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Education And Employment

The tendency to confuse the aims of different stages of education, primary, secondary and higher, without reference to the question of aptitude and future employments, is one of those persistent fallacies in educational thinking in this country which is difficult to lay to rest. It is hydra-headed. If one tried to dispose of it by an array of well-documented arguments in one area, it surfaces in another.

It was, for instance, argued by one newspaper reporter recently that the fact that only 20 thousand places in different institutes of higher education, including the universities, were available for an estimated total of 70 thousand school graduates who passed the higher secondary education examinations last year betrayed a lamentable anomaly, an unfortunate dearth of opportunities for the development of talent. The unstated premise in this reasoning is clear that every successful school leaver, regardless of his grade and aptitude, had a right to access to higher education, and that if he were denied a place in the universities, the denial amounted to deprivation.

In the first place, 20 thousand places for 70 thousand potential candidates represent statistically a figure of over 28 per cent, which is higher than, for instance, the comparable figures for Great Britain and the USA, assuming that all the 20 thousand had attained a grade which qualified them for higher education. The greater majority, more than 70 per cent on average, were however students placed in the second and third divisions, who could do much better by pursuing vocational courses than by wasting their time and energy trying to earn university degrees which offered them no chances of easy employment.

This is the curx of the whole problem. Reliance continues to be placed on the number of university graduates turned out every year as the only yardstick of progress, and little, if any, account is taken of society's ability to absorb them fruitfully. In consequence, employment among graduates has been rising year by year and has now attained the dimensions of a major problem whose impact is being felt even in politics. The influx of hundreds of students into universities, who have no real aptitude for higher education means also a progressive lowering of academic standards and contributes perceptibly to the growth on campuses of an atmosphere which is wholly at variances with traditional notions of academic life. On the employment side, for instance, one thousand B.A.s. and M.A.s. applying for a post requiring a level of education not higher than matriculation (S.S.C.) shows directly the failure of the present education policy and system.

It is little use blaming those whom we admit. It is society's failures to realise the consequences of unplanned educational expansion and to create alternative vocational institutions where school leavers could be trained in such crafts as offer wider employment opportunities which is responsible, to a large extent at least, for unrest among the young and the feelings of despair growing fast. Real loss and waste result when time and money are spent on turning out low-calibre graduates incapable of practical work, who cannot fit in anywhere.

Considering the immense prestige of degrees we should in our opinion seriously examine the feasibility of creating a new technical degree— B.Tech.— to which candidates who master such crafts as carpentry or tailoring or a dozen other ones might aspire. That should give them the prestige and satisfaction they hanker after and at the same time improve the standard of the professions concerned. We have hitherto been content to leave them to uneducated or semi-educated men who cannot bring to the professions new ideas. Were this to end, new horizons would be opened for hundreds.

That should mean not only more employment opportunity but an increase in the national income and

ultimately should

frustrated young men

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