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24

Education, The Key To Change? - II

Jean Claude Buchet

A basic question to which an answer must be found is that of the relevance of primary school curricula. Often altered, most such curricula are too full and their content is out of step with local reality. It seems today that is not just one-off adjustments which need to be considered, but a complete rethink which questions their objectives and redefines their ultimate economic and social purpose. The objectives of education need to be looked at afresh. On leaving primary school, children must have acquired knowledge which enables them to cope with practical situations in everyday life. This point is a crucial one.

For children, the effects of the education systems in most Third World countries today tend to mean breaking with their environment rather than successful integration into it. The present systems give

priority emphasis to traditional education, limiting the development of children's understanding of the world about them.

It is therefore important for partners outside the school, in direct contact with the environment of the village or urban district, to be involved in drawing up the curricula and defining the education practice of the school.

Four approaches must be developed to promote this objective:

There must be a response to a set of needs in the primary education field in order to increase access to school and to improve the quality of the teaching.

★ Practical and productive activities, drawn from local know-how and oriented towards the acquisition of modern tools and knowledge, need to be brought into school;

★ The involvement of society as a whole in the life of the school needs to be boosted through greater involvement of the teaching staff, the parents of pupils and external partners;

★ An interest needs to be taken in the social conditions of school attendance, i.e. the living conditions of children in their environment.

Any development strategy should be based on this essential principle: the school does not function in isolation, it is at the heart of a village or urban district and must lead to children being able to act on their environment later by transforming it.

Once this constant has been established, it should be possible to devise a fairer world, one which shows greater solidarity with children from the back of beyond.

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