

Education And Development

In order to participate in the modern world it is essential for nations to achieve, and constantly maintain, a high standard of literacy. Generally speaking, those countries who have reached a high level of education as opposed to a high rate of literacy have also, normally achieved high levels of incomes as reward for their skills and these incomes have, in general, been fairly equitably distributed. Exceptions can, of course, be cited, such as Sri Lanka where high rates of literacy has not been followed automatically by high income levels.

Normally there is a close correlation between high standards of education and the many other indices used to measure levels of living in countries around the world. Most particularly productivity levels tend to increase and with them the increased consumption which heralds a higher standard of living. High standards of education accompanied by higher levels of income also encourage increasing levels of expenditure in areas like education as people become willing to invest some of their surplus wealth in the future of their children.

Any realistic development activities taking place in a nation having the welfare of its people at heart will endeavour to improve the lot of its people. Its main course of action must therefore concentrate on educating and training its human resource. As such the potential of its people and the future standard of its human resources must be well thought out and most logically based on developing a more literate, better educated, and more enquiry-oriented society. To achieve this aim it will be necessary to establish a well-developed, well-coordinated, system of universal education. That this will be a cost to the state in terms of both time and money needs to be understood but as an investment will be time and money well spent.

For Bangladesh with its high rate of adult illiteracy a start has to be made to reach out and educate the adult illiterates first in order for them to be able to appreciate what education means. Once this has been achieved it will be relatively easy to persuade them to send their children to school and plans for universal education will automatically meet with success. It is imperative to understand there are no easy solutions and no short-cuts to this still outstanding problem but which is none the less a problem which needs to be addressed at once.

At this crucial moment it is also imperative for us, as a nation, to know where we are headed for. Haphazard efforts at development must not be allowed to continue any longer. If we accept that educating our workforce is the prime pre-requisite for getting the economy into what economists might call the "take-off" point there is no alternative to instituting a comprehensive programme for the eradication of illiteracy. Less than this will consign us to a future unbecoming a nation entering the 21st century with all its unspoken promises.

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