

INTEGRATION OF SCIENCE WITH EDUCATION

There is a clear perception among policy makers that integration of science with the education delivery system is an imperative to bring about any meaningful change in the life of the average Bangladeshi. The commitment to this principle was reiterated recently by the Presidential Advisor on Compulsory Primary Education, Mr. Md. Mansur Ali Sarker while addressing the meeting of the Association for Science Co-operation in Asia (ASCA) held at Bangkok. The Advisor underscored the importance of a policy formulation process which seeks to achieve a higher level of living standard based on a greater assertion of scientific education.

The meeting, chaired by the Minister of Science and Technology of the Royal Government of Thailand, was significant in a special way because Thailand belongs to that select group of Asian countries which have been able to use technology to leapfrog chasms of poverty into the late 20th century in terms of economic potential and growth. Thailand has much to thank the role that science and technology has played in the dramatic enhancement of its status in the comity of nations.

In his speech Mr. Mansur Ali Sarker said that the government of President Ershad had announced a science policy and a national committee has been set up to investigate various issues concerning development of technology including its transfer and import. The focus of attention on research and development, the Advisor pointed out, was the importance the government was attaching to the efforts of evolving a set of guidelines which could effectively promote development process in countries like Bangladesh which lag behind its Asian counterparts in the application of technology for overall uplift efforts, an agile work force and good teams of scientific experts notwithstanding.

That technology has an important bearing on economic and social progress is not debated any more anywhere but the question is: how far can the LDCs exercise options in the matter. While the developed countries can expect their advanced market forces to impel research towards profit and gain, the role of the same in developing countries has been manifestly different. While following the dictates of the market, many advanced countries have gone into areas of dubious enterprise including arms manufacturing and dumping of goods in the Third World.

Some developing countries are not free from such sins either. A policy of producing arms, chemical weapons and harmful products which generate high profits has been pursued with the resultant misdirected national energies and consequently distorted, if not retarded growth. The developing countries must try to learn from this.

The Bangladesh Advisor on Compulsory Primary Education is in a better position than most to recognise the crucial role of technology in the transition of a country like ours from the depressing situation of today to a higher socio-economic plateau. Citing the emphasis of the Government of President Ershad on education, with special focus on female education, he delivered the message at the Bangkok meeting that lack of resources would not be allowed to stand in the way of formulation of policies which can help usher in an era of progress and well-being of the people. For developing countries like Bangladesh, technology can be the best weapon to overcome poverty, illiteracy and a host of social ills.

The national governments require the support of networking organisations like ASCA which have acquired a vast storehouse of knowledge and experience that can be profitably replicated. By committing itself to the concept of Compulsory Primary Education and the idea of integrating science into every aspect of development efforts the Government of Bangladesh under the pragmatic leadership of President Ershad has already made the first right move.

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