

An Added Dimension To Schooling

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THE system of education we follow and the methods of teaching we practise in educational institutions lend themselves both explicitly and implicitly to the development of an awareness and gradually to the mechanism of achieving excellence in education. Such an end has been emphasized in recent times at all levels of education so much so that a learner's achievement now-a-days has been a joint function of a multiple agents. One of such very important or perhaps the most important agent at present is the tutor of the learner.

Never before was the practice of appointing private tutors so general as it is now-a-days. Even a four-year old child is tutored at home, let alone the teenagers. As a result, home tutoring has flourished as an occupation and taken various forms. The forms and styles of tutoring are taking ever new turn with its ever increasing demand.

Now that tutoring has occupied a position of crucial importance in the teaching-learning situation, and perhaps this is something unique in our country, there is a need to analyze the factors responsible for it.

Some of the factors are:

(1) Schools, for some reason or another, can no more provide its learners with as much assistance as they actually need. Catering for individual differences and, therefore, individual needs, although is the cornerstone of instructional psychology, is not being fulfilled by most of the schools, whether public or private.

(2) Our schools as microcosm of our culture and society highlight excellence in education not enunciating what it is, what are its essential features, mechanisms for developing them, and the most important of them is what significance it bears in one's life. The whole purpose of schooling has, therefore, been reduced to obtaining higher ranks, several A's, distinctions, letter marks etc. as end products and so parents or guardians cannot but put pressure on their children by seeking extra-school help in the form of a tutor. In recent times, it is nothing unusual to find that a student of even upper primary and middle school is being tutored by more than one person.

Too narrow specializations, lack of broad-based general education curriculum at the undergraduate levels etc. produce one-track knowledge at an early stage of tertiary education and, therefore, people tutoring often find themselves incapable of teaching all subjects even to a youngster of the aforesaid levels of school.

(3) With socio-economic changes in our society, our lifestyles have

An educationist discusses the factors responsible for the increasing dependence of the pupils on outside class room help in the form of coaching.

also changed as a result of which parents, particularly the mothers who are supposed to be the best teachers of younger children, cannot help the kids in their learning. Also, there is apparently a sense of diminished responsibility on the part of the parents in matters of education of their children. This often gives rise to too much expectation from schools, on the one hand failing which too much dependence on tutors, on the other. Notwithstanding the failure of schools to perform what they should, as a matter of fact, too much expectation from schools would definitely indicate diminished parental responsibility. After all, the children spend only one-fourth of a day at the most at schools, where they are required to internalize various subject matters. Reinforcing knowledge gathered at school would require a set of proper study habits development and exercise of which would have to be taken care of primarily by guardians and thus a child of average intelligence should be able enough to cope with the requirements of his class level—if, of

course, the latter varies between normal and slightly above normal load. Even a self-motivated child at any stage of schooling would often require parental guidance and supervision. After all, sustaining interest and, therefore, motivation in educational endeavours perhaps, is still the most baffling concern to the teachers, management of which extends beyond formal schooling.

In the wake of such an unprecedented situation, it is no wonder to find advertisements in newspapers asking for smart tutors for even nursery age children and kindergartners. It is a pity that prior to the experience of discovering that learning is fun, things are all set as strait-jackets and delivered to the child. Continual dependence on tutoring inhibits freedom of exercising one's own imagination and, therefore, intellect particularly at a tender age. For some students it is often difficult to judge how much of a given assignment is his own and how much is his tutor's. Our testing procedures and systems of examina-

tions are to blame to a large extent for this kind of illusion.

If the quality of education in schools can be improved, and class size kept manageable, dependence on tutors can be reduced. There is a need to recognize development of proper study habits among children as part of educating them. They must learn how to study, and also how to prepare themselves for quizzes, tests, examinations etc. that they are to confront so frequently in our system of education. It is hoped that once they know the mechanisms of learning for acquiring knowledge, they will be flexible in their attitude towards learning, think and handle subject matters quite independently, and therefore be self-reliant. Tutoring, therefore, would be required only when it is really a necessity, for instance, for remedial purposes. Other things of schooling remaining desirable, a child of average intelligence at least upto the middle school level should not require private tutoring. Young school children of India are not dependent so much on tutors as ours, let alone youngsters of Europe and America. We should aim at natural intellectual development of the child before trying to do any regimentation of the same.