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Education For Development

When defining educational policy specific to development needs most governments are confronted with the difficulty of deciding which approach to follow. The usual way governments respond to this challenge is by expanding the existing facilities to take in a larger number of students. The alternative is total reform of the present system which incorporates curricula modifications through re-orientation so as to reflect the real resource requirements of the state.

If education is to be made relevant to the needs of the nation, development policies must be designed so as to effectively modify the economic and social indicators as exist outside the education system. The internal effectiveness of the system has to be modified so that education imparted is more appropriate to the needs of the state. This means the modification of course content and the creation of a system pertinent to the needs of the rural populace.

So far, development has resulted in the transfer of human resource from rural areas to urban parts without benefit to the rural poor. Rural education has therefore suffered most in respect of growth and development because this has always been urban-biased. Now, with the increasing pressure on the built-up areas rising to an impossible crescendo, efforts are being made to redirect people back to the villages but, in order to achieve this end, rural education policy itself must become meaningful.

The major imbalances in the economy reflected in the wage-differentials and in the persistent social embargoes which in turn restrict upward mobility, if perpetuated further, will have a disastrous fall-out for the beleaguered economy. Remedial measures, if undertaken even now, could have the beneficial effect of reducing rural-urban migration. Increasing rural employment opportunities as envisaged in self-employment schemes may be the answer we seek but, if this is to be achieved, the rural population must receive the right kind of training which enables them to earn their daily bread. Education therefore must be specific to the needs.

The current job situation still indicates a market where job specifications are over-stated. More jobs need to be created for people who are less qualified rather than extending the present situation where even the most menial of jobs are actively sought after by people with certificates.

This is a sufficient indicator of the lop-sided view we hold of education for development. Under such conditions education becomes a national waste. So far, no government has been able to come to grips with the real issues and define a policy for education which will enable us to educate the nation with the aim of meeting all the development targets.