduced to that of an expensive means of distinguishing the academically more able from the less able, hoping that such a distinction will enable the nation to develop its manpower most effectively. Secondly, the kind of knowledge, skills and attitudes imparted by such a process have little relevance to socio-economic development. Thirdly, the academic pre-service and selection pattern for subsequent professional training is unbearably costly for a poor nation when compared to alternative methods such as re-current in-career education coupled with on-the-job training.

*"All over the world, schools are organized enterprises designed to reproduce the established order" . . . The establishment of more schools in Malaysia or Brazil teaches people the accountant's view of the value of time, the bureaucrat's view of the value of promotion, the salesman's view of the value of increased consumption, the union leader's view of the purposes of work . . . People learn that they acquire more value in the market if they spend more hours in class".*

Ivan Illich

A few examples of the operation of the above misconception may illustrate the point. The University of Sri Lanka has laid down the condition that for any student to qualify to enter the medical faculty, he should have five credit passes in certain subjects recognized for this purpose, the unproven assumption presumably is that the academically gifted pupil is better suited to benefit from a medical education and that such a pupil will also be a better doctor! Whether there exists a high correlation between aptitude for academic studies and the humanitarian qualities needed to make a good medical practitioner has so far not been investigated. Another instance of an unjustifiable demand was the special compulsory organic chemistry paper for medical entrance. An investigation revealed that the highly specialized advanced knowledge tested in that paper was not required by medical students and the paper was abolished without causing any loss to medical education. The only conclusion one could draw from such instances is that these barriers were placed to make the competition for the limited number of places as stiff as possible.

The former practice of selection, which fortunately is no more, for the limited number of places in the much coveted Civil Service was also based almost entirely on academic distinction. Here again the assumption probably was that academic brilliance was highly correlated with administrative and management ability.

Even in the selection of personnel for semi-skilled and middle-grade craftsmen and technical level jobs, one comes across the insistence on certain academic qualifications which probably have very little relevance to the skills and aptitudes required for the job. The inevitable result of such practices is to create a demand for higher education which a poor country cannot afford.

Some of the above practices are now being critically examined by research workers. Research studies have been launched to question certain basic assumptions relevant to education and employment. Such studies are attempting to find out whether there is some intrinsic connection between the level of a job and the level of general education needed

for it. They are also investigating whether a formal institutional training is required to impart higher level skills before one starts on his career. Another problem that is being considered is whether one could develop 'content free' aptitude type of tests as an instrument for selection for higher academic and professional education in place of the present achievement tests based on a subject-centred curriculum.

### The need for changes

If the changes in the structure and content of education were to have a significant impact on the socio-economic development of the country, then certain radical measures would have to be taken. New wage structures will have to be introduced to reduce differences of income associated with differences in academic qualifications. The rush for higher educational qualifications is obviously for the acquisition of higher earning capacities and not out of a thirst or love for knowledge. Hence, a reduction in the cash value of educational qualifications will certainly reduce the demand for such qualifications. A reduction of the competition and pressure for higher education will most certainly have a beneficial backwash effect on education.

Changes in attitudes regarding the social values of different occupations are also needed. The most effective way of doing this would be to reduce income differentials attached to different occupations.

New methods of recruitment, training and promotions in the labour market are also needed. The present insistence on pre-service qualifications should be relaxed and instead early recruitment for occupations coupled with on-the-job training and in-career recurrent education should be introduced. Apprenticeship type of in-career training should be encouraged and given an equal recognition with pre-career institutionalized training. Encouragement of early career selection and absorption of school leavers by the labour market at a scaled down wage structure will have far-reaching effects in reducing wastage in academic education and reducing unrealistic aspirations in the minds of learners.

Changes are needed in the structure of education to help young people to

find work and not prolong their training hoping that it would enable them to find employment some day. Such changes should necessarily be linked with nation developmental plans in which means of production have to be made available to school leavers to help them to create work for themselves in suitable fields. In most developing countries such employment opportunities will be found mainly in agriculture or agro-based industries. There is an urgent need in such societies to create more productive employment and not merely expand and prolong academic pre-service education.

In order to achieve the above objective drastic changes have to be made in the curriculum and teaching methods. Hitherto it was accepted without question that pedagogy fashionable in the developed countries could solve all the problems of the poor nations. The curriculum and teaching methods which were successful in the rich countries were thought to be quite suitable for and expected to have a miraculous impact on poor countries. Experience in the Third World countries during the last decade has proved the barrenness of such expectations. The pedagogy of the rich countries has only confused and misdirected the educational practices of the developing countries. A new pedagogy has to be developed to meet the needs and solve the problems of the people of the Third World.

"Schools confuse process with substance, teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, diploma with competence, fluency with ability to say something new. Teachers because they sell a packaged curriculum become merchandise distributors. Pupils learn not because of the teachers but because they are motivated by the stick or the carrot of a career".

Ivan Illich

Some of the elements constituting such a new pedagogy are to be found in the concepts of non-formal education and lifelong education. If the major aim of education is correctly identified as 'preparation for life' and not 'qualifying' for a job, there is an increasing need to expand and develop opportunities for providing life skills and employable skills. In poor countries such opportunities could be provided best not through

the formal channels prevailing in the educational systems in rich countries but through non-formal channels and in association with schemes for life-long recurrent education.

Capacity for self-reliance and flexibility in attitudes to work are two objectives which deserve the highest consideration in a pedagogy for the poor nations. The formal Western system of education is actually drifting the people of the poor nations away from such objectives. The content and teaching methodology for the education of the poor should give the highest priority to such objectives.

In developing a new model for education as a lifelong process, Knowles states that:

".....as the time span of major cultural change has become shorter than the life-span of the individual, it becomes necessary to redefine education as a process of continuous inquiry. The role of the teacher must shift from that of transmitter of information to facilitator of self-directed inquiry. Education must be regarded as a life-long process, for knowledge gained at any point of time will become increasingly obsolete..... The schools around the world largely remain tied to the subject matter transmittal framework of the medieval trivium and quadrivium..... The first assumption is that the purpose of education is the development of competencies for performing the various roles required in human life. The second assumption is that the primary purpose of schooling is to help children and youth learn *the skill of learning*..... The third assumption is that the curriculum of organised education will most effectively achieve the objective of schooling if it is structured according to a spiraling series of individual learning projects, with the understanding that several individuals with similar learning needs might engage in a learning project collaboratively. Under this assumption the school would be presented to learners as a learning resource centre and that teachers would be presented as learning project consultants."

Many writers have referred to the crisis in the classroom and even raised the question whether schools are necessary. Silberman in his *Crisis in the Classroom* questions whether our school system could stand the test whether it is adequate to meet the needs of the present and the foreseeable future. He submits that our educational institutions fail the test. He contends that to meet the needs of the future, we need *not*

.....The school of the future will allow children to learn at their own individual pace, utilizing their own rhythm and pattern. ....



"Some are counting. Some are drawing. Some are cutting or pasting. There is a lot of activity .....The teacher is hovering around, giving a helping hand here, and answering a query there."

masses of intellectuals, but masses of educated men—men educated to feel and to act as well as to think. Three of the most eloquent and widely-read proponents of 'deschooling', Paul Goodman, Ivan Illich and John Holt advocate the thesis that "schools are grim and joyless places organized for the convenience of teachers and administrators rather than for the learning needs of students. While some critics think that it is sufficient if schools are made more informal, flexible and more child-centered, the more radical school reformers go even further and question whether schools as they now exist are worth preserving at all. They suggest that real and meaningful learning can take place more effectively outside the formal classroom. Illich calls for the "constitutional disestablishment" of the school and suggests that in a deschooled society, learning could take place through "educational networks, peer groups and learning webs".

Hald expressed a somewhat different view—

"By a deschooled society we don't mean a society without any arrangements and resources for learning. We don't even mean a society without schools..... But in a deschooled society nobody would be compelled to go to school, neither by the law nor by, the threat of joblessness poverty, discrimination, and exclusion from society—all of which are in force today..... In sum, a deschooled

society would be a society in which everyone shall have the widest and freest possible choice to learn whatever he wants to learn, whether in school or in some altogether different way".

Goodman recommends what he calls "incidental education" which will enable learners to have greater freedom to explore the world.

Today educators are beginning to realize that education is a continuous biological process. It is neither time-bound nor place-bound; it is not confined to any particular age limit, and needs no formal institutional set-up. The school of the future will have a flexible curriculum. It will have no rejects and drop-outs. The school of the future will allow children to learn at their own individual pace utilizing their own rhythm and pattern. The curriculum of the future will provide learning experiences not only in the traditional verbal skills, the 3 Rs, but also in productive, employable, practical skills. Tomorrow's school will break down the barrier between the school and the community and will integrate itself with the community. Finally, educators will realize that education is a continuous lifelong process; that *learning* is not synonymous with *schooling* and that learning can take place both within the formal school system as well as outside through various non-formal channels.