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HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT IN SRI LANKA : A SOCIOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE*

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Introduction

Human Resources Development (HRD) is a process with demographic, economic, social, cultural and other connotations. It is therefore natural that the subject is examined from different angles taking into account its diverse aspects. In very general terms, HRD can be defined as the process of the development of the human potential in its diverse forms for the betterment of the individual and the society concerned. In practical terms, the process may involve educating the masses, removing illiteracy, ensuring full employment, improving quality of life, training of people, particularly the young etc. The focus of the present paper is not on any one of these areas. It is rather an attempt to focus attention on the overall process of HRD in Sri Lanka from a sociological point of view.

Sociology of HRD

The major concerns of the present paper are indicated in Figure 1. As is implied there, HRD is not merely an attempt at the development of human skills and capabilities through training. It also involves a major thrust towards planned economic, social and cultural change. In other words, HRD is not only a means to an end but also an end in itself.

Current emphasis on HRD in the context of the underdeveloped countries is largely a product of the realization that most of these countries cannot afford to replicate the western development model which relies on capital and energy intensive production. On the other hand, the dilemma that these countries are faced with is the fact that their elites have sought to pursue borrowed life-styles derived from the west and that they by and large provide ideal role models for the rest of the population, particularly the young. In the absence of rapid economic development which could support such life-styles, the elites have sought to promote those sectors of the economy which could ensure the maintenance of western life-styles. Recent developments in the Sri Lankan economy are very much in keeping with these desires.

In a society which places emphasis on social mobility, it is natural that the young tend to treat the elites as their reference group and look for means by which they can reach their targets.

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What are the values which the local elites give expression to? Some of these are conspicuous consumption and display leisure, freedom from manual work, arrogance, power and influence, and competition. Why is there so much competition in the sphere of education? Why are the younger people so much obsessed with non-manual service sector employment? Why is this big rush to the Middle East? Why are the queues at western embassies getting longer day by day? Why do the ordinary people crave for imported goods? All this is because the ordinary people are directly under the influence of the values and goals pursued by the elites. They have not rejected the values and life-styles of the latter. They are in fact trying to emulate them.

What does human resource development mean in the above context? Should it be a process facilitating the pattern of development that has been taking place in recent years? Can meaningful HRD take place while the elites pursue the values mentioned above? The answers to these questions depend on how we define HRD.

We can visualize three development scenarios for Sri Lanka. First is the NIC model vigorously pursued by some Asian countries like South Korea and Taiwan. The second is the development path that Sri Lanka has followed after 1977, reliant heavily on export earnings derived not so much from the exports of manufactured goods as from the export of skilled and unskilled labour and primary goods, tourism and development aid. The third is a development strategy that relies on the development of local resources, both human and natural, with the primary aim of satisfying the basic needs of the general population.

The difficulties in the adoption of the NIC model have been discussed by many economists and political scientists. The pattern of development that has taken place in Sri Lanka over the last decade or so can rarely be considered conducive for human resource development for the bulk of the people who are accommodated in the newly developed sectors of the economy are so dependent on external resource flows that their lives have become unstable, dependent, unsettling and uncertain. Rising mass unemployment and under-employment, on the other hand prevents optimum utilization of human resources. In spite of the expansion of certain areas of economic activity, a large segment of the population seems to get marginalized from the mainstream of development as exemplified by mass unemployment and widespread poverty. Even those who are encapsulated in the growing sectors are not fully absorbed into a sustainable economy and face an uncertain future. This is clearly evident from the changing fortunes of Middle East migrants, construction workers, and those employed in the tourist trade. The low wages paid to the workers and the adverse working conditions obtained in the export processing zones and the garment industry raise doubts about their capacity to promote HRD in a desirable manner. Moreover, these sectors do not seem to have significant backward linkages facilitating the development of the other sectors of the local economy.

If HRD means the development of local human resources for the benefit of the general population, then the country should define its development goals in such a way as to persuade the people to work towards that objective. In other words, there cannot be two sets of values and development goals, one pursued by the elite, the other to be pursued by the common people. When the elites pursue imported life-styles, one cannot expect the common man to pursue indigenous life styles. This contradiction is perhaps the biggest challenge that those who advocate HRD in the context of contemporary Sri Lanka have to grapple with. The resolution of this contradiction is also the most urgent task ahead for the intellectuals and the politicians of Sri Lanka today. Though one cannot afford to be pessimistic in these matters, one should not underestimate the complexities? and difficulties involved either. What are these complexities and difficulties? Since they are related to the country's economy, the associated class structure and the emerging social inequalities a brief note on these aspects seems to be in order.

The Post-independent economy of Sri Lanka continued to be predominantly agrarian despite attempts at industrialization by successive governments. The growing population pressure on land was relieved by the opening up of new land in the Dry Zone and redistribution of land in the Wet Zone. Even though the basic food needs of the general population could by and large be met by local production, the aspirations of the growing younger population stimulated by their exposure to new ideas, values and modern life-styles pursued by the well-to-do became more and more difficult to be satisfied. Education and potential social mobility associated with it further reinforced these aspirations. The inequality that emerged between the educated (successful and 'fortunate') subsequently became further elaborated when a far more significant division emerged between the educated employed and the educated unemployed. The educated unemployed could not identify with either the former or the drop-outs of the education system.

The growing population pressure on local productive resources, particularly land resulted in increased shared poverty in the countryside. Increasing cost of production, need for investment credit, unstable income, intermittent crop failures, personal calamities such as illness and litigation, usury and land speculation, all contributed to the dispossession of a sizable segment of the peasant population. This is particularly the case in the new peasant settlements in the Dry Zone where there are few other sources of income besides agriculture. For these families, the future lies outside agriculture, perhaps even outside the village. Even those families which have a stable agricultural base do not seem to believe that their children's future lies in rural agriculture for they appear to pursue other paths even more vigorously by spending lavishly on children's education.

Why do the rural people want to give their children a good education? It is certainly not to prepare them for a rural agricultural life because they are convinced that they do not need educational certificates to become hardworking, successful farmers. They simply want their children to pursue a life-style which is different to their own. They

would not mind their children returning to the village after their education, provided they come back at least as a petty official or a teacher with a monthly salary no matter how meager the latter is. These village-level white collar employees are often better off than artisans, craftsmen and petty traders who represent the rural non-farm sector. They are also better off than most other villagers in terms of living conditions, social influence and prestige.

Now to turn to the urban scene. As is well known, urban growth in Sri Lanka has been limited. Nevertheless, due to the absence of adequate formal sector employment, the urban poor by and large rely on informal income sources. A large percentage of the informal sector activists are casual labourers engaged in either wage work or piece work and live and work under adverse conditions. The vast majority of informal enterprises are in the services and therefore rely heavily on the surplus derived from circulation and exchange rather than direct production of economic wealth.

What are the implications of the above pattern of economic growth. If we take different categories separately, the picture becomes clearer. If we first take the drop outs of the education system, they take up various activities often by default, not necessarily by choice. They often undertake whatever work they find in order to make a living. Because of their poverty and the lack of educational qualifications, they fade into the background. If we look at the educated unemployed, investment on their education and training is misdirected. Apart from being highly literate, they have not acquired any specific skills. They actively seek a life-style which remains illusory for most of them. The educated unemployed are not altogether contented either for many of them occupy positions which they feel are not in keeping with their qualifications. This is particularly so for many university graduates who occupy lower-rung white collar positions such as clerical and teaching.

What is the significance of recent social and economic changes in Sri Lanka? Before an attempt is made to answer this question, a brief look at the recent changes can be useful.

There is no doubt about the fact that non-agricultural employment expanded substantially over the last decade or so. Yet the expansion has not so much been in the area of industrial production as in the service activities such as trade, transport, tourism, construction and overseas employment. As mentioned before, such non-farm activities are characterized by instability and uncertainty. They have not helped build a sustainable national economy. If we take the example of Middle East employment, some of these points can be easily clarified.

Most of the workers going to the Middle East are housemaids[2] who do not acquire any marketable skills either before they go to the Middle East or while they are in the Middle East. When they return to the country they do not have any particular skill which could help them find work or embark on any productive self-employment. Since they are lowly paid, often they do not return with a substantial financial capital which can be

invested in a business venture. A major part of their savings is devoted for purchasing household durables. Many Middle East returnees do not invest in productive ventures, but spend on housing, etc. After a short lapse of time, they tend to seek employment abroad again because they have exhausted their savings and are rarely absorbed into the local economy. Besides the consumption patterns they get used to while in the Middle East can be hardly maintained without going back to the Middle East. The situation is not very dissimilar in relation to the other categories of Middle East returnees.[3]

The situation with respect to tourist trade is not very different. Those who are associated with it get used to a life-style derived directly from the West which can rarely be sustained outside it. The workers employed in the industry cannot be easily accommodated in the other sectors of the economy in the event of its decline due to security or any other reason. Another reason for it is the fact that whatever skill they acquire on the job cannot be meaningfully utilized outside the industry at all as the flow of labour is the other way about.

The tourist industry as it has developed in Sri Lanka is heavily dependent on imports and therefore has few backward linkages. A large part of the foreign exchange generated by it is thus used to import commodities needed by the industry and its people. Given the fact that tourism is a major factor promoting western consumption patterns, its contribution to sustainable economic growth is perhaps a negative one.

The expansion of the informal sector which is a significant feature of economic growth over the last decade or so also seems to have taken place at the expense of productive investment and employment. Most of the activities encapsulated within the urban informal economy are service-oriented and have thrived on the surplus derived from the circulatory process linking the rural economy with the urban centers.[4]

The largest part of the export-oriented manufacturing sector in Sri Lanka is the production of ready-made garments. As is well known, its raw material and technological base is imported whole sale. The biggest local input is cheap labour. Skills imparted to the workers are limited and superficial and therefore do not amount to a significant transfer of technology which is needed for sustainable growth. The industry itself is guided by economic and political forces emanating from the west and therefore the future of the industry and its work force is not necessarily in the hands of the local authorities.

The extremely dependent nature and the vulnerability of the Sri Lankan economy heavily dependent on the sectors of the economy mentioned above was clearly demonstrated during the recent Gulf crisis. Thousands of workers who returned to Sri Lanka during that period were virtually stranded in their own country not knowing what to do under conditions of unemployment and indebtedness. Not so long age, the workers in the tourist industry underwent similar hardships when the tourists stopped visiting Sri Lanka subsequent to the 1983 ethnic disturbances. No doubt some of these workers found employment in the Middle East to be affected by yet another man-made disaster

in the from of the Gulf War. Why do we find ourselves in the present predicament? It can be argued that it is largely due to our refusal to plan our own future in more realistic terms and the failure to radically re-structure the system of rewards and incentives in order to guide our society towards it. In the remaining pages of the present paper, an attempt is made to support this argument.

The famous French Anthropologist L. Dumont portrayed the caste-ridden society of the Indian sub-continent as a hierarchical one as opposed to western societies which, according to him, are characterized by stratification. (1970) The main feature of a stratified western society is social mobility, i.e. individual's ability to change his birth status. Western colonialism in South Asia has been responsible for significant social structural change there. Such changes have been far more significant in Sri Lanka than elsewhere largely due to the fact that the local caste structure there, particularly among the sinhalese, has not been so rigid. It is however doubtful whether the traditional notion of hierarchy has lost all its meaning and significance in contemporary society. Such a doubt is founded on the fact that we still tend to subscribe to a set of values which are hierarchically arranged.

This raises doubts, as to whether we have totally abandoned the traditional yardstick of 'inequality' in the sphere of social relationships. It appears that many people still tend to give expression to hierarchical values in their day-to-day lives irrespective of whether they are in a village or a modern formal organization. In our formal organizations, the significance of hierarchy extends very much beyond the contraceptual domain.

An extreme example would be the relationship between minor employees and the white collar employees. Status inequality here is even more significant than material inequality. This is evident from the forms of address used extra, organizational relationships, etc. Another clear example for the perpetuation of hierarchical values and practices is the concept of domestic servant. The master-servant relationship involved is often highly unequal and often amounts to a patron-client bond. Even though the lowly wages paid provide the basis for the unequal relationship, the legitimization of the latter is based on a hierarchical ideology derived from traditional values. There are many other instances that can be cited in support of the above argument. But, I think the point has been made.

What is evident therefore is perhaps a fusion of the notions of hierarchy and stratification within a single social structure. The result is that there is social mobility but mobility itself is unidirectional. If we take the education system as an example, the above point can be clarified. It provides opportunities for mobility towards a series of positions which are hierarchically arranged in terms of social influence, prestige and rewards, (see Figures 1, 2 and 3)

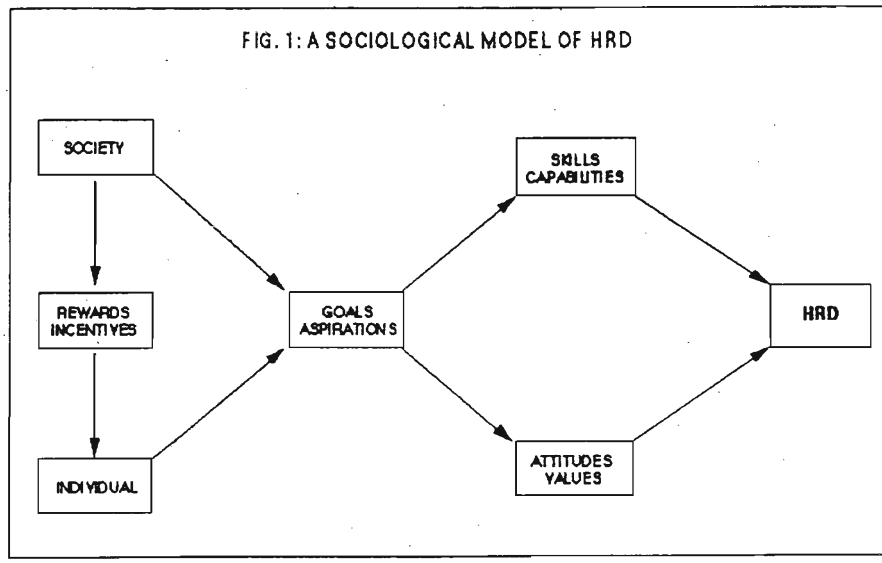

Figure 1: A Sociological Model of HRD

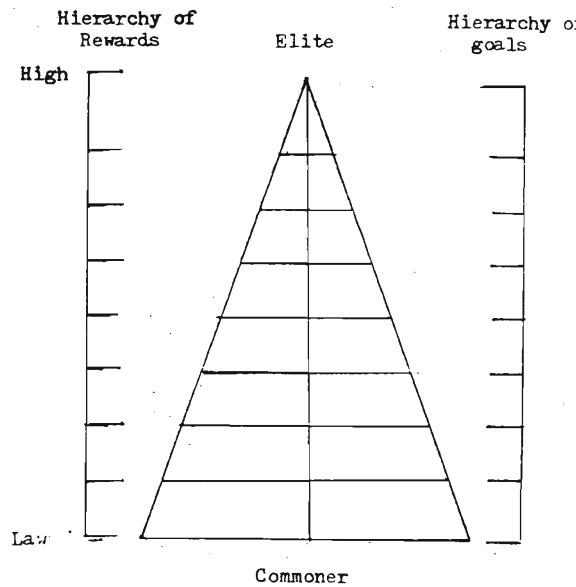

Figure 2: Process of Social Mobility

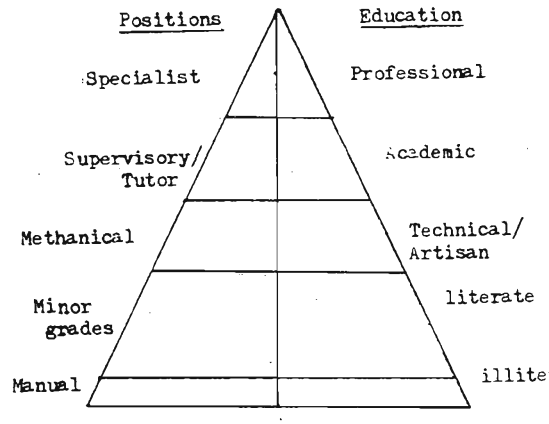

Figure 3: Rank Ordering of Positions

So it is not a situation where many channels of mobility lead to diverse positions with more or less equal status. Our education system and the related processes attest to this fact. The increasing demand for education and the growing pressure on the education system, in spite of the limited opportunities it offers to the general populace are clear indications that it is still the most widely used means of social mobility. This is largely due to the dominance of elitist values in our society supported by the corresponding rewards structure.

The above state of affairs, apart from generating tension, frustration and unrest in society, also acts as a major obstacle to the development, proper allocation and utilization of available human resources thereby hindering the process of sustainable economic growth and social progress. It prevents the growth of those sectors of the economy which are not vulnerable to external pressures.

What we observe in Sri Lanka today is the outcome of a long process of planned and unplanned change. Planned because it is the result of deliberate policy and action. Unplanned because it is the sum total of spontaneous responses of the people. This means that the process of change is not something which is entirely in the hands of the policy makers and planners. Similarly it is not a process which is entirely beyond the manipulative powers of the latter. In other words, it is the role of the perceptive social scientist, to disentangle the complex interconnections involved and suggest possible ways and means of guiding the process of change in the desirable direction. For him to be in a position to perform this task, there is a need for a shared commitment to social science, for, without such a commitment, the social scientist can never be a change agent and would be just another parasite making a living by virtue of his verbal ability.

What is to be Done?

Social change, whether planned or unplanned, is a process guided by ideas and interests. On the other hand, both ideas and interests, are not static and are subject to spontaneous change and deliberate manipulation. It is the realization of these facts that raised hopes among early sociologists about social engineering. As we all know today, many of these hopes have been shattered when it became increasingly evident that sociology could not provide a blue print for an ideal society which has solutions to all its ills.

Sociologists today are far less ambitious. They have realized how complex the social phenomena can be, particularly in the contemporary world which has witnessed the gradual blurring of national, social and cultural boundaries. In such a setting, neither ideas nor interests are restricted by national boundaries. There is no need to stress the fact that social planning involving a commitment to a particular set of ideas and interests is becoming increasingly difficult. Yet, it is inescapable that social planning in a national context perhaps is the only realistic response to social and economic problems facing a country. Such a view is also reinforced by the fact that many countries have been able to reach to varying degrees their national goals through processes of planned change. Given the nature of the global environment today, the process of planned change involves not only national planning but also careful management of external relations and exchanges. In the remaining pages of the present paper, attention is focused on the sociological dimension of national planning. As for the external dimension, suffice it to say that external influences should not be allowed to prejudice the major thrust of the process of social planning.

Sociological Dimension of National Planning

Any attempt to deal with the subject of national planning invariably draws our attention to planning objectives or goals. The definition of goals, on the other hand, involves value judgements. Development goals are never devoid of values. Any casual look at diverse national development goals embodied in different development plans would attest to this fact. Likewise any commitment to HRD also involves value judgements. The value involved here is the commitment to place the human being at the centre of the development plan. Such a commitment may preclude the pursuance of certain development strategies which are likely to go against the objectives of HRD. It is therefore necessary to define the latter in some detail so that appropriate development strategies could be developed with a view to facilitating the achievement of such objectives.

It can be argued that there is often a congruence between the dominant social values in a society and the development goals pursued by it. It can also be observed that social values and development goals tend to reinforce each other. We have already referred to the fact that the pursuance of a borrowed western lifestyle by the peer stratum

of society has encouraged them to promote those economic activities which support their life-styles. Similarly, the elitist values promoted by the education system have intensified competition for education thereby widening the gap between the elitist educational institutions on the one hand and those of the common man on the other.

The results of the above developments in recent years have been the intensification of social inequalities characterized by generalized poverty in the face of the growing affluence of a small minority, widespread under-employment and unemployment, the expansion of the lumpen population prepared to pursue quick money at whatever cost, the growing resentment by the frustrated youth who were marginalized by the main currents of growth, temporary and permanent outflow of skilled manpower etc.

The above manifestations are certainly not signs of a healthy society. Rather, they indicate that there is a sharp conflict not only of interests but also of values. The stated goals of development such as economic prosperity, social justice and equality of opportunity are only illusory for a large part of the population. As mentioned earlier, even those people who were encapsulated by the growth process face uncertainties owing to the vulnerability of the sectors involved. Yet the latter have been the major areas of employment for the unemployed for they come closer to the values and life-styles nurtured by the elites.

Why should the above situation be altered? The reasons are many. Firstly, this pattern of growth generates economic instability and backwardness resulting in political instability and social disorganization. Secondly, it pushes more and more people towards life-styles and consumption patterns which continue to be illusory for most of them resulting in widespread frustration, resentment, unrest, crime and other forms of anti-social behaviour. Thirdly, it retards the development of local resources, both maternal and human, because of its emphasis on wrong development priorities and misallocation of resources. And finally, the trickle down effect of urban-based economic expansion over the past decade has been so insignificant that the gap between rural and urban areas in terms of social infrastructure, consumption patterns etc. has further widened. Given the above background, there can be little doubt about the need for a reappraisal of development priorities, goals and strategies. The question that remains to be answered is how such change could be effected?

The way the above question has been posed presupposes a concerted effort on the part of the state to direct economic and social change in the country. Such an effort is not necessarily incongruent with the declining trend in direct state participation in economic enterprise for what is required is the guidance of the process of economic change through regulatory, resource allocation and income distribution mechanisms. The most crucial aspect of state intervention is social mobilization backed by political will.

The need for social mobilization aimed at human resource development can be easily understood if one looks at the major social and economic problems facing Sri

Lanka today. There is virtual national consensus on the fact that the unemployed and under-employed youth who are evidently dissatisfied with the prevailing social and economic conditions have pushed the country into a crisis situation. They are frustrated because their aspirations which are derived from their socio-cultural environment (and therefore legitimate) have not been fulfilled. While some of them have directed their aggression towards society, others, as evident from alarming statistics on suicide[6] have directed it towards themselves.

The response of the disadvantaged towards social and economic pressures has not always been one of aggression and resentment. While some have run away from the village to the city and beyond, others suffer in silence. Fast-spreading alcoholism among the rural poor can also be considered as a symptom of this situation.

The growing aspirations of the general population, particularly those of the rural youth, are more than likely to remain unsatisfied in the years to come, particularly if the current trends of economic and social change persist. This is due to the fact that the current processes of economic and social change perpetuate the contradiction between expectations and opportunities. The resolution of this contradiction is therefore a pre-condition for meaningful social and economic progress. This can be achieved only through mass social mobilization leading to fundamental changes in social values and reward structures. This is easier said than done because it necessitates a radical approach to economic planning, income distribution, education and training and intra-national and international exchange relations.

A detailed examination of the new national planning environment needed cannot be undertaken in the context of the present paper. What is attempted below therefore is a brief discussion of the sociological concerns that a new national development planning strategy focused on HRD should take into account.

One of the major considerations of development planning should be the reduction of intense social inequalities, particularly between urban and backward rural areas. Such inequalities exist in the form of employment and income opportunities, social infrastructure such as health, education, transport, entertainment, and social influence. It is these factors which compel rural youth to seek non-farm, non rural employment. The above inequalities also have a direct bearing on the quality of life of the rural poor. Quite apart from generalized poverty, there are many pockets of serious deprivation scattered throughout the country which are largely the result of adverse ecological, social infrastructural and economic circumstances.

The reduction of inequalities can be expected to remove many factors which produce frustration among rural people, particularly youth. Moreover, it can also result in the improvement of their quality of life leading to, among other things, higher productivity and social contentment.

Planned reorganization of opportunity and reward structures is an integral part of any attempt at a substantial reduction in social inequalities. Furthermore, it is also a prerequisite for human resource development. As mentioned at the outset of the paper, social mobility already occupies a central position in our value system. But the opportunities for mobility are highly restricted. This is due to at least two reasons. Firstly the underdevelopment of the economy prevents rapid economic expansion and diversification. Secondly, the goals of the aspirants are hierarchically organized rather than horizontally diversified so that many people are left behind by those who move up the ladder. This results in under-employment and unemployment. This is particularly the case with those who attempt to move up through the education system (see Figure 2).

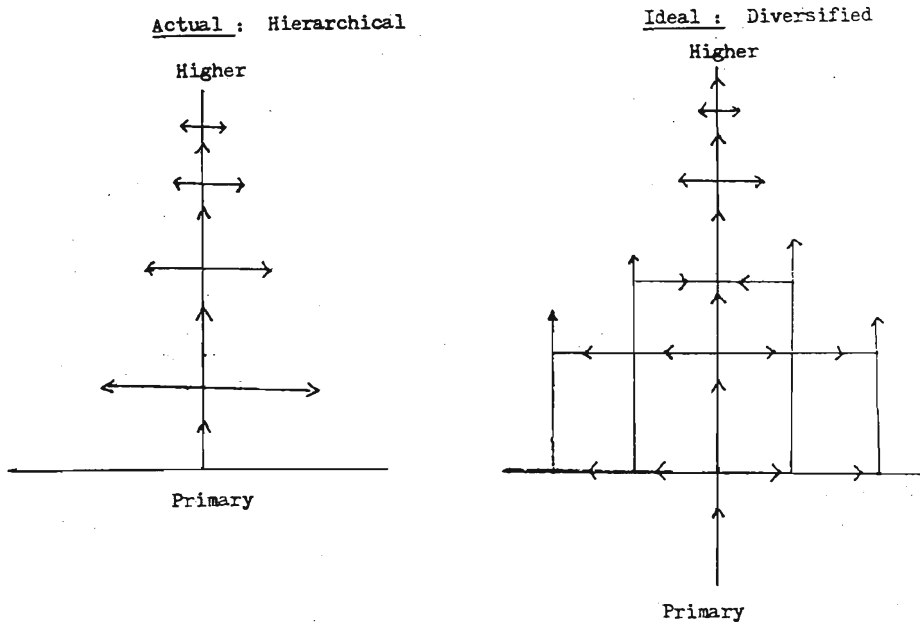

Figure 4: Social mobility through education

Before any attempt is made to expand the opportunity structure, it is necessary to understand why it is restricted. Any social scientist with a modicum of knowledge about the village economies should be aware of the fact that there exist few opportunities outside agriculture. While the deteriorating man-land ratio restricts income opportunities in agriculture, the youth from landless and near-landless families are compelled to look for non - agricultural sources which are few and far between and are often not more attractive. As available information indicates, such income sources are characterized by instability, low income earning potential uncertainty and low social esteem.[8] The result

is that the youth with educational certificates are not attracted to them. It is usually drop-outs of the school system who take up such positions. This itself no doubt adversely affects the economic activities involved for it prevents the flow of youngsters with necessary attributes into such areas of activity.

Non agricultural positions which require modern industrial or technical skills are rare in the rural areas due to the lack of rural industrialization. The latter is largely a product of the availability of cheap imported industrial products and the low incomes of the rural population. Given the above background, it is not surprising that the youth who are exposed to modern education and modern life-styles want to leave the village in search of white collar employment, no matter how lowly paid the latter is. Many rural youth with educational qualifications leave the village to take up such positions as office peons, security guards and security service personnel. Many more fail to secure even such jobs. Those who succeed and leave the village command more prestige at home that those who are left behind and self-employed.

How can the above situation be changed? As mentioned before, it is essential that the existing opportunity structure be reorganized and expanded. This requires the creation of work opportunities which are attractive not only in terms of working conditions but also in terms of social esteem. In other words, creation of opportunities alone is not adequate. It is also necessary to introduce a rewards structure which represents a radical and unprecedented departure from the existing one.

The expansion and the reorganization of the opportunity structure require fundamental changes in resource allocation, income distribution, redefinition of development goals and reorganization of the education system.

As for the reorganization of the education system, it should be noted that its present academic orientation should give way to distinctly work orientation so that academic-oriented instruction is only one aspect of education.

As a result of the excessive academic orientation of the general education system, there exists a dichotomy between manual and non-manual work. Those who go through the education system tend to develop a negative attitude towards physical labour. This tendency is further reinforced by the low esteem and inferior material rewards associated with such work. While these attitudes and values cannot be changed overnight, appropriate changes in the education system as well as in the reward structure can be expected to produce the desired results over a period of time. It should, however be emphasized that changes in these two areas should be simultaneous so that they are mutually reinforcing.

There are clear instances where rigid hierarchization of society has been avoided through educational and social reform. As is well known, in countries like Germany, linkages have been established between educational institutions and work places so that youngsters do not necessarily have to move up the educational ladder to achieve social

mobility. In other words, there is a multitude of channels of social mobility which are more or less independent of the formal educational system. Those who move up the educational ladder and enter into higher education are identified early and constitute a small minority.

The diversification of opportunities for social mobility should therefore be a major consideration in National Planning. This would mean not only making the existing less attractive opportunities more attractive but also creating new opportunities which are equally or more attractive.

A significant feature of our education system is the production of certificates. The Promotion of skills which are required in real-life situations occupies an insignificant position. Thousands of youngsters going through the education system come out with many certificates, not with any specific skills which can be marketed or utilized. This is true from the secondary school level right upto the University level. One might argue that this is what the pupils and the parents want. However, a careful examination of the empirical situation may reveal that it is a product of the elitist values prevalent in our society. The result is that many youngsters become victims of this dominant social current; they neither acquire skills which can help them find productive work nor secure employment on the basis of their certificates.

In an underdeveloped country like Sri Lanka, youngsters have few work opportunities outside agriculture and informal service occupations. As already mentioned, agriculture and informal sector occupations are not attractive to the educated youth. The result is that they compete for whatever white collar occupations they could apply for. Since these occupations cannot absorb more than a fraction of those who aspire for them, employment creation should take place elsewhere.

While employment creation itself is not a simple planning task, creation of attractive employment is a far more complex process. For instance, the hierarchical nature of our social structure encourages rank ordering of occupations and economic activities. As is well known, when an attempt was made to introduce a more skill-oriented curricular in the early seventies, various activities introduced were quickly arranged in a hierarchical order. There were allegations that poor rural children had to learn brick making, while pupils in prestigious urban schools were given the opportunities to learn modern skills such as computing and photography.

It is in the above context that an integrated and radical approach to social and economic planning becomes essential. If national planning is to serve the purpose of human resources development, its scope should not be defined in narrow terms to restrict it to a limited, often sterile technocratic exercise aimed at employment planning. Rather it should encompass the entire range of related and relevant activities and processes such as educational reform, social policy, income and resource, distribution, reorganization of reward and incentive structures, social mobilization, redefinition of development goals; removal of discrimination, development of strategies to optimize the

utilization of local resources and the development and absorption of appropriate technology. It is not necessary to emphasize that these activities and efforts should not take place in isolation.

Conclusion

Human Resources Development is not merely an attempt at the development of human skills and capabilities through training. It in fact involves a major effort towards planned social, economic and even cultural change. It is thus not only an end in itself but also a means to an end.

In the area of social planning, efforts should include, among other things the arrest of those social currents which impede the full development and utilization of human and material resources. In the area of economic planning, attempts have to be made to develop those sectors of the economy which have the greatest potential for the absorption and utilization of human resources while at the same time arresting those economic forces which tend to marginalize large sections of the local population. In the area of cultural change, efforts should be directed towards the arrest of the propagation of those social values, life-styles and attitudes which impede mobilization and rational utilization of human resources. All these in turn necessitates an integrated approach to national planning and redefinition of development goals.

Notes

1. For a detailed discussion see Hettige (1990).
2. The predominance of female migrants continue to be a major feature of the process of migration (ef. Hettige 1988).
3. Many Studies on Middle East Migrants in Sri Lanka point to this fact (ef. Atukorale, (1986), Hettige, 1991)
4. For a discussion, see (Hettige 1991a).
5. For a recent survey, see Rodrigo, et al. (1987).
6. Available statistics indicate a sharp upward trend in the incidence of suicide in Sri Lanka.
7. Sri Lanka Census of Agriculture 1986:10.
8. Based on author's current research on rural non - farm employment in Irrigation settlements in the District of Anuradhapura (unpublished).

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