

Education: Policy And System

Sir,

Plenty of materials are being published in these columns of your esteemed daily on "education". Our government is trying to do its best for free primary education in the country. It is undoubtedly a good sign. But, Sir, what is education? And what is it for? We say education is the backbone of a country's development. If it is meant for development, 'our' education should be 'production oriented'. By production oriented I want to mean 'earn as you learn' but not the other way round. We are poor. Traditional formal education has a gestation period, say more or less 16 to 30 years. We cannot afford that time to make our education productive.

So far no clearcut single definition of education is available. Literacy is not education. It is a means to education. Education policy and system should therefore vary from country to country depending on their socio-economic backgrounds and needs.

Education is 'knowledge'. A carpenter who made a chair—may be a masterpiece, a persons who repaired/made a motor at 'Dholai Khal' for your fan but cannot write their names, we call them illiterate. But they are productive, whereas a person who crossed school, college and university obtain diplomas and degrees, may remain unproductive. We call him "educated elite".

Our education policy and system should therefore be so designed that can develop our socio-economic conditions based on our backgrounds and needs, making it productive, right from the start. To do that, alongside primary education, we need 'incentive oriented education system', generating employment and earning. I think informal vocational/technical education with employment, formal primary and secondary education side by side, may go a long way in this respect particularly for the illiterate poor adolescents and adults. Such a system may improve 'our' education towards development. NGOs with educational plans and programmes should concentrate in his direction to achieve tangible practical results worth the money they spend.

Higher education should be in the private sector for the class of people who can afford it. There should, however, be provisions for scholarships for poor meritorious students for higher studies and research.

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PS —

I have just read with great interest your editorial under the caption "The World Bank and non-Formal Adult Education" which appeared on March 23, 1996 issue of your paper. I found your comments and suggestions very good appropriate, and constructive. Thank you for publishing such an important editorial. May I urge the 'letter-writers' to take up this important issue and make their valuable comments and suggestions through these columns of your daily.