

THE BANGLADESH OBSERVER

DHAKA WEDNESDAY JULY 11 1990

Education And Development

Developing countries such as ours are confronted with two possible approaches when defining education policies either to expand facilities for educational opportunity by increased enrollment (quantitative expansion) with perhaps minor changes in curriculum, teaching methods and the form the examination system should take but with no change in the labour market structure prevailing in the country, or change in the educational costing policies, or, they can attempt to reform the whole system of education by re-orienting the curricula to reflect the real resource requirements of the state. The evidence available of other developing countries attempting to make education more equitable show that when the choice was made for quantitative expansion it did little to ameliorate the chronic un-employment problem nor did it alleviate poverty in any way by encouraging a more equitable sharing of wealth, and only served to exacerbate the economic stagnation prevailing in rural areas and perhaps perpetuated the international intellectual dominance in evidence in most poor countries.

If education is to be made relevant to the needs of the nation development policies must be so designed as to be able to effectively modify the economic and social indicators existing outside of the educational system and at the same time modify the internal effectiveness and greater equitability of the education system itself through the modification of the course content to make it relevant, and appropriate, to the requirements of the rural poor. Only by linking these two ideas together can the connection between education and development be truly served.

If major imbalances within the economy, such as wage differentials and social restrictions which prevents upward mobility, can be remedied it could have the beneficial effect of reducing rural-urban migration through increased job opportunities. The present condition prevailing in Bangladesh in the job market indicates that job specifications are over-stated and even higher and higher levels of education become necessary to obtain even the most menial of jobs. This is one condition which needs to be actively discouraged by the elimination of school certificates for positions like messengers, janitors and low level clerks which do not require any real expertise. Prospective employers will be required to cooperate by playing down the educational requirements now considered necessary for low level jobs.

The chronic teaching shortage has to be overcome by offering positive incentives to qualified personnel to keep them home in order that the country benefits from their expertise and not allow them to add to the brain drain.

In order to maximise the productivity level of the people, particularly the rural populace, primary level school curricula must be so designed that it is oriented towards the occupational requirements of the poor, but it must be remembered that unless rural economic opportunities are not forthcoming so as to absorb the new literate population, any effort to make education at primary level more appropriate to the masses will not have the desired effect. Without the prospect of suitable employment people will tend to look upon education with indifference.

The major problem which will arise from widespread education will be to ensure that capable students from poor backgrounds have the opportunity for higher education at present denied them for want of finance and some kind of subsidy will have to be provided to the promising, but poor student if the prevailing inequalities in the formal education system are to be broken down. Any system which can ensure the capable poor the right opportunity for further education is sure to help in the levelling of existing social difference and in itself will have a positive impact on development issues both within and without the family structure. There are many examples of equitable educational system in the world which we can study afresh and modify in accordance with our own present day needs.