

Education Problems of India

Or

What is wrong with the Educational Reforms in India

Despite all the rhetoric that has gone into condemnation of the system of higher education in India and despite all the fanfare accompanying the introduction of the reforms suggested by the different Commissions, educational standard continue to deteriorate. Consequently a general atmosphere of cynicism prevails in the academic circles. The students and the teachers feel that they are pursuing a purposeless and puerile activity. The unending chant of denunciation has done no good to the education in India. The cynicism has led the teachers to blame the students for indiscipline and the students blame the teachers for indulging in other than academic activities, the leaders blame both of them. It seems that everyone is trying to find a scapegoat; these attitudes are nothing else but psychological compensation for our desire to escape the stark realities.

The present system of education is the least exacting as for the labour on the part of the students and the teachers is concerned. That is why even the lukewarm efforts at experiments such as the introduction of semester system, internal assessment have been opposed. Similarly the teachers ridicule them as fad and try to torpedo even the best scheme. That is why basic education met its end. Higher secondary education has failed to achieve its aim, in-service summer institutes have been a failure and 10+2+3 system is branded unpractical. So long as the teachers and taught do not involve themselves seriously in the educational reforms nothing can be done. Even the Government finds it easier to cut the allocation to the educational schemes. Whenever its budget goes awry, educational schemes are the first casualty. Moreover allocations have never been sufficient.

Another problem worth considering is that though teacher is supposed to be the very hub of the process he has no say in policy matters. It seems that the educational policies are hatched by the bureaucrats, who generally try to follow the political motives behind policies. Many a time the policy seems to be theoretically correct but the practical aspect of it is completely ignored. When a teacher is asked to implement this policy there is a sense of indifference and alienation. Moreover, it seems that in the official calculations successful teaching implies popularity with the students and the high pass percentage. How can the students and teachers be governed by these mechanical calculations? Recently a suggestion was afoot that the teacher should be assessed by the students.

This would have led to the appeasement of the students and so education would have been nothing but labour to gain popularity. The planners often blame the implementing machinery but they themselves never learn from their failures. That is why during the last two decades educational experimentation consisted of measures that we have introduced at random. It has been a process of tinkering and not grafting. By making education result-oriented they identify it with vocational training. But the purpose of education should be to develop them as acting and thinking individuals who are capable of analyzing new facts and new situations. Russell in his essay entitled *Useless Knowledge* points out that education should aim at producing better human beings rather than artisans and technicians. Such an education will have a process of enlightenment as well as enlargement of outlook. In fact the planners have been trying to inject ideological considerations into academic matters. For example the concept of socialism in education has come to mean better colleges and inexpensive and universal education. Mass education cannot be education; quality should not be sacrificed for quantity. It can correctly be called literacy and not education.

In fact immediately after independence the Government should have overhauled the much condemned British system, at that time the introduction of reforms and changes would have been easier because education then was limited to a few institutions. At that time we were swept away by democratic aspirations and the government thought of expanding education horizontally within the existing pattern. Today even a minor reform involves hundreds of institutions, thousands of teachers and millions of students. Moreover, demands on our exchequers are so heavy that it seems impossible to overhaul the entire system. In other words all future planning must seek improvements within the existing system. Otherwise also there is no need for total change. After all basically the same system is working in British Universities in a proper manner. What we need is quality control and that we can do even in a democratic way.

It should also be borne in mind that during the last few years whenever students were given representation on academic bodies they invariably sought dilution of curricula, laxity in the standard of education and the condoning of student's lapses. They have never presented the student's point of view and have never played a constructive role. We should not try to appease the students otherwise academic standards will not be raised.

Clearly we should not think in terms of a total change of education and reforms must cover not only the syllabus but also the modes of teaching. This is possible if unqualified autonomy is given to the universities. A healthy competition among the universities will never lower the standard of education. In case of such fears some coordinating agencies at the State and the Central levels may be created. Unlike the University Grants Commission, these agencies, should not hold the

purse because it leads to dictatorial bull-doing. Above all the attitude of the teachers should be changed. The present-day universities give degrees and not education. Only teachers can help to transform this purpose of education. Otherwise also if the teacher is result-oriented, only he will himself become redundant because so called guides would replace him. As the number of teachers is very large, teachers cannot be reoriented overnight. Every educational reform should be preceded by teachers' improvement programmes. It will not be out of place to say that teachers themselves should be periodically tested and if they do not come up to the standards some type of disincentives should be there. Neither the bureaucrats should be allowed to have their own way nor the teachers should consider their work nothing more than teaching a few periods in the classes. The teachers should be forced to carry on work on their subjects and should be made to keep their knowledge up-to-date. If education in India does not improve it would mean an end of political stability and social betterment.

New concept given in the educational reforms is that of work experience. It is envisaged that one year more of schooling will be devoted to professional education and this will help the students to become qualified for taking up jobs immediately after higher secondary examination. They say that every school will set up workshops for carrying on the scheme or imparting this type of education. Every school in India cannot afford to meet the expenses of maintaining a workshop and of employing the trainers. The planners concede that if each school starts one workshop it will be more than sufficient, this frustrates the aim of reform in education. If the choice before the students is limited it is not possible for him to develop his inherent talent for a particular profession. Moreover the schools will also start discriminating at the time of admissions and it may result in malpractices. Apart from it, even this system is not practical. If we want that the students should take up jobs after higher secondary we will have to create job opportunities for them. If we are able to absorb only a fraction of them, the problem will become more acute and more troublesome. Naturally, these types of schemes should not be given for the sake of novelty or for satisfying the curiosity of the people.

Similarly, the educational reform by eliminating the conventional type of failures and also by introducing the grading system we are not bringing any proper change. If we abolish failures we should ensure proper education. Students cannot get good education if the same method of teaching and the same system of examinations continues. The study of the different subjects should increase the general ability and the examination should test the general ability instead of testing their memories to retain the facts on different subjects. If we bring any reform it should be linked up with all the aspects of education, otherwise it might degenerate. So our system of education has been prostituted and corrupted

more by the spirit behind its practical working. Education should not become a tool in the hands of planners; only then something can be done for improving the standard of education.