THE EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH

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With a few exceptions, all the countries of Asia and the Pacific region belong to what are called "developing" countries. India is one of them. There are certain matters in the field of education, training and general welfare of youth which would seem common to these countries. It may be worthwhile to take note of these matters as they constitute the background against which proposals for the education and training of youth are to be considered.

These matters include low literacy, low standard of education, pressure of expansion of educational facilities, disparity in the provision for education between urban and rural areas, special backwardness - social and economic - of some particular communities and regions, inadequacy of financial resources for education and other social services, lack of industrial development, low rate of economic growth, unemployment among educated and other young people, and higher social prestige of white-collar jobs.

India, which became independent in 1947, may be taken as an example. In spite of efforts since then, the literacy rate, as revealed by the 1971 national census, rose only to 29.4%. In other words, more than two thirds of the population is still illiterate. Similarly, 70% to 75% of the population still live in rural areas, and practise agriculture, although there is a continuous movement of men, women and children from villages to towns and cities. Simultaneously, the villages are themselves becoming quite prosperous.

In the area of educational expansion, the country has made considerable progress. For example, the enrolment of children of ages 6-11 has risen from 10.9 million to 54.2 million between 1947 and 1971. This means that approximately 80% of children of primary school age have already been brought into schools. The average quality of primary schooling, however, needs considerable improvement. There are isolated schools, mostly located in urban areas and charging high fees, which can compete with the best in the world. But most of the government, local body and recognised private schools, where the bulk of students receive their education, suffer from inadequate physical facilities such as

buildings, furniture, science apparatus and other teaching aids, and lack financial resources for co-curricular activities, mid-day meals, and free supply of books, stationery and uniforms, all of which are considered to be essential ingredients in any modern system of education. To avoid any misunderstanding, however, I must say that since becoming independent India has made good progress in education in several directions. Practically all over the country education has been made tuition free up to the first 8 or 10 classes; free books, stationery and uniforms are being supplied to poor children, and a beginning has been made in the provision of mid-day meals to school children. The available financial resources have, as a matter of policy, been concentrated to improve the quality of teaching personnel with a staggered programme for the construction of school buildings and staff quarters. The situation at the secondary and the university stages of education is similar.

It would appear from this that, while the problems of out-of-school youth have to be appreciated, understood and tackled, it may be difficult to attend to them at the cost of the young people already enrolled in educational institutions. Out-of-school youth deserve attention on human, social, and political grounds, particularly in a democratic society. But for the purpose of creating enlightened leadership, growth of efficient manpower and economic development of the country, institutional education and training need to be planned properly and whatever institutions are established should be well-provided and of adequate standard.

To avoid competing claims in this area, it may be best to consider the problems of in-school and out-of-school youth together and to make the best use of the available resources. This approach is dictated also by the concepts evolved by the modern science of management. Such an approach may be found more economical and fruitful even for countries with richer financial resources.

Take the problems of secondary education, for example. In India, as in most of the developing countries, secondary education is more or less a single track system. There are in this country more than 35,000 high and higher secondary schools. The enrolment in each of them varies from 400 to 2000 approximately. Nearly 20% of children in the 14-17 age-group have already been admitted to these schools. They are usually full to their capacity. By and large, however, they provide only general education in the subjects of humanities and sciences. In order to improve the employability of the school graduates and also to fit them better in the national economy, various recommendations have been made

from time to time to vocationalise secondary education and to introduce job-oriented courses. Thinking in this direction has gone on for quite some time, but with little progress.

The main hurdles in this area are lack of resources for the schools, the social and economic value of a university degree, and the preference of the professional colleges for students with a good knowledge of basic sciences. The country has a number of polytechnics, industrial training institutions, commercial schools, agricultural schools and schools of Fine Arts including music and dancing. Most of the parents belonging to the elite and the educated class wish their children to obtain general education at the school stage so that they become eligible for higher education in professional or other institutions. At the same time, educational planners, policy-makers and economists go on urging continuously that a good proportion of the school students should be diverted to courses of a practical character.

Under the circumstances, one of the possible ways of tackling this problem is to include in the curriculum of general education at the secondary stage some job-oriented courses on an elective basis. For example, a secondary school child may offer, out of the five subjects which he is required to choose, four of general education and one which is job-oriented in character. The new scheme of studies should also provide bridges with the help of which children can change over from general education to job-oriented courses and vice-versa, in case they wish to do so at a later stage. Such an approach would be a practical solution to the kind of difficulty mentioned above.

The introduction of such courses will require additional funds for the organisation of the workshops required for practical work and for expenditure on buildings, technical personnel etc. In a co-ordinated plan of development, it should be possible to so locate the institutions and so organise their programmes that the same facilities may be utilised by school children during the day and by young people out of school at other times. In this arrangement, it should be possible for the established examining authorities to evaluate also the progress of out-of-school youth in the job-oriented courses and to issue appropriate certificates to them. Provision of evaluation will add to the seriousness of their work. The certificates will raise the prestige of the work, will function as an incentive, and will also help them in getting employment after completing the course.

In this arrangement, it is also possible to introduce in the job-oriented courses for out-of-school youth some essential

elements of general education, namely, citizenship education, hygiene and health, and simple skills in reading, writing and arithmetic.

Some of the job-oriented courses which the Central Board of Secondary Education, lndia, is currently considering are:

(1) Secretarial practices
(2) Principles and practices of trade and commerce
(3) Catering technology
(4) Maintenance mechanic's course
(5) Industrial science
(6) Arts and crafts
(7) Agricultural sciences
(8) Medical laboratory techniques
(9) Optometry
(10) Orthoptics
(11) Physiotherapy technician's course
(12) Health educator's course

The above courses have been selected out of a large number. This selection is based on the results of a study of demands for personnel made on the Employment Bureaux in the country as well as on the opinion of persons with expert knowledge of potential areas of employment in various sectors of the economy. Because of technical and industrial development, expansion of professional knowledge and its application, and growth of trade, commerce, transportation, administration etc., a large variety of new areas of employment and work are emerging. Shown hereunder for each of the suggested courses are the specific jobs which are linked with these courses, higher posts to which course students may aspire, and possible areas of self-employment:

1. Secretarial practices

Jobs: Accounts clerk, audit clerk, cashier, bookkeeper, bill clerk, ledger clerk, store clerk, storeman, receptionist, telephone operator, record keeper, steno-typist, stenographer, personal assistant.

Promotion posts: Office assistant, office superintendent, accountant, junior auditor, senior cashier, store supervisor, private secretary, reporter, instructor (shorthand and typing).

Self-employment: Establish a private coaching/commercial institute for shorthand and typing. Organise a pool of typists/stenographers and accountants for ad hoc work of professionals such as lawyers, authors, journalists, shopkeepers, businessmen, chartered accountants, and undertake on a commercial basis shorthand, typing or duplicating work.

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2. Principles and practices of trade and commerce

Jobs: Salesman, canvasser, demonstrator, order supplier, commercial traveller, clerks/ assistants in export-import organisations, marketing clerk, purchase clerk and general clerk in establishments concerned with wholesale and retail trade, business, small scale industries, import-export houses, export promotion councils, banks, department stores, emporia.

Promotion posts: Export assistant, export manager, purchasing agent, sales supervisor, buyer, purchase manager.

Self-employment: Set up private trade, business shop, packaging establishment, or export and import business.

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3. Catering technology

Jobs: House-keeper, care-taker, linen supervisor, laundry supervisor, kitchen supervisor, floor keeper, pantry man, pantry supervisor, steward (air, ship and institutional), flight purser, hotel receptionist, tourist hostess.

Promotion posts: Senior supervisory and managerial positions in hotels, restaurants,hostels and boarding houses, hospitals,clubs, government and private guest houses and as air hostess.

Self-employment: Establish an eating shop, cafeteria, restaurant, bakery, confectionery, dry cleaning plant or laundry.
Work as caterer for marriage and other parties.
Take contracts for running canteens in schools, colleges, hospitals, nursing homes, air companies, travel agencies, etc.

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4. Maintenance mechanic's course

Jobs: Motor mechanic, scooter mechanic, I.C. engine mechanic, tractor operator-cum-mechanic, farm machinery/implements mechanic, dairy machinery mechanic, mechanic (electrical appliances), chemical plant mechanic.

Promotion posts: Supervisor/foreman.

Self-employment: Establish a private repair and maintenance workshop for all types of automobiles, farm machinery and implements and dairy machinery.
Set up agro-service centres and custom service units engaged in hiring out tractors, agricultural implements, and their repair and maintenance.
Take up hiring of electrical/sound equipment for festive and other occasions.

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5. Industrial science

Jobs: Sub-overseer, estimator, planning assistant, engineering assistant, blue-print reader, design assistant, works supervisor, clerk of work, estimator (engineering), pharmaceutical chemist, pharmaceutical laboratory assistant, dyer, drier, glass blower, clay toy maker, potter.
Seek employment in industries manufacturing soap, cosmetics, ink, polishes and paints.

Promotion posts: Supervisory positions in manufacturing establishments, or with building contractors and architects.

Self-employment: Set up one's own engineering workshop or repair shop, or units for manufacture of pharmaceutical products, soap, ink, cosmetics, paints, polishes, varnishes, textile bleaching and dyeing.
Set up small scale industry for manufacture of ceramic products like toys, pots, bangles, crockery, glasswares.
Take up trade or commission agency in the above products.

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6. Arts and crafts

Jobs: Salesman and storekeeper in emporia or departmental stores, handling or selling of handicrafts in the State and the All-India Handicrafts Board.

Promotion posts: Supervisory positions in the same areas.

Self-employment: Establish one's own workshop or business in village arts and crafts such as cane and bamboo work, carpet making, coir products, textiles, embroidery, doll making, leather goods, metal ware.
Establish co-operatives for production, sale and export of handicrafts.

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7. Agricultural sciences

Jobs: Agricultural/horticultural assistant, fieldman, agricultural/horticultural overseer, dairy assistant, warehouseman, fishery overseer, hatchery operator.

Promotion posts: Managerial positions in agricultural/horticultural/fishery/dairy farms.

Self-employment: Set up one's own horticulture, floriculture or live-stock farm or dairy, nursery, poultry, fish, hatchery, piggery, etc. Start workshop for repair and maintenance of agricultural implements and tools. Establish fruit preservation and canning centres and small scale units for manufacture of products such as jam, jelly and pickles. Take up warehousing, stocking and sale of agricultural produce or implements.

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8. Medical laboratory techniques

Jobs: Laboratory assistant in various medical colleges, hospitals, schools and laboratories.

Promotion posts: Laboratory technician, technical assistant, technician tutor.

Self-employment: Organise laboratories for carrying out various types of tests required for patient care, research and development in the field of medical sciences.

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9. Optometry

Jobs: Optometrist in medical colleges, eye and other hospitals.

Promotion posts: Senior optometrist and technician tutor.

Self-employment: Start own establishments as optometrists, prescribing and dispensing visual aids under the guidance and supervision of an opthalmologist.

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10. Orthoptics

Jobs: Orthoptist in medical colleges and eye hospitals.

Promotion posts: Senior orthoptist, and technician tutor.

Self-employment: Get gainful employment with various eye specialists and private medical practitioners.

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11. Physiotherapy technician's course

Jobs: Junior physiotherapist.

Promotion posts: Senior physiotherapist.

Self-employment: Establish own clinics as masseurs and physiotherapists.

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12. Health educator's course

Jobs: Health education technician/field technician in medical colleges, schools, public health departments of various corporations, medical and district boards.

Promotion posts: Health education technician Grade I, health educator, lecturer etc.

Self-employment: Join voluntary organisations engaged in problems of sanitation, hygiene and prevention of diseases.
Set up private enterprise producing literature and other material in the field of health education.

There is one more important area of education and training for youth which deserves careful consideration. This is the area of physical education. The importance of games, sports, athletics and similar other activities has been duly recognised by all educationists and others interested in the growth of youth because these activities are essential for the proper up-keep of health, for better social adjustment of children and for character formation. In educational institutions in India, physical education has been provided for as an activity only. A stage seems to have come when

physical education can be considered to be an independent discipline of study, for over the years sufficient theoretical knowledge and factual information has accumulated around this subject. A few colleges of physical education have been established in the country already. They provide courses of study leading to university degrees. The Central Board of Secondary Education is now planning to introduce physical education as an elective subject of study. When sciences were introduced into the school curriculum, the concept of practical examination was introduced in the techniques of evaluation. In the Board's examination of each science subject, therefore, there are two question papers in theory and one practical examination. It would appear that in the technology of evaluation in physical education, there should be one paper in theory and two practical examinations. One of the latter examinations could be with special reference to sports and the other with special reference to games.

Several advantages would seem to accrue from the introduction of physical education as a subject of study in the school curriculum. First, this would provide an avenue for growth for those children who have a special aptitude for sports, games and allied activities. The more talented children among these, who are selected for the various meetings at local, regional, national and international levels, have to undergo some loss in their studies due to the time they devote to preparing themselves for and participating in the meetings. The inclusion of physical education will provide for such children an opportunity of growth at par with those who have aptitudes in other areas of study. Secondly, this would raise the general importance and status of the various physical education activities in the country and would thus create a welcome and healthy outlet for the enthusiasm and energy of both in-school and out-of-school youth. In other words, this would help to minimise the misdirection of energy of young boys and girls in the form of protests, strikes, defiance of authority, destruction of property, etc., on trivial or wrong issues. Thirdly, usable facilities in physical education can be well organised even for illiterate and uneducated youth, and such facilities, if created within educational institutions, can be well utilised by both in-school and out-of-school youth.

The modern technology of education has given birth to a number of techniques which are relevant to the provision of education and training for out-of-school youth. These include the use of modern audio-visual aids and the organisation of correspondence courses, morning and evening institutions, condensed and sandwich courses, and public libraries.

The great advantage of each of these techniques is their flexibility. They also provide an atmosphere of informality and freedom. Unlike a regular educational institution, none of these programmes follow a rigid time-schedule or necessitate complete uniformity in age and scholastic achievement of the pupils in a particular class.

The modern audio-visual and other aids, such as radio, films, exhibitions, excursions and television, are potential means of education and training. They can also be well utilised to improve the general attitude of youth. Clubs, community centres, field trips, inter-regional exchanges of young people, various associations and societies organised for constructive purposes can make a tremendous contribution in bringing youth together for self-study, co-operative work, useful and productive activities and healthy entertainment.

The medium of postal services or correspondence has been tried with success in many countries for various programmes of education and training. The courses organised through this medium are variously known as correspondence courses, own-time courses, postal courses or distant-control courses. This technique can be used for providing instruction, education and training at both the school and the university stages. In some places, an effort is being made to utilise such courses to reduce the pressure of enrolment in universities. This technique has also been utilised with profit to provide avenues of training and promotion for skilled and semi-skilled workers in industry.

Morning and evening institutions are regular educational institutions except for the fact that they are particularly helpful in providing facilities for the education and training of employed youth. Such persons cannot otherwise take advantage of the regular educational institutions. Apart from serving the felt need of youth in centres of large population, such institutions also seem to reduce, to some extent, the pressure for enrolment on the existing institutions.

The scheme of condensed courses is specially helpful to certain categories of youth and other persons. For example, those who discontinued their education at an early age and entered the world of work can take advantage of condensed courses. Widows and unmarried or neglected women, who may otherwise be a burden on the society, can also take advantage of condensed courses and with the help of a certificate, diploma or a degree, which they may obtain through such courses, they can lead a better and happier life.

The essential condition of success of any scheme of condensed courses is that it should prepare the pupils for a regular examination which should be of value in getting suitable employment or independent work. Any scheme of condensed courses or sandwich courses can be well supported and supplemented through correspondence courses and radio and television programmes.

Public libraries play a crucial role in the modern world. A library is no longer simply a store-house of books, a centre where one can consult books or borrow them. To serve the community successfully, the library must also move and go to the community. To this end, it should organise various activities such as adult literacy classes, debates, discussion groups, audio-visual programmes, dramas, excursions, and establish branch and circulating libraries. In the context of education as a life-long process, the usefulness of a public library is unlimited. Through schemes of reference, bibliographical services and otherwise, the public library can be extremely useful both to the educated as well as the neo-literate and illiterate youth.

One word about the special attention which must be given to the girls and women. They can obviously take advantage of all programmes and activities which are organised for youth in general. However, most young girls and women have to attend to the household affairs too. Accordingly, in any programmes for education and training for young people special timings convenient for girls and women should be provided. Similarly, there are certain areas of special interest to the fair sex. Activities like tailoring and sewing, needle work, knitting, cookery, gardening, horticulture, modelling, painting and salesmanship seem to be of special interest and benefit to them. Even if such courses have not been organised in the general programme for youth, they can be introduced specially for girls and women.

Thus, while it is important to take note of the separate attention which should be paid to the education and training of out-of-school youth in any country, it would appear more feasible to organise appropriate courses for them jointly with in-school youth. It is also necessary to reorient the existing curricula and other programmes of education and training to improve the employability of youth. It is desirable to take note of the modern growth in educational technology and to supplement institutional education and training with other methods which are specially appropriate for out-of-school youth. Some of these techniques can be well utilised by in-school youth too.