

Wider knowledge base

In most advanced countries, during the early years of learning, students get acquainted with as broad-based a curriculum as possible. Mixed syllabuses including compulsory subjects from both Humanities and Physical Sciences are offered as a rule. The merit of this system lies in its balanced approach. Thus a student, who will ultimately prefer a course in any of the social sciences or management studies at university level, will nevertheless be equipped with basic knowledge of Physical Sciences which is becoming a must for every citizen in a fast transitional technocratic era. Similarly, another student, preparing finally for a career as an engineer or accountant, is conversant with as much history and geography as can be expected from a good citizen in any country.

Our system of education at school and college levels had been the opposite of this since the introduction of group curriculums in the early sixties. These groups—popularly called Humanities, Science and Commerce—are possibly responsible for much of the muddle which we face currently. As an outcome of the group system, there is in the country today an army of educated people gainful employment for whom has almost become an impossibility. They are the sad victims of the course system which produces thousands of university arts graduates over the years, who on passing out discover to their dismay that there is simply no use for them anywhere. These people are often otherwise well educated, but they overwhelmingly lack technical know-how and the elementary scientific knowledge and this makes their fitment into the mainstream of nation-building activities exceedingly difficult. On the other pole, there are many highly qualified technocrats in the country who could possibly exercise better leadership in their respective institutions, were it possible to acquaint them with working knowledge of Economics and Civics. They would probably become more complete and capable persons with such a wider knowledge base.

It was reliably learnt that the National Curriculum Committee has drawn up a new curriculum up to Higher Secondary level. The committee will recommend abolition of group systems in the secondary level and urge introduction of compulsory papers on History, Geography, Civics, Physics, Chemistry and Biology. The Committee is reportedly considering also the introduction of work-oriented courses up to Secondary level.

The committee's suggestions are undeniably steps in the right direction. However, better results can be achieved if group systems are ultimately done away with up to Higher Secondary level.