

Quality Education And Teachers

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BEFORE we talk about quality we are to realise what the word education actually means and also that it aims at. Among a number of definitions the one put forward by Willmott, "education is the apprenticeship of life" appears to be an appropriate one. Following Socrates we can say education is to know oneself and to know one's surroundings. Thus it appears that education aims at the full development of a human being with sound mind and body, imbued with independent spirit and analytical mind. "The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think—rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men," says another philosopher.

The full development of personality is the ultimate goal of all educational efforts. In order to achieve this goal, it is crucial to ensure an education in which moral, intellectual, physical and technical-vocational elements are integrated in rich harmony. In education, therefore, stress should be given on such principles as dignity of individuals, respect for personality, freedom, self-determination and individual responsibility.

With these few things at the back of minds, we can now proceed to talk about quality education. Again, in a developing country like Bangladesh where literacy rate is roughly 20% we cannot talk about quality in isolation, the question of quantity also comes in. There is an apprehension that quality deteriorates with the enhancement of quantity. But this is not always true, unless where there is accommodation for 100 students we raise it to 500 overnight without prior arrangement and thus turn the school into a bazar. Though deterioration may take place at the beginning of the introduction of mass education in a developing country it will level off with the lapse of time. In fact, if the whole system works on the basis of a sound planning there should not be any fundamental conflict between quantity and quality.

Again, the concept of quality education varies, for valid reasons, from person to person and group to group. It may mean one thing to a guardian, another thing to a Government planner and a third to a teacher. To a guardian the best education is that education which provides white-

collar job to his ward. A government planner naturally would not like to have an assembly of unemployed youths around him to pester him for suitable jobs. He would, therefore, ask for creation of limited educational opportunities with an eye to the economic activities of the country. To a teacher, on the other hand, the measure of quality embraces the capability of student in mastering 3R's, the ability of memorizing a given range of facts in history, geography, hygiene, science and the like. These facts increase in volumes as the student goes up.

Since the Second World War the view ascendent is that the more stress should be given on production function of education. Birth of economics of education can be clearly dated from the Presidential address of T.W. Schultz to the Annual Meeting of American Economic Association 1960. Here Schultz by education might have meant quality education.

In the midst of these diverse opinions and conflicting interests, how one is to define quality? Still the onus is on one how prefers to talk about quality. In that sense we are in a fix.

If education is to be apprenticeship of life, the mere memorization of a few facts will not help the students in the long run, that will not make them think for themselves, neither their minds will be broadened nor their eyes will be opened to study, to realise and to see things in their proper perspectives and to make judgement and to take independent views.

In short the teachers view of quality does not tally with the criterion set by us. We would rather prefer to see the students manipulate the facts presented before them. They should be allowed to think about them. The inquisitiveness, creativity and innovative ideas are to be germinated in the minds of the students through teachings in the class rooms. This type of lessons should continue from elementary schools to Universities. If properly done, I suppose, this type of education will fulfil our criterion for quality and consequently we shall have no hesitation in naming that education "quality education."

If this type of education can be imparted to students, neither the

guardians nor the planner shall have to worry about job opportunities for these graduates. In the office or in fields or in factories, wherever they will go, by applying their innovative ideas, they will be able to increase production. They will act as entrepreneurs—will be self-employed and will employ others. They will be national assets instead of becoming liabilities. Their merit will be recognised at home and abroad by all and sundry.

But the question is, how and by whom this system of quality education will be imparted giving more stress on meaning and understanding; modern and wider curricula; variety of contents and methods for nursing individuality, creativity and problem solving attitudes; internal tests; relaxed and positive discipline; physical development; emotional, aesthetic and intellectual life; closer relation with community; better buildings and equipment. And what method is to be introduced to achieve the quality?

The whole system is a complex one and is the mediatory infrastructure of teachers, students, guardians, institutions, curricula, libraries, laboratories, examinations, diplomas, playgrounds etc. Further, before changing or promulgating a new system of education in a country the consent of the Government must be obtained.

The type of education we envisaged, quite naturally, will involve all those mediatory factors mentioned above. Now it is the job of a sound and motivated educational planner to take all these factors together and bring a harmony among them and then ultimately come up with a workable solution. The planner needs to be an educationist himself having exposure to the planning system of the Government of the country concerned and has approach to higher echelon of policy makers.

As already indicated, for having quality education in a country, specially in a developing one, a change in the existing educational system is imperative. It is not the change of system alone but also to a large extent the change of attitude as well; motivation of the concerned people lies at the root of its success. The educational planner need not only be an educationist himself but requires to be a

good salesman as well. Then only he will be able to motivate the teachers, students, guardians and Government planners.

Curriculum

In an educational system one of the first things that deserves consideration is curriculum. Curriculum and syllabuses will tell us what to teach. The contents of the syllabi will indicate the horizon and depth to which one is supposed to go on the one hand and, on the other hand they would show how exciting to the students the subject matter could be and how far they could kindle the imagination of the students.

Off and on updating and modernising of the syllabi, specially in science and technology are unavoidable tasks, unless we want to remain stagnant for ages. For drawing up such curricula and syllabi for different stages of education the services of experts are to be requisitioned. The best thing is to have a National Board for curricula and syllabi in every country if it is not already there. In its fold there can be a committee for each subject starting from primary to University levels. Thus a continuity will be maintained and the body can suggest the adjustments whenever and wherever necessary. The Board's duty will be to take an overview in the gradual development in each subject in different countries of the world and to advise the subject committees to take note of the changes and to act accordingly. The Board will also remain alert about the change in teaching methodology and any other aspect in educational philosophy so that the country does not miss the benefit of discoveries and innovations of others. Of course institutions of higher studies will prepare their own curricula and syllabi. In this regard their independence should not be curtailed. They may require to consult the National Board.

Board will give guidance for productions of text books, teacher's guides etc. on different subjects and also for procurement of books and journals for the libraries. An associate of the board may take the responsibility for procuring equipment and apparatuses for laboratories. Thus a central supervision may ensure quality education at every level in the country. (To be continued)