



RATIONALISING HIGHER EDUCATION

WIDESPREAD dissatisfaction with the prevailing system and standard of education in the country are getting decision-making people to suggest ways of arresting the decline. The Planning Commission as a first step, suggested that the universities should themselves evolve methods of evaluating their teachers' performance, then go on to rationalise the administration in colleges and universities by bringing each under any one "affiliating body". At present a college that offers both the intermediate and graduate courses have dual affiliations—one from the HSC Board and another from the University—leading to unnecessary cumbersome complications in management.

Another proposal by the Planning Commission is to integrate the different graduate courses under a single head with the content and tenure for "pass" and "honours" similar. Those who wish to specialise in subjects would be free to opt for intensive courses in the same, provided they are proficient in them. This would bring graduate courses nearer those offered by universities abroad, at least in kind if not in standard. Ideally this would also mean that there would be inter-departmental cohesion and the teachers themselves would have to re-learn and catch up with the new graduate courses, which would presumably offer inter-related subjects and a wholistic approach to education.

The Planning Commission also recommends forming a University Education Service, under which a teacher-exchange programme between universities could be initiated; rationalising inter-university departments to cut expenses; encouraging community participation rather than nationalisation to ensure the growth of educational institutions; and evolving ways of recruiting dependable and academically sound primary school teachers and ensuring their continuous service.

The system indeed needs to be looked into critically. But isn't the malaise in the education sector just a reflection of the general erosion of values everywhere? The nation is paying dearly for the intellectual dishonesty, consumerism and the spiritual apathy of the opinion-making sections of the public in every sector. Unless a cure can be found for that, recommendations can change little.

Efforts to improve the situation however must be made by identifying the basic faults within the system that are progressively taking education downhill. The Planning Commission's first recommendation could be a starting point, though it is unlikely that such a performance test would work in a "mutually understanding" professional circle. Beginning from classroom instruction to degree doling our education is based on a compromise system, which offers little that beneficiaries can gain from. To change the intellectual and spiritual makeup of the nation would take a good deal of strength on the part of the academic circle and the actively conscious section of the public.

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