

EDUCATION PROSPECTS PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES

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Instead of entering into the controversy about the philosophical and practical aspects of education and the various definitions, one can straightaway say that education means transmission of existing knowledge, skills and the various modes of holding the society together in all its ramifications. Even more importantly, by acquisition of knowledge, it is expected that those who undergo education would also be able to meet the newer and newer challenges posed by different and changing circumstances. Coping with environment-material non-material- is certainly expected of the products of education. However, coping with the demands, both material and non-material cannot be done so easily, and this in itself calls for a differentiated education, which has important implications. Thus from literacy to the acquisition of the highest kind of knowledge lies the array of education and naturally those placed at different levels of knowledge inevitably introduce a system of stratification into lower and higher. By and large, in every society, knowledge and particularly the highest kind of knowledge is confined to a small minority and that is why, notwithstanding professions about equality, such confining of knowledge has to be taken note of. It would not at all be wrong to say that the world system is differentiated on the basis of knowledge and the inevitable stratification arising out of it. To give an instance, one could say that super powers have acquired tremendous hold on what is regarded as highest kind of knowledge which unfortunately comes to be largely equated with Science and Technology- development of arms and ammunition, economic prosperity i.e. coupled with economic and political dimension of the rest of the world. Whether one likes such a stratification or not, it has to be accepted that such a state of affairs exists and if so what can be done to rectify it. Even in the case of a particular

society-nation such as India, the differentiated access to acquisition of knowledge reflects a reality.

Education for what ?

Education- acquisition of knowledge, skills is absolutely essential for self-development. Personality development would not be possible without education, which ofcourse is both formal and non-formal, although increasingly the former is more and more emphasized. Thus cognitive development of individuals is certainly a must which has to be rendered possible by education. Cognitive development means inculcation of rationality, which in its turn facilitates control over the situation for the individuals and groups concerned! One could even go further and say that shaping of the situation would also rightly form a part of the cognitive dimension, although it has a moral dimension, because the existing situation and its nature may be legitimately questioned, in which case appropriate action will be triggered for changing it. Even to live in a society a minimum degree of the moral dimension of education has to be emphasized, by which is meant atleast awareness and acceptance of the importance of social-moral living. Living in society necessitates a minimum acceptance of the moral dimension, since social relations are moral relations. Moral aspect of education thus would imply a sense of responsibility on the part of the individual vis-a-vis other individuals. Apart from the cognitive and moral dimension, the cultural dimension of education implies acceptance of the existing culture- material non-material- and also the efforts to acquire excellence, which would bring together individuals and groups. One of the important purposes of education is the transmission and contribution to the cultural pool. Alongwith culture, one has to take note of sophistication and its consequence for differential status and prestige. There is now an increasing awareness and acceptance of the role played by culture in not only differentiation but also in creation and maintenance of distance on the basis of culture. Hitherto, emphasis was mainly placed on the economic and political dimensions only. In a society like India, one need not over-emphasize this point, because it is written large on the various aspects of socio-cultural reality which also had and has a certain measure of economic and political dimension. For example, the distinction between the tribal and the non-tribal, the rural and urban comes to be in the final analysis cultural differentials which also gives rise to economic and political differentials and domination. Every recipient

of education certainly expects that education would ensure the development of earning capacity. Similarly, self-reliance would also be inculcated, since education would necessarily promote control over the situation, if not, its transformation. From the point of view of the individual, acquiring education certainly has a dimension of power and domination over those who have not been able to acquire education. Super powers are competing with each other for acquiring highest kind of knowledge- scientific, technological, so that they could retain their existing power of domination over the rest of the world.

Social Development :

While the individual acquiring education is mainly concerned with his own development, the society at large (State) is certainly very much concerned about education promoting social development in the most comprehensive sense of the term. The society expects that the inputs of education would ensure economic political and socio-cultural development in order to make the society richer in every way. Education is looked upon as an investment in man which, apart from ensuring economic returns, would also mean turning out of a better person- an efficient, well-rounded person at the end of the educational sojourn. It is expected that the inculcation of rationality through the process of education, would help promote efficiency and skills which would facilitate economic prosperity for the society concerned. Likewise, the scientific temper as an adjunct of rationality, would enable the recipients of education to question the basis of even social order, in case they feel it is unjust. It is here that the concept of social responsibility assumes great importance. While the individual is interested in his own development, society is interested in the inculcation of a sense of social responsibility which can be discharged probably only by participation and co-operation on the part of every individual in the affairs of society in a positive manner. The awareness created by the inputs of education should enable the recipients of education to properly appreciate the lot of the deprived and the dis-privileged and ofcourse the reasons underlying it, so that steps could be taken to redress such disadvantages and deprivations which really means social change to bring about a desired type of society. It is also expected that a given polity needs educated, informed and watchful citizens, so that they would neither allow political parties, particularly the ruling party to monopolise power and to ensure people's positive participation

in the political process so as to make it conducive for creating a better social order. The inputs of education would also promote socio-cultural development, so that every individual can meaningfully participate in the cultural and social activities.

Education at different levels :

There is no doubt that in every society, education operates at different levels, ranging from literacy to the acquisition of the highest kind of knowledge which would include not only science and technology but a philosophical, moral and critical analysis of socio-political and economic order, so that recipients of this type of education can be entrusted with the responsibility of throwing up new ideas so as to improve the existing socio-economic, political order. Ofcourse, one has to take note of the fact that particularly the acquisition of the higher knowledge in the field of Science and Technology has created problems all over the world in the sense of separating such groups from the rest of the people and also by promoting their undue domination in society. In fact, a philosophical, moral and critical analysis of the state of affairs and the existing tilt of the balance of power and domination in favour of the minority of highly educated scientists, technologists etc. can be either averted or rectified from time to time. The various levels of education ranging from literacy to the highest kind of education would automatically ensure the much needed division of labour, without making it anomic, because when the division of labour is neither free nor equal, a society becomes oppressive can be both designed and monitored. The inculcation of education would sensitize people to both understand the nature of the socio-economic, political order and also to question it as and when necessary. A careful blending of technical and social knowledge would enable a society to strike a balance between technological developments and moral development, in the sense of social responsibility and adhering to ideals.

Institutionalisation of education :

It is customary to emphasize the role played by family in providing a sound basis for education through personal face to face-interaction and socialization. However, alongwith such socialization arises the fact of differential educational careers for which families belonging to different status groups provide the basic foundation aspirations,

motivations and facilities. It is equally well-known that modern education cannot be limited to family and has to be formalised outside the family where naturally society and the State step in. The formal nature of education requires institutionalisation right from the pre-school education to education of the higher type. In a way, it should be mentioned that even the non-formal education has to be institutionalised, although the rigidity latent in institutionalisation can be considerably reduced so as to take note of the differing situations, needs, resources and aspirations of the people concerned for whom the programme of non-formal education is designed. Institutionalisation of education naturally gives rise to bureaucratisation in order to administer the programme of education at all levels. This again may give rise to mechanical adherence to procedures, rules and regulations and smother the very creative aspect of education. It can be easily appreciated that, rising numbers of those who want to go in for educational programmes at various levels, certainly necessitate a good deal of administrative and bureaucratic set up which is made even more rigid by the intervention of the State (a) in providing required finance and (b) by imposing a common set of standards, procedures, rules and regulations, evaluation of educational examinations, programmes and so on.

The institutionalisation of education proceeds with the premise of homogeneity in education although such an assumption goes awry when one notices that those who enter the various streams of education, come from different backgrounds and as such may not be able to fully benefit from the very so-called standardised programme. From the most interior and remote villages to the capital of the country, systems and programmes of education are planned and implemented more often than not, with considerable disregard for the differing situations. As mentioned earlier, because of the unequal access to education to start with, the product of education cannot be expected to be equal in its outcome. On the other hand, society and State expect turning out of a homogeneous product. Similarly by imposition of standardised programme of education, there can and does arise a mismatch between life and education. If the purpose of education is to enrich life of the individual and ofcourse enhance the level of society, such a mismatch would be counter-productive particularly when education has kindled aspirations and expectations. On the other the migration of talent to other countries and also the internal migration to educational centres of repute and also into certain professions, vocations and careers

generally in metropolitan areas leaves the major part of the country high and dry. While the majority of those who 'go through' the standardised programme of education find it uninteresting, irrelevant and even difficult to cope with. That is where the recipients of higher education have to be sensitised to their responsibility towards the entire society and not be only self-oriented. The active involvement and participation of those who have received higher kind of education in the appreciation of and solving of the problems of the common man by using his technical professional knowledge without impairing human dignity would help to improve the situation. Thus a two-way process of communication and interaction is needed to attain this end.

The Indian Situation :

Even as we want to discuss the prospects, problems and perspectives of education in India, it is necessary to make a brief reference to the pre-Independence period. Traditionally, education in India was restricted to very few. Initially, education was equated with knowledge of scriptures which handed down from mouth to mouth only to those who were privileged to get it. Ofcourse, it is very well-known as to how knowledge of epics and Puranas was also transmitted from mouth to mouth mainly by using the vehicle of Prakrit languages so as to reach the masses, while the knowledge of scriptures viz., the Vedas and Smritis was handed down through the vehicle of Sanskrit. Even women from higher strata to whom knowledge of scriptures was made available, came to be excluded at a point of time from such knowledge. Practical knowledge of engineering, architecture-urban planning, construction of houses, bridges, dams, reservoirs etc. has been properly documented although there was hardly any formal training about it and such knowledge was transmitted within the family and caste by and large. Similar observation could be made about the knowledge of medicine. Ofcourse, handicrafts had flourished which were mainly destroyed by the British rule. By and large, the kind of education which was available was either scriptural or pertaining to devotion to God which was basically transmitted orally. Even technical and scientific knowledge mentioned above, was confined to the family concerned and passed on from one generation to another. The picture one gets is that of education and knowledge being restricted to a small minority.

The British rulers, while they did not want to interfere in matters of religion and social-cultural affairs, nevertheless took the step of introducing modern education through English. It would not at all be wrong to say that the kind of education they wanted to make available to the people was desired to create a class of lower bureaucracy in India. That is perhaps why the British rulers were extremely tardy in allowing the introduction of professional and technical training. Even recruitment to modern education as provided by the British was monopolised by the castes and classes who had the tradition of education and as such there came about a convergence between the holders of traditional education and modern education which led to their absorption in bureaucracy, though at lower levels. This ofcourse had important implications for the imputed exploitation by the lower echelons of bureaucracy as far as the illiterate, ignorant and poorer sections of population were concerned; for example in terms of land records, moneylenders' records and so on. The entry into education provided by the British assured white-collared employment, though confined to and enjoyed by certain groups only, which became a matter of discontent for the majority of the people in course of time. Yet, it should be mentioned here that education for depressed classes became a possibility only because of the British rulers' insistence reflected in the various enactments. Dr. Ambedkar's phenomenal progress in the field of scholarly work and ofcourse his signal contribution to the uplift of deprived and disprivileged castes, must in no small way be attributed to his entry into modern education. Of course he was greatly helped by some of the princes like Sayajirao Gaikwad of Baroda and Shahu Maharaj of Kolhapur who were themselves exposed to western ideas of social justice, human dignity, equality through modern education. Confining oneself to Maharashtra, mention has to be made of various social movements, particularly The Satya Shodhak Movement, which systematically paved the way for questioning the monopolisation by a certain section of entry into modern education and, therefore, into echelons of bureaucracy. A clear-cut-relationship between modern education and absorption in new occupations was seen by the proponents of such movements and that is why emphasis came to be laid on the right to modern education for all, irrespective of castes and classes.

Even though the British rulers tried to provide restricted type of education, the generation of early learners drank deep of Western thought, ideology, values and the political framework viz., democracy

and were naturally keen on demanding the same for the Indian people. Further, the decline not to say destruction of Indian economy as a result of foreign exploitation also became an important issue on the one hand and emergence of nationalist thinking- nationalism and ofcourse sustained efforts on the other hand to carry on the movement to its logical end viz., complete independence from the British rule. One major plank of the nationalist movement was the development of nationalist education and particularly nationalist educational institutions in Maharashtra, as exemplified by the Deccan Education Society, and in other parts of the country too, e.g. Dayanand Anglo Vernacular Educational Society, for the spread of education. By founding institutions for modern and higher education and learning, efforts were made to create national resurgence amongst the recipients of such education. A critical analysis of political and economic framework was rendered possible and at the same time, self-respect and self-reliance were sought to be emphasized. Though to a very small extent, the British rulers had succeeded in creating a class of 'Brown Sahibs' who tended to distance themselves from the common man and particularly those engaged in nationalist movement. Ofcourse, systematic efforts were made to throw open the highest kind of service in India viz., Indian Civil Service, to Indians and that is how to ensure participation of Indians at the highest level of policy making and policy execution. Here again, inevitably, such opportunity was monopolised by the high castes and classes. Therefore, parallel movements for providing education to those who have been erstwhile deprived of access to modern education, were launched e.g. the Rayat Shikshan Sanstha, Women's University in Maharashtra, adult literacy work and so on. As a result of the British rule and their deliberately restricting the development of industries and agriculture, the problem of unemployment confronted the people starkly in their face. Moreover, the kind of education which was provided, was more of an academic type and there was no direct relationship between education and employment. In spite of the strides made by modern education during the British rule, the percentage of illiteracy tended to be as high as seventy percent. Thus, on the one hand, education had kindled the nationalist flame and also that of social reforms-radical change of social structure, opportunities were very restricted which certainly inflamed discontent and dissatisfaction. Ofcourse, the performance and contribution of those who had acquired higher education added to the self respect and assurance of the nation in the sense that

Indians would not be found to be wanting in excellence and achievement in any field for which they were trained, may it be scholarly, administrative, professional skills and so on.

Even though one speaks of the Post Independence period, one has to remember that promises were made during the pre-independence period such as removal of illiternity and ignorance and making education relevant for man and society, ensuring that education would contribute to overall development of the nation including ofcourse national intergration as well as the development of regional identities and culture. The post-Independence scenario has to be discussed in the light of some of these promises. In the first place, needs which were to be urgently satisfied were - man power development and training, development of the nation so as to ensure economic prosperity through the expansion of industries by using the inputs of science and technology and also by promoting agricultural development on scientific lines. It was equally regarded as important to tie up development with social justice, which in its essence means that education, which was supposed to be a major instrument of development, would take care of the principles of equity and social justice by throwing open education at all levels to every one who desired to partake of such education. On the other hand, emphasis was placed on the training and education for excellence so as to build a strong economy for the nation.

In order to achieve this end, several modalities were employed such as the State, Community, Caste, Religion etc. to provide the required kind of education, which had both quantitative and qualitative dimension. The State had to intervene in a big way to promote highest scientific and technological knowledge through the founding of several institutions of higher learning such as the Indian Institutes of Technology in different parts of the country, All India Institute of Medical Sciences, Institutes for Agricultural and Research Development and so on. It is indeed well-known as to how the State has provided tremendous amount of subsidies for the students studying in such Institutes, so that they didn't have to pay the economic fees but highly subsidised un-economic fees. The community by and large also undertook the task of starting educational institutions right from the primary schools to colleges and other institutes of higher learning. Inevitably, factors like caste, religion, came to play an important role in the expansion of education. In order to expand education at various levels, some of the important components required, were obviously finance, personnel and

ofcourse, motivation. The proliferation of educational institutions certainly made great demand on highly trained personnel which was not always available both in required numbers as well as in terms of competence and quality. This was particularly so in the mofussil areas, where higher education also has spread in the shape of colleges. Coupled with the expansion of education which is reflected in the number of Universities and Institutions of higher learning as they exist to-day, there are about one hundred thirty universities and atleast hundred institutes of higher learning and ofcourse thousands of high-school, middle schools and primary schools and naturally with the enrolment of student population in these institutions of educationm several problems have come up such as the drop outs and wastage. For instance, sixty percent of the children who enter in class I, drop out before class V, which means that our school system is adding every year an average of fifteen percent of the first year enrolment to the illiteracy cohort of the country meaning that school system has in fact added to illiteracy rather than literacy. This drop out continues throughout the education system, becoming eighty percent by standard VIII and about ninetyfive percent by end of the first University degree level. This is a form of human and financial wastage which a poverty ridden and resource scare country like India can ill-afford. Moreover, there is a direct relationship between poverty and drop out which becomes even more glaring when one remembers that all these institutions of education are subsidised by the Government through direct taxes which impinge heavily on the poorer sections. Thus, there is a transfer of resources from the poorer to the well-to-do sections so as to run these institutions which again means that the ideal of social justice and equity is far from realised. It is indeed well-known that education is from a homogeneous entity because of the unequal availability of the major components mentioned above like finance, personnel, motivation etc. in different States of the country and even within a State in different sub-regions and ofcourse the urban-rural hietus is too well-known to need repetition.

Aspirations and Achievements in the field of education :

Apart from providing scientific and technological development and ensuring economic prosperity, education has been looked upon as a major instrument of even distribution of educational opportunity and the consequent participation in the fruits of developmental activity. In short simultaneously with promoting development, education in

itself is needed to be continuously informed by the philosophy of social justice. In the Indian case, this has acquired a particular edge, because education has been denied to sizeable sections of the population of which illiteracy can be regarded as only one indicator. Illiteracy necessarily means a certain kind of menial employment, if and when available, and closing of the vista for majority of the children and adolescents who are engaged in such employment. At the same time, considerable investment has been made for providing highest kind of education and training so as to provide a highly equipped manpower for handling the intricate task of development, which is reflected in the number of institutions of higher learning. It is again a patent fact that the increasing numbers of people with every decade also makes further demand on both the quantum and quality of education. Inevitably, one speaks of the resources crunch which is not merely financial, but even more so with reference to personnel. Then again, the prevailing ideas about the physical space and layout of educational institutions also make it more difficult to provide education at all levels for the rising numbers of the people. The gap between aspirations and achievements is indeed too well-known. However, the understanding of such a gap is crucial. In the first instance, one must state that there are several bottle-necks and lacunae which hinder the fulfilment of aspirations. Social structure as it operates, is such that it is heavily biased against the new entrants into the field of not only modern higher education but also at the primary level- even for imparting literacy. Such a bias against the poorer, deprived and disprivileged sections has naturally resulted in the demand for special reservations for certain sections of the population such as scheduled castes and scheduled tribes in particular and also other backward castes and groups. It would be interesting to point out here that religious minorities like the Muslims and the Christians from Lucknow demanded special reservations for them in education at various levels (based on a study of minorities in Lucknow in 1985). Several studies viz., my study of 'Scientists in Academics and Industry', 'Management Students in Western India' and, Study of Medical and Engineering Students in Bangalore etc. have pointed out time and again the prevailing relationship between social stratum and the pursuit of certain kinds of educational career viz., professional education. Thus professional education and education which is both prestigious and rewarding financially has been monopolised by certain groups who have had the benefit of higher education in their family. The facility and felicity of English

medium also has been brought out as an important factor facilitating entry into and successful completion of such prestigious courses leading to prosperous careers. Social structure thus has to be understood in terms of social stratification which does not have only the economic base but also has a significant cultural component. If one looks at the various courses and the institutions providing such courses ranging from village school to Central Universities and particularly Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi University and the various Institutes of Technology and institutes enjoying high repute and prestige, it would be obvious as to how the various components constituting educational system viz., the students, the teachers and the parents mostly belong to higher socio-economic echelons. This again has important implications for the quest for standardisation and insisting on uniform curriculae, syllabii, system of evaluation and so on. Even in a given city, it would be totally wrong to imagine that the various educational institutions preparing candidates for the same examination, do not have similar students, faculty as well as parents so that one may not necessarily expect relatively similar performance, achievement and successful absorption in occupations and careers which are regarded as both prestigious and financially rewarding.

Culture :

Culture signifies a way of life, outlook on life, values, perception of reality, ability to transform reality in the desired direction, ensuring one's development and also that of society etc. Stratification also affects culture in the sense that the very perception of the goals of education differ from one stratum to another, thus enquiring into perception of goals of higher education amongst a group of talented students and average students, it has been noticed that those who are more or less the first entrants into higher education tend to emphasize the role of culture viz., that at the end of their successful completion of education, they will be regarded as 'Culture Persons'. This is because explicitly or implicitly they are aware of their not belonging to the so-called 'cultured groups' again in the sense of various types of sophistication as expressed through language viz., particularly the use of English language for conversation and interaction amongst friends, dress, cultivation of certain tastes-music, art etc. Because such students are more often than not excluded from the so-called 'sophisticated' groups, and therefore are looked down upon or at best tolerated and that is why such students accord primacy to culture as the most important goal of higher

education. Poverty also is responsible for stultifying the importance of education both from the motivational and achievement angles. The very value of education is disregarded. Ofcourse, as for the parents of such students, they naturally expect that at the end of their children's education they would be naturally absorbed in prestigious and economically rewarding jobs and careers and any disappointment on this score would considerably reduce the importance of education for these parents and ofcourse result in frustration for those who have received education. The all India cosmopolitan culture, international culture, city culture, small town culture and so on are associated with the kind of education which is provided to kind of students by the kind of teachers by the kind of institutions. More often than not, the vicious circle is perpetuated, defeating the very purpose of education viz., to make every one feel equal, independent, self-respecting and readily acceptable and accepted by all. The purpose of education is to 'understand' all... the various situations, the various groups, sub-groups and so on, whereas higher education in particular, as it is pursued now, tends to promote segmented culture and cultural groups. Teachers by and large in most of the studies have emphasized the importance of discipline and as such expect the student body to be disciplined which has direct implications for conformity instead of growth and change.

Alienation of the educated from the masses of common people

Education had become an instrument of personal and social isolation instead of integration in every sense of the term. Even if one were to casually visit some of the institutions of higher learning mentioned above, this fact would be obvious. Even in any college in a city, there is more or less a clear-cut bifurcation between those who had English as their medium of instruction and others who did not have it. Dress, mannerisms, pronunciation, affectation and what not, characterise the so-called elite and the chosen. Some time ago, young men and women from Bombay were interviewed and they were extremely proud of asserting that though they were physically located in Bombay, they were in every respect leading the life of a New Yorker in matters of dress, pursuit of arts, diet, recreation etc. Inevitably the question of contact between the educated and the common masses hardly arises. One can give analogy of the passing out by the blacks in white society in America. Education is certainly

looked upon as a lever of social, economic and occupational climbing

Politicization of education :

Spread and expansion of education far and wide has also meant its politicization. As mentioned earlier, various ethnic groups and interest groups are keen to promote education, so as to have a set of loyal followers and acceptors of what those groups stand for. The management of these institutions by and large expects, particularly the teachers and also the students to conform to its values and thereby further realise of their interests from their point of view. It is indeed well-known as to how elections for student bodies are fraught with most naked participation and interference by political groups, factions and parties. Some of these elections are mini-elections for Assembly or Parliament, where relative strength of different political groups and parties are put to test. Naturally, instead of putting a premium on education and the attainment of educational values, utmost importance is attached to participation in the so-called University or College politics and grabbing of leadership by hook or crook becomes the norm. The various kinds of malpractices can in no small way be explained in terms of politicization of education. This is not to suggest that the entire system of education has been politicized only in this way, because there are quite a few examples of ideological basis of student activism, which ofcourse was more pronounced during the pre-Independence period.

Devaluation of education :

By and large, it can be said that there is a mismatch between education and life- particularly in respect of making a living. Several courses, which the majority of the students go in for, do not enable them to earn a living as soon as they finish their education and even if they were to get any employment, that employment has very little to do with the education that they have received. Even in the case of engineering and medical degrees, the products of some of the engineering and medical colleges are devalued, if not de-recognised by their relevant professional bodies. Therefore, there has been a trenchant criticism of some such products for not only being unemployed but even more so being 'unemployable'. Imparting of skills to meet real life situations has been woefully absent in most of the educational courses. In addition, false notions of dignity and

prestige attendant upon acquiring of degrees also renders the recipients of such degrees unprepared, not to say unfit, to meet the challenges of life. Unfortunately, education is regarded as a homogeneous entity, which is far from being so. Nurturing a sense of excellence and imposing those standards on others or rather using these standards to devalue and debunk other institutions and their product is again an exercise in unnerving the recipients, not to say their parents. It is high time that the gap between the so-called centres of excellence and the so-called ordinary institutions be bridged so as to benefit the former in particular and the latter too. The criticism of education and its product in season and out of season further adds to the morass and demoralisation of the students as well as teachers. The top heavy approach operating in the educational policy viz., creating islands of excellence such as the Indian Institutes of Technology, certain Post-graduate Medical Institutes, some Central Universities etc. result in the migration of talent from the country to affluent countries and also within the country. Due to the undue emphasis given to catching up with other highly developed countries, research is carried out in areas which may not have direct relevance to the issues and problems of development within the country, and that also may be one of the reasons why there is a migration of talents apart from other factors like lack of sensitivity to social and economic reality on the part of students and also teachers. It would not be wrong to say that the conduct of education and educational institutions leaves much to be desired by way of unimaginative formulation of the content of education, process of education, interaction and relationship between teachers and the taught and ofcourse a relative isolation of educational institutions from the rest of society. Undue emphasis on rules, procedures, uniformity of standards has been the bane of most of the educational institutions operating in the country with the result that innovative thinking is not only discouraged but is sometimes even penalised. In various studies of students of natural sciences, it has been brought out that there have been hardly any appreciation of understanding of social reality and all that they are interested in is to enter into well-paid jobs and have only vague notions of according topmost priority to science without adequately understanding what science means. Unfortunately, the bifurcation of students between science arts and humanities has been largely responsible for inculcation of such attitudes and ofcourse as far as the engineering and medical education and its products are concerned, right from the entry into

such colleges, such students tend to distance themselves from the rest reflecting utter lack of sensitivity. Academic training without practical training and confronting real issues even of a professional nature, has been responsible for this gulf as well as the inability and incapacity of the students to solve the concrete problems. In some of my studies of scientists, science administrators who were themselves highly educated and proficient in solving important theoretical and practical problems voiced their opinion in favour of reorientation of courses for the University product so as to enable them to come to grips with concrete problems and be of utility to the organisation employing them. Due to the devaluation of education, those who are highly trained in science do not want to reach at any level unless ofcourse they are compelled to do so, for lack of any other employment. Naturally, teachers of science would not present the best talent available. The colossal problems of removing illiteracy and ignorance particularly amongst the deprived and disprivileged cannot be adequately tackled without active participation and help from the recipients of education, at all levels and a certain kind of internship, orientation to practical problems, interaction and working with common people which is lacking to-day, be instituted.

How to make education more meaningful, interesting and useful to the recipients of education and also to the imparters of education :

At the outset, it must be mentioned that traditionally, one may speak of imparting of education. However, on a closer scrutiny, it is very clear that those entrusted with the task of imparting are also continuously learning not only the subject matter which they are supposed to impart, but even more so the psychology of those to whom they are supposed to be imparting as well as creatively participate in a two way communication and interaction. There is no such thing as talking to but talking with. The prevailing asymmetry between the teachers and the taught at all levels rather than participating in a common endeavour to increase the pool of information and knowledge and insights into life and reality is crucially required. A great measure of realism is needed in designing the system of education so as to be suited to the needs of the country. Adoption of foreign models or even within the country elitist models create a sense of inferiority and despair amongst a very high majority of those participating in the educational system. Education has to be

treated as functional requirement for problem solving at all levels, right from the primitive tribes to the most sophisticated strata of our society. Acquisition of knowledge and skills needs certification not in the form of diplomas and degrees but in the creative, enhanced capacity to deal with the problems as and when they arise, on the spot in any given city. For example, if people have to be equipped with the required knowledge of science and technology, then they should be made competent to deal with their own urgent problems, so that efficiency, skill and cost reduction will be assured which can help generate self-employment and income. This would obviate the necessity of migrating to towns and cities. It may be argued that this is easier said than done, but fortunately during the last quarter of a century and more, various groups of those highly trained in science and technology have engaged themselves in tackling the problem of transmission of the knowledge of science and technology to the common man in his or her own setting. The work of the Kerala Sastra Sahitya Parishad is too well-known to need any detailed description. However, the essence of the work lies in the fact of scientists working with people and conveying the message of science and technology to the common man in his own language so as to make it useful for solving urgent and day-to-day problems. It is customary to weep over the lack of distribution and marketing facilities. That is exactly where not only the Management experts but also social scientists can play and do play an important role in ensuring build up of a suitable human organisation to solve such problems. The artificial distinction and distance between natural sciences and social sciences and Humanities really dissolves in a field setting and thus the prevailing caste system in the field of knowledge needs to be undone if goods are to be delivered. In the endeavour of making education relevant, accessible and directly useful, co-operation of everyone is needed. In the entrenched systems of education, bureaucracy runs supreme and rules, regulations, precedence manage to whittle down the process and fruits of education. Therefore, it has to be asserted that bureaucracy in education is an instrument and a servant and not the master. It is not unusual to run into the Vice-Chancellors who have themselves been teachers once upon a time, functioning essentially as administrators and bureaucrats and thus spoiling the very purpose and process of education. Education, if it has to be a really useful input, has to be subjected to scrutiny from time to time and it cannot be so unless and until there is a continuous feed-back and monitoring of what is

happening in the country in the pool of educational material. This is particularly so in the field of social sciences although its importance for science and technology cannot be under-rated; otherwise one comes up with projects and programmes prepared from a purely scientific and technological perspective in total disregard of the substantive situations meaning the needs of the people; viz., the big dams and construction of big industrial projects without in any way providing the wherewithals for the common man, who is most affected by such projects. Education is a crucial input and service which facilitates understanding and helps the development of manpower so as to accept the challenge of any situation successfully. If such a momentous task is to be performed by education and ofcourse those entrusted with the task of providing education, traditional attitude of education being made available at a very low cost has to be given up and it has to be treated atleast on par with other important services. Pious exhortations about the noble profession do not help when it comes to a realistic appraisal of the whole situation. Education is a service from within and not from without if it has to fulfil its goals.

