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Education And Income Stratification At A Frightening Level

The reason the state provides education is to have a workforce that is productive. This is why education to a certain level is compulsory. In fact educating the young is important, as it is the social justice issue of our time and a long-term issue for the civic health of the nation. We need to close the socio-economic gaps in educational attainment as educational stratification and income stratification has reached a frightening level. It is also important that low-income students can attain higher levels of education so that they too can participate in the economy and society.

When we consider the poverty rate for families headed by dropouts is more than twice that for families headed by high school graduates this is, in itself, frightening as these are they most likely to be unemployed, less likely to vote, and more likely to be imprisoned than high school graduates. In other words when we know the greatest resource a country may have is the educational level and technical skill of its workforce, it is a national concern. Therefore the most effective way to attain faster economic growth is by spending more on education.

But education by the government as by the private sector is cost intensive. Most everything related to education must be bought. books, chalk, rulers, and teaching aids but though education is costly every citizen is entitled to it. But as education planning for human resource development is difficult when there is so much economic pressure still we must be aware that it is only through education that we can create the manpower we need for economic development. The lack of education prevents people from realising their potential both as an individual and productive member of society but in order to institute reforms, the state must be clear about what education should do for the nation and what role it should play in the lives of the people. If education is to meet the needs of the state, if the government is wise it will concentrate on this sector. But one of the major problems is the presence of divisions within society as that undermines the sustainability of educational institutions because divisions perpetuate social unrest. If education is only for those with financial means to pay, the majority of the people will not gain access to it and will instead produce an apathetic generation.

Developing skills is an economic necessity our early policy makers failed to appreciate as we now have a population that is more of a handicap than asset. But those countries that invested first in education are now reaping the benefit of a well-trained technically oriented workforce. If the elimination of illiteracy is worth the sacrifice, we must get around the constraints like a chronic shortage of funds. However developing countries cannot invest as much on education as industrialised ones so in such circumstances they have only one of two choices - to either lag further and further behind or go forward. The greatest challenge is how to bridge the knowledge gap between them and the developed world as technology is creating socio-economic discrimination between countries and people as only those who can utilise the technological privileges can improve their well-being. It is only by making human capital technologically literate that we can become an emerging economic power.

Although private institutions can provide education in these areas, the majority of students are unable to gain access, therefore the all-over effect is lost. Unless school syllabuses, teachers' training and related matters are recast, or the government sets up similar institutions, improving the human resource can never be speeded up. One reason for this is that investment in higher education is high in relation to spending in other sectors. It is also a belief that the present system produces square pegs in round holes so unless the anomalies are addressed we cannot ensure that students get value for the time spent in schools. If we are to catch up with the rest of the world we need to give our students a far richer curriculum so that each has exposure to science and technology.