

The Value Of An Education

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Not all of us really seem to fully comprehend the value of an education in equipping us for our future lives but none of us is likely to get very far without it. But, not just any kind of education will do, for it will not serve our purpose. Although some of us are likely to say education is for education's sake or for equipping the man to lead a fuller life and, to an extent, this may be true but, to be practical, in our society, education, in the main, is to prepare us for a better job. Therefore, it is imperative we strive to achieve the kind of education which will fit us for the future. This is the widely accepted premise, especially for those who come from a background of educated, professional, families but whether or not this concept will also be suitable for the average citizen is a question we must seriously ask ourselves in the backdrop of real life situations.

Most of us who pride ourselves on our intellect have a fanciful idea of the concept of equity and equal opportunity in life, including education, but to be realistic, we must admit this is just an ideal we strive towards and which may not be at all practical within the present set-up. But, if education is to be made relevant to the needs of the nation, development policies must be re-designed so 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 equity of the education system itself, and this can only be done through the modification of the course content.

Most of us are, of course, by now aware how neglecting women has resulted in a lop-sided social situation where rates of literacy are weighed heavily in favour of the male. Although in the main this grew out of the wrong notions which were handed down by previous generations, much of it is the outcome of the prevailing economic conditions and people cannot really be blamed if lack of resources caused them to favour the boy child for, at that time, women were confined to the home and the role of breadwinner was exclusively the male's. Now that times have changed and frequently we find the woman not only helps support the family, in many cases, they are the sole breadwinner. Thus it is inevitable for attitudes to change and this will automatically result in seeing women's education in a new light particularly as more and more opportunities open up.

With girls being given the education which is their right as equal citizens of a modern state, the concept of education must undertake drastic changes for, in the past, education has all too often borne no relationship to every day living experiences. It was frequently under-valued and, being undervalued, it churned out too many misfits. For education to be successful, it must be capable of building up self-reliance in people and increasing their self-esteem. The need to bridge the gap between academics and reality is, therefore, now being realised and attempts made to do this by introducing new curriculums is a step in the right direction although it will still take much time. But the inclusion of agricultural subjects will not, by itself, serve the purpose of fitting the right man for the right job, although it may fit him with a minimum level of skill, but, unless it enables him to function effectively within the confines of his own environment, it will not produce the desired result.

Education must not, therefore, be so limited that it serves to exclude people from higher levels of learning for education must not end with schooling and people must be able to continue to absorb new ideas and concepts unaided. In other words, education must include the teaching of communication skills essential to communal living. To this end the curriculum must include other essentials like team sports which provide people with the basics of cooperation. Problem solving, respect for others, and for their opinions, even when they differ widely from our own and, as most of us are poor in the strictest sense of the term, we also need to be taught how best to make use of our limited resources.

তারিখ ... ০.৪ JUN 1994 ...

পৃষ্ঠা ৫ কলাম ১