

TheNeed For A Fresh Look At Education And Communication In The Light Of National Development Priorities

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Introduction:

Education and communication are of the utmost importance in conscientizing the young about real socioeconomic development priorities facing the nation. In a developing country with enormous economic, social, cultural and political problems, the elimination of poverty, malnutrition, ill-health and unemployment on a national scale should engage the serious attention of educators and communicators in all the regions. And the media of mass communication should keep the national socio-economic priorities before media users so that the real issues are not lost sight of by the people.

Education is not just a social amenity; It is the foundation of the socioeconomic development of the country. A degree from an educational institution has now become a status symbol in marriage markets. It is also a passport to a job. Social status can be achieved in many ways, the least important of which it is a degree. This is not to deny the usefulness of higher education to the social progress of a nation, but to emphasize that in a nation faced with enormous economic problems, education just for the dispensation of degrees has no social relevance. According to census 2011, Kerala has the highest total literacy rate and female literacy rate, but in spite of this student unrest, moral degradation of examiners, marks scandals and many other social evils have been witnessed in this state.

National scene:

What, then is the ultimate goal of education? For a proper answer, we have to look at the total picture of our country. Despite of all our efforts so far, large majority of our people are living below the poverty line, however we define that imaginary line, the mechanism by which our economic destiny is tied to the economic fluctuations in rich countries and the gradual desensitization of our elite to the misery around them?

Kerala is a good example for the progress India made in several areas. It is cosmopolitan state in the sense that people of different religious persuasions have so far lived in relative peace and harmony. And yet corruption is rampant in all walks of Kerala life, particularly in the education field. Jobs and admissions are allegedly sold to the highest bidders. And every institution of higher learning seems to promote sectarianism and casteism. School and colleges are apparently used as weapons to show the strength of each caste order nomination. Won't this sectarian approach to education emphasize wrong social priorities? Is Kerala's example being copied by some regions of the country that are educationally backward and largely illiterate now?

If education does not serve in producing socially conscious individuals who will be ready to work for the eradication of poverty on a national level. "No society can surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable" {ADAM SMITH}. "Sectarianism, fed by fanaticism," as the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire, has said, "is always castrating". The purpose of education is social change. Have Kerala's educational institutions made any substantial study of how foreign money has been invested for the benefit of social progress instead of individual status seeking?

With the inflow of money, some castes and communities have gained control of municipalities, panchayats are educational institutions. The dowry amount has also shot up despite all the platitudes from religious platforms against this social evil and despite existing laws against it. Sectarian leaders in politics and religions quietly acquiesce in this and several others social evils such as accepting capitation fees and job fees. If someone dare tell the opinion leader of Kerala that eradication of poverty should receive primary attention, they will turn around and ask in genuine or dissembled wonder. Where is poverty?

The International Scene:

When we move from the national scene to international scene, we can see the stark reality of about two-thirds of the world's population living in object poverty, ill-health and misery. Sociologists have divided the world into First, Second, Third and even Fourth worlds. Some of them have characterized the inhabitants of the last two worlds as the "Wretched of earth" (Frantz Fanon for example). In whatever way we divide the world, we cannot escape the reality that the rich sectors of the world and those of individuals nations are small island of prosperity in large seas of poverty.

Water, pure drinking water is going to be a scarce commodity in the next century. Unemployment and under employment are serious problems even in the so-called developed sectors of the world. What is more important is that kind of biological decay has set-in poverty-stricken areas of the world. A large number of Asian and African people, particularly women and children are going to suffer severe brain damage caused by malnutrition and starving. Thousands of workers the world over are affected by occupational disease ought from their working environment. Science and technology are not utilized by the world's leaders as much for fighting poverty as achieving a false sense of security through the accumulation of weapons.

Many of our social leaders are not aware that millions of people in advanced countries including some deeply devote Catholics, Quakers and soviet-citizens are totally opposed to the arms are indulged by their political leaders. Are those who guide our educational system bothered by these world problems?

Communication System:

Few experts when discussing national development stress the role of communication in perpetuating international imbalances in the economic structure of the world. They do not emphasize the global constraints working on national system of modern, hightechnology communication.

Economic and political domination of the underdog countries by the top dog mother served in establishing the modern system of educational and communication technology throughout the world. Although some benefits of such technology cannot be rejected by the

underdog countries even after escaping the clutches of political domination, the latter have to reexamine their educational and communication system in the light of national priorities instead of continuing to depend on them blindly.

The use of the modern technology of mass communication can be helpful in national development only when the ideas disseminated with its help are compatible with national heritage and value systems as well as with national priorities. As seen MacBride has said in the report of the international commission for the study of communication problems which he headed; “The few countries in which these discoveries originated still enjoy a massive advantage over other countries where development is still proceeding in tortuous ways, hampered by a poverty which enforces a lack of the necessary infrastructure..... “Indeed, since information and communication may today become the source of the creation of wealth, the system responsible for the existing communication gaps and the inequality in this sphere threaten to widen the gulf between the rich and the poor.”

Conclusion:

Education just for the dispensation of degrees has no social relevance, with the decline in educational standards, there is decline in general quality of life. In the developing or underdeveloped world are not even aware of these problems; instead they are imitating models evolved in rich countries which ironically enough, are beginning to rethink and even reject those models. The trends in education and communication are not conducive to national development. Both our educational institutions and our mass media pass on information to the elite who in turn pass it through their own life's examples to masses. The real priorities of national development are too often forgotten in these two-step flow of information commercial values have seeped into our educational and communication institutions.

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