

Compulsory Education And Employment Opportunities

To date, no matter how hard we try, there seems to have been very little success at reducing the rate of illiteracy in the country. To all extent and purposes, it could be said that things have come to a standstill and nothing has changed over the past two or three decades. But, with the increasing realisation that illiteracy is a luxury we can no longer afford for in the modern world it is not even tolerated, the drive for human resource development focuses itself anew on an educational drive.

But, as the focus has now shifted away from the adult literacy programmes to the provision of universal education for the child, the need for establishing schools and expanding the infra-structure of education calls for minute long-term planning which will take in all the aspects of the end result of a successful compulsory education scheme which is, of course, the provision of suitable employment, for the newly educated workforce, or is it our intention to send newly educated youth back to work the land?

Intensified programmes for educating the young undertaken in other countries has caused an awareness of some of the pitfalls for undertaking a programme of compulsory education without a corresponding programme of intensified industrialisation and job creation. Nor were any practical trade-related skills imparted to students which might have prepared them for taking up any form of self-employment. Awakening a little too late to this need has already got several countries into trouble and it behooves us to learn from their mistakes and prepare now for absorbing a newly educated workforce into gainful employment, which is no mean task, for estimates suggest there will be at least one million new entrants a year and, if most of these have received some level of education assuming, of course, the compulsory education scheme is successful, we are in for a rude shock in the future.

But, just any old job will not do for education, even the most elementary kind, awakens new hopes and aspirations among people who, mindful of their new worth, will look for those jobs which will raise their status and take them out of their previous social class. The effect of education on the human mind must, therefore, be properly evaluated if the process is at all to be successful and, side by side with education, a pragmatic programme for job creation must be taken up otherwise it will all have been for nothing and surely nobody wants that?