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Waste In Education

The relevance of education for meeting the social and economic needs of the people is a recurring theme of the exponents of education as a means of emancipation. However, despite the limited reforms vis-a-vis curricula, formal education still remains highly academic, ignoring the needs of the average man for basic literacy and numeracy. With wastage at the secondary level still high, in the sense that a neglect of the science subjects often forces those who survive this part of the system to opt for liberal arts, knowing fully well that openings for them in the workplace will be limited, the need for a review here should be obvious. But, with the start of the compulsory school programme, it is quite feasible that funds previously earmarked for this sector will be redirected toward the primary sector. However, the government may find itself up against opposition from the private schools if it follows this line of planning.

As things stand now, around 72 per cent of secondary schools are in the private sector and despite 70 per cent of their salary bill being paid by the government, there is a strong voice in the field of education. For the government to be able to resist this type of pressure, a new understanding of what the nation expects from education needs urgently to be defined.

As the government recognises the fact of basic education as a prerequisite for economic and social development, they are honour bound to provide the extra funds needed for making primary education truly universal and, at the same time, develop other levels of learning. But all this will put a tremendous strain on government resources which may not always be possible to sustain especially in view of the amount of wastage within the system. Reducing wastage, therefore, takes on greater importance when we know that this increases the per capita cost and, if this extra cost results in poor human development, we may wake up one fine day, only to find the whole exercise has been wasted.

Other areas of waste can also be spotlighted for, the previous male bias is obviously at the cost of the female, just as urban preferences result in a widening of the rural-urban gap in education; and there are other areas too which need attention, before this sector can be said to be based on a sound footing. Therefore, eliminating wastage must become top priority for, if allowed to continue, the quality and standard of universal education will inevitably have to suffer.