

The Education Sector - Where Reform Is Long Overdue

At a recent review meeting of implementation of projects under the Education Ministry delegates stated that the pace of project implementation is higher this year. But as in six months only 33 per cent of the target has been achieved, it may not be possible to achieve the remainder in time. This is of immense concern not only because the highest allocation of the national budget has been given to education but it delays needed reforms.

Despite the success in eradicating cheating in examinations and increasing the rate of all over literacy and in female education, the state of education is still in need of improvement if only to justify the expenditure of public money. But simply establishing new schools, colleges and madrasahs is not going to serve the purpose, nor will sitting on the recommendations of the Education Commission of 2003 for more than nine months cut any ice. Yet as we recall, on receipt of the report the Prime Minister ordered the immediate formation of a cell to implement the commission's recommendations for curricular and administrative changes.

Among the major recommendations was the need for single-track education system to replace the present multi-track one. The commission also observed that specialised education should be started from the higher secondary level but as the technical institutes in the country are not in good condition, they cannot serve their purpose. For example training in computers is deficient because it does not suit the demands of the world market. Recently the Prime Minister underscored the need for proper education and training but unless science, technology, industrial arts are at the core of the nation's education system we cannot hope to cope with the needs and challenges of the twenty-first century.

She also said her government has taken various steps to ensure quality education at all levels and that the curriculum and courses are being reformed at all levels. That is good in as far as it goes but unless corruption in the education sector is fully addressed, all the best intentions will ultimately fail. However as we do have educationists and technical persons with foresightedness, and who have prepared some guidelines for the education of our students, it may not be so hard to implement their recommendations. But while reports gather dust on official shelves, the education sector continues to move forward without a rudder. But unless we know and comprehend the aims and objectives of education, we shall continue to flounder.

Dependence on a syllabus and curriculum determined more than 30 years ago will not serve the purpose of the modern world. This must certainly change if we are to meet the demands for efficient personnel to meet world requirements both now and in the future. Policy-makers must give this greater importance because we are not producing what needs to be produced. If the country remains dependent on the uneducated and semi-educated, the country will not progress. If we are unable to provide for, and manage, the large number of students passing out at intermediate level each year, money spent for education is wasted. We must find ways to enter the more sophisticated areas of commerce and though we have a number of educated people, we have not been able to utilize them properly. After all, our human resource is the only real resource we have, so they should be educated in such way that is of help to the country and if we postpone reforms of the education sector much longer we shall pay for the delay. Policy-makers, intellectuals and implementing agencies must immediately chalk out an elaborate education policy if we are to avoid such a setback.