

# EDUCATION

## A Strategy for Development

### THREE CASE STUDIES

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*Awakening from centuries of feudal and colonial slumber some emergent nations of the Third World are experimenting with new approaches to education. In the following article three such countries, on three different continents, China, Peru and Tanzania are examined for their restructured educational systems. Mr. Wijedasa is a teacher of long experience now working with the Sri Lanka Curriculum Development Centre.*

Education plays a major role in a national strategy for economic and social development. In the developing world too education is made to play this vital role in bringing about desired economic and social goals. In achieving these goals education has become the single biggest undertaking in these countries. It employs more people and influences directly the lives of more people than any other organisation apart from the government itself. The expenditures on education are huge in relation to other governmental and private expenditures. Those countries are spending roughly the same proportion of their national resources on education as the richer countries. Poor as they are, does the spending of such vast resources help these countries to achieve their goals?

A brief survey of the state of affairs prevailing in this part of the world shows that education has not been effective enough in realising their objectives. The glaring shortcomings are wastage, a high percentage of drop-outs and the sharp contrasts and inequalities within the system. The very standard to which these countries aspire is inappropriate, irrelevant or sometimes positively harmful to the development of the country.

The educational systems of these countries by emulating the developed systems of the west, expect to produce identical systems in their countries. They expect to emulate the material achievements of Europe and America, thereby producing citizens whose ambitions and aspirations are at total variance with the needs of the nation. This harmful effect is shown by the unfortunate social attitudes

often acquired by the vast majority of the citizens through their respective educational systems. Far from serving as a preparation for tackling the country's most urgent tasks, these systems often produce an elite which feels itself to be far above any practical involvement in the development tasks of these nations. Instead of providing the skills and determination needed to bring about a total revolution in agriculture, these systems become agencies which provide a means to escape to the towns. The school systems encourage a distaste for manual work and a preference for the academic. These fundamental flaws have been realized by the educationists of some of the developing countries and adequate corrective measures are being taken. These countries have been bold enough to seek entirely new paths and new measures in order to produce dedicated citizens for achieving desired goals.

To illustrate this new thinking I have selected three countries from three continents which are deeply engaged in building new societies. They are China, Peru and Tanzania. All three countries belong to the developing world and all are endeavouring to build socialist societies although the methods and speeds at which they hope to reach their goals differ. Another common feature among them is that all of them have been heavily exposed to the devitalizing effect of colonialism and have emerged from it in recent times. Two countries, Peru and Tanzania came directly under the complete domination of Western Colonialism. In the case of China several colonial powers joined together, to control

her economic and political affairs till the beginning of the twentieth century.

#### CHINA

China was at the time of the Communist victory, a very backward country. It was semi feudal with five-sixths of the population living in the countryside. The overwhelming majority of the population were peasants, mostly very poor, and illiterate, riddled with the superstitions and value systems characteristic of a semi-feudal social system. Education was confined to the middle and upper classes. The people in authority were the products of a very conservative, elitist educational system which inculcated in them class values and a contempt for physical labour or technical or practical work.

At the time of liberation, China exhibited the basic problem of all backward countries attempting to build a new society, an acute shortage of personnel to engage in this task. Its main problem was to produce sufficient numbers of people to engage in the task of socialist construction, to organize, inspire, and lead peasants into new collective units such as cooperative communes, to set up, and manage new state-owned factories, to extend and run the transport system, organize public health services, administer towns and cities and the other innumerable tasks which require levels of education, skills and competence. Above all it needed people who had the correct vision and attitudes for building a new society. Education became an instrument for carrying forward the gains of the revolution.

To the rulers of People's China education has two primary objectives. It should help to teach as swiftly as possible, wiping out illiteracy in order to create a modern socialist, industrial technical society absorbing modern techniques to innovate and create on its own, and inculcate a world outlook—a revolutionary and internationalist proletarian outlook.

The path to the attainment of these broad aims was laid down by Chairman Mao Tse Tung when he said "it is essential to shorten the length of schooling, revolutionize education, put proletarian policies in command, train technicians from workers. Students should be selected from among

workers and peasants with practical experiences, and they should return to production after a few years of study”.

The reforms in education took a dramatic turn during the Cultural Revolution. All examinations were abolished and all universities and cultural institutions were closed for a year while a thorough sifting of the teachers and teaching material was undertaken.

The main elements of reforms which emerged from this reappraisal were that:

1. The administration of schools and universities should be trimmed, bureaucracy should be cut back. Chairman Mao's instructions on this aspect were, "It is still necessary to have universities, here. I refer mainly to colleges of science and engineering. However it is essential to shorten the length of schooling, revolutionize education, put proletarian politics in command and workers propaganda teams should stay permanently in the schools and take part in fulfilling all the tasks of struggle criticism-transformation in the schools. In the countryside the schools should be managed by the poor, and lower middle peasants the most reliable ally of the working class".
2. All who enter colleges must come from working class or peasant background. Existing students should be re-educated by workers and peasants. In the words of Chairman Mao "Students should be selected from among peasants and workers with practical experiences and they should return to production after a few years of study", and "cadres and other

people in the cities should be persuaded to send their sons and daughters who have finished junior or senior middle school, college or university to the countryside. It is very necessary for educated young people to be re-educated by the poor and lower middle peasants”.

3. Education must be very sharply technical, practical and directly useful. Pure theory and humanities should be reduced in importance.
4. All education must be amalgamated with practice. Students must go to the factories while studying. Chairman Mao put it thus: "It is necessary to maintain the system of cadre participation in collective productive labour. By taking part in collective productive labour the cadres maintain extensive, constant and close ties with the working people”.
5. Students should return to rural areas for fairly long periods. The advantages of such a policy enables the amalgamation of theory and practice, resulting in developing indigenous experts and providing job opportunities for them. Mao has said "all people who have had some education ought to be very happy to work in the countryside if they get the chance. In our rural areas there is plenty of room for them to develop their talents to the full”.

A number of practical steps have been taken to implement this revolutionary thinking on education. Senior middle school students are required to spend a year or two among the workers, peasants and soldiers, in the communes factories

or army, tempering themselves in the three revolutionary movements—the class struggle, the struggle for production and scientific experiment.

Fitness for university entrance is measured by character and achievement, zeal and inventive spirit and no longer by examinations. Selection for enrolment is on the basis of those who have shown a firm proletarian standard. The old system of recruitment by examination and enrolment for the higher education institutions had failed to free itself from the set pattern and the bourgeois system of examination.

These reforms though of a radical nature have enabled the Chinese to bring forth from their education system, a generation of educated youth who are more self-reliant and with the morale and confidence necessary to usher in a new society in their country. They have evolved a revolutionary system of education in keeping with the revolutionary changes in the socio-economic system. Together they have achieved a remarkable and swift change in that vast country—a change that has no parallel in history.

## PERU

Peru is a land of diversities, topographic, climatic, ethnic, cultural and linguistic, a fragmentation so pronounced that some authors have referred to the nation as many Perus. Politically as well as economically, power had been wholly in the hands of a small 'Hispanic' elite concentrated in Lima and in the provincial urban areas. The system of education set by the early Spanish colonists was a faithful reproduction of the Spanish model with no concessions to the country's requirements and it was a system directed towards perpetuating an elite upper class culture, since the socio-economic basis on which that elite rested remained unchanged. It was totally inadequate to cope with the complex problems requiring solution and also served to perpetuate and even aggravate the economic, social and cultural inequalities of Peruvian society.

The armed forces took power in 1968 and initiated several radical transformations within the country. The Peruvian Revolutionary Government made known its new education programme in 1970, and these reforms

China has had some very interesting experiences in the field of education, especially since the Cultural Revolution. The excerpts below from Chairman Mao indicate some of the thinking behind the New Education in China.

*"In the problem of transforming education it is the teachers who are the main problem".*

*"... Our education is fraught with problems, the most prominent of which is dogmatism. We are in the process of reforming our educational system. The school years are too long, courses too many, and various methods of teaching unsatisfactory. The children learn text-books and concepts which remain merely text-books and concepts; they know nothing else... The school years are too long, courses too many, and the method of teaching is by injection instead of through the imagination. The method of examination is to treat candidates as enemies and ambush them. Therefore I advise you not to*

*entertain any blind faith in the Chinese educational system. Do not regard it as a good system. Any drastic change is difficult, as many people would oppose it. At present a few may agree to the adoption of new methods, but many would disagree. I may be pouring cold water on you. You expect to see something good, but I only tell you what is bad."*

*"Educators and teachers, they themselves must first be educated".*

*"Rural students should make use of their vacations, week-ends and holidays and spare time to return to their own villages to take part in production".*

Chairman Mao Tse Tung

were conceived as a social necessity and a fundamental feature of the structural changes to be effected in the country.

The Peruvian leaders firmly believed that education could be a basic factor in national development only when it is implemented within the overall context of other reforms, thus backing up, accelerating and helping socio-economic development. The ultimate goal of the Peruvian education system is to create 'the new Peruvian man in a new Peruvian society.' To realize this goal it was argued that there would have to be radical changes in attitudes and values, a transformation which could only be brought about through 'conscientization' defined as an 'educational process whereby individuals and social groups gain a critical awareness of the historical and cultural world in which they live, shoulder their responsibilities and undertake the necessary action to transform it'. A logical product of 'conscientization' would be a genuine participation by the individual and the community eventually in all sectors of national life, more immediately, in the key sector of education. In this new vision of education 'conscientization' plus participation would produce citizens who are not only ready to assume their responsibilities but who are aware of their rights, individuals with a sense of their own cultural identity but also imbued with a respect for all cultures as being equally valid, anxious to preserve their particular ethnic, linguistic heritage, but at the same time integrated into the nation as a whole, seeing their labour not as a burden placed on them by oppressive forces, but as an enrichment for themselves and a contribution to the welfare of the whole community.

In pursuance of these goals, Peru has developed its new education system with the emphasis on the concept of lifelong education, so that it ensures the continuity of the personal educational process and the constant advancement of all members of the national community, from infancy onwards embracing every level of the formal education system and simultaneously institutionalising non-formal types of education.

Peruvian educationists have made a real effort to provide families with an

understanding of the child's needs and development during the pre-school stage upto the age of six. As far as the formal system is concerned more emphasis is placed on practical orientation. The non-formal sector is intended for married men and women who either dropped out from formal schooling or who never attended school at all and a greater emphasis is laid on technical and practical skills. Courses covering handicrafts, animal husbandry, agriculture, forestry, domestic economy and rural construction are organized by other Ministries such as Agriculture, Labour and Commerce and are coordinated by the Ministry of Education. These courses are geared to the specific needs of particular districts and are offered through special vocational training centres.

To provide support for total Peruvian reform a programme of Educational Extension work utilizes mass media, discussion groups and exchanges of experience, to generate a network of social communication, supplemented by the provision of printed or Audio Visual material and assistance to the community in developing its own media, like popular theatre, local bulletins newspapers etc. Special Educational Programmes for Rural Areas is another innovation that secures participation. More and more emphasis is being paid to bilingual education so as to eliminate the existence of a fragment of Peruvian society which nourished both resentment and submissiveness among the vast number of population who were not active Spanish speakers.

Another important innovation in the Peruvian educational system is decentralization, and the key to it is the so-called "nuclear system" where by the educational system was freed from its rigidity so that education reached out of schools, and took roots in the social needs of the community. The underlying concept was to utilize the basic community organization for coordination and management of education services, and other services used by education within a specific geographical area for the promotion of community life thus confirming that education should take place in, and through the community and that responsibility for its content, orientation, administration and direction should eventually be vested in

the family and the community rather than be the exclusive preserve of education authorities.

These reforms which were promulgated in 1970 are in the process of being put into operation and it is too early to make any assessment. Yet the important thing is, that Peruvians have realised the urgency of the task of reforming, so as to educate the 'new Peruvian' who does think that his talents are not a marketable commodity to be sold to the highest bidder, and who is highly committed to the urgent tasks of nation-building.

## TANZANIA

Tanzania emerged from its colonial bondage in 1961 as a highly undeveloped country. Its erstwhile masters had imposed on its people a typical colonial educational system which concentrated more on the primary state of education. The few who were able to go further than this state were also thoroughly moulded in the colonial outlook so as to seek spiritual sustenance from their colonial masters. In 1970 roughly over 80% of its adult population was illiterate and this was a very disabling handicap to development.

The country was in such a state of disarray that its President Julius K. Nyerere gave much thought to developing a strategy to seek urgent solutions. High priority was given to formulating an education system which would help the Tanzanian to participate in building the New Tanzania.

*The education provided by the colonial government.....was not designed to prepare young people for the service of their own country, instead it was motivated by a desire to inculcate the values of the colonial society and to train individuals for the service of the colonial state.*

President Nyerere of Tanzania

In analysing the problem, Nyerere says that in Tanzania, or for that matter in Africa, the underlying purpose of education has been to enable the African to emulate material achievements of Europe and America and to turn the African into a Black European or Black American.

To Nyerere the purpose of education is the liberation of man. "Education has to liberate both the mind and the body of man. It has to make him more of a human being, because he is aware of his potential as a human being and is in a positive, life enhancing relationship with himself, his neighbour, his environment".

Primarily this liberation should help the African to free himself from the mentality of slavery and colonialism by making him aware of himself as an equal member of the human race with equal rights and duties. It has to liberate him from the shackles of technical ignorance so that he can make use of the tools of organization and creation for the development of himself and his fellow men. The purpose is not to turn out technicians who can be used as instruments in the expansion of the economy, but technicians who have the technical knowledge and ability to expand the economy for the benefit of man in society.

Nyerere emphatically states that education should liberate the Tanzanian so that he would regard his knowledge not as a tool for exploitation of others but an instrument for the advancement of his fellowmen.

In Tanzania, the educated individual thinks of himself and not the larger community. His education has converted him into an object—into a repository of knowledge rather like a special computer. It is as an object or commodity that he has been taught to regard himself and others.

With such an attitude a person will inevitably spend his life sucking from the community to the maximum and contributing the minimum, living as he desires to live. Such a person is not a liberated human being. He is commodity.

It is with the objective of changing such colonial social values and attributes that the new educational system has been launched. In his now famous Anusha Declaration of 1967 and of 1970, Nyerere has emphatically stated that the new educational system should help the Tanzanian to cultivate new values and attitudes to equip himself for the developmental tasks. As the country is committed to the building of a socialist economy this new outlook has become a desideratum or its development.

As an innovative measure a network of primary schools were built throughout the country and these were reconstituted to form the community schools of Tanzania. The concept underlying this innovation is self-reliance. The development of the land allotted to the school by the joint participation of the school and community helps in the maintenance and upkeep of the school. Further it helps to build a lasting bond between the school and the community and a firm belief in the virtues of self-reliance.

As community schools they have been expanded to include the function of teaching adults. Primary school teachers who are now involved in teaching adults have been given a reduction of 2 hours a week from their task of teaching the children. Additional teachers are drawn from the skilled personnel in the area e.g. the local agricultural officer is drawn upon to teach agriculture skills, the local TANU (ruling political party official) to teach aspects of national policy or an interested man or woman to teach aspects of local dance, drama and song.

The learners themselves are involved in the organisation of the classes. Each class has its small communities, from among its pupils who plan the courses, supervise attendance, and the smooth running of the centre. These are important elements for the success of the programme because they involve the people themselves and make them committed to their own programme.

In Tanzania illiteracy being the greatest impediment to development, it has been decided to wipe it out completely by 1978 through functional adult education classes, to be conducted as a national campaign. It has been decided that the training in the skill of reading and writing be conducted hand in hand with imparting to the adult some practical skill and knowledge in his occupation or vocation. Farmers of maize should learn to read and write by using properly programmed maize primers that teach them better maize farming in a very practical way. Reading and writing becomes a secondary and a transient element in the whole exercise, although very important. The functional approach to adult education where education is tied up

with practical application of skills, attitude and knowledge forms a sound basis for continuing education in any one's vocation, profession or occupation.

A further example of the possibilities of large-scale innovations made possible through the extensive network of organizers and national commitment is the mass radio study group campaign which completed its first phase in August 1973. In all 75,000 group leaders were trained in special seminars conducted locally at work level. These group leaders enrolled over 2 million adults all over the country for group discussion. More than 2 million books written in simple language on the topic were distributed to the adult learners; twice a week, the sessions were supported by radio programmes, propaganda slogans, posters, speeches, campaign textile materials which all helped to extend this campaign to the whole nation.

The objectives of all these innovations are to develop the people's awareness and the spirit of socialism and cooperation *Ujamaa* and to strengthen the sense of integrity thus bringing about definite changes in people's behaviour and attitudes and in their physical environment.

## NEW DIRECTIONS

This brief survey of the new education systems in the developing countries shows the new directions that education is taking. These countries have realized that education without structural transformation in society does not promote development but only perpetuates a situation in which the few who are rich, become richer, and the many who are poor become poorer. They also have realised that education cannot lag behind social changes. They have each in their different ways, devised educational systems which promote and hasten social change. In their eyes education is not merely an aid to development but one of the most potent tools to be used in the task of development. The concept of education as a strategy for development has emerged from the painful struggle going on throughout the Third World to achieve rapid socio-economic development, in order that their suffering peoples may gain a place in the sun.