SCHOOL CURRICULUM IN CRISIS: THE CASE OF SRI LANKA

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The inauguration of the Free Education Scheme in 1945 led to a phenomenal increase in the demand for education. School enrolment nearly doubled by 1955. In 1965 it increased to 195% and in 1983 it stood at 300%.[1] This ever increasing demand for education necessarily created enormous problems for the Ministry of Education. The supply of qualified teachers, maintenance of suitable pupil-teacher ratios, construction of adequate school buildings, supply of books and apparatus, increased salary scales for the work-force engaged in education, all added up to transform the system of education into a really expensive enterprise. All this had to be accomplished with an ever shrinking vote on education measured in terms of the percentage of G.N.P. The vote on education which stood at 4.7%[2] of G.N.P. in 1964 progressively decreased to 2.4%[3] of the G.N.P. in 1983. This situation has created crises in all areas mentioned above and all efforts of the Ministry are geared to face these crises. In fact the White Paper in Education (1981) is a well thought out plan to face these crises. Efforts are being made to reduce expenditure on education without paying much attention to the consequences.

These crises have undoubtedly masked or eclipsed a more fundamental crisis-that of the purpose, structure and the content of the school curriculum. The school curriculum was forever a target of criticism. In general all criticisms pointed towards the notion that it was not related to the needs of pupils and society, the knowledge and skills of teachers and the facilities available in the schools. Further, teachers complain that the curriculum materials issued to schools were not pre-tested for effectiveness and feasibility. As such they find it difficult to teach according to the curriculum. The response of the Ministry to these criticisms was to revise and redesign the school curricula every 6 or 7 years. School curricula were completely revised in 1965, 1972, 1978 and in 1985. It must be stated that each revision allowed the Ministry a period without criticisms lasting for about 2 years. Sri Lanka perhaps may be the only country in the world where school curricula are revised and redesigned so frequently. It is worth mentioning that school curricula introduced in U.K. and U.S.A. in the early 1960s are being used even today.

This crisis should take precedence over the others as the curriculum represents the core and should be recognised as the tactical centre of the educational enterprise. Kelly emphasises this fact more succinctly. "The curriculum is the very foundation of any education system, and no amount of tinkering with the structure of the system, the organisation of the schools or the selection procedures to be used will have more than a peripheral effect unless accompanied by a rethinking of the real substance of education-the curriculum itself".[4]

Sri Lanka has just revised its school curricula and in order to gain an insight into the strengths and weaknesses of this revision, it would be necessary to ascertain the modern view on the functions of a curriculum.

Functions of a curriculum

In this paper curriculum is taken to mean "all the experiences for learning which are planned and organised by the school".[5] This definition raises the question 'What is learning?' Learning "means changing the behaviour of a student so that he is able, when encountering a particular problem, to display a behaviour which he did not previously exhibit. The task of the teacher is to help the student to learn new and changed behaviours and determine where and when thay are appropriate".[6] Thus a school curriculum is a deliberate, intentional and organised activity designed to change, modify or mould the behaviour of students based on valued goals. These behavioural changes should necessarily occur in all three educational domains put forward by Benjamin Bloom. With a properly designed curriculum changes in behaviour take place in the students' thinking, feeling and acting.

The functions of a curriculum are summarised by Whitfield as :

(*a*) accelerating behavioural changes in children which occur without the formal education system

(*b*) promoting behavioural changes which would not have otherwise occurred; and

(*c*) controlling to a greater or lesser degree, the direction of these changes in behaviour through the structuring of learning.

Process of Curriculum Development

Today Curriculum Theory is developed to such an extent that it is possible to draw up relevant and worthwhile curricula to suit any country. At the very outset it is necessary to formulate the goals of each curriculum to suit the individual as well as society by undertaking a detailed situational analysis. According to the guidelines on situational analysis put forward by Malcolm Skilbeck,[8] the total educational situation will have to be taken into consideration. Such an analysis will bring to the surface in clear terms all the goals that will have to be achieved by the curriculum. Once the goals are formulated curriculum building based on sound theory and sound criteria

has to be undertaken. This built up curriculum material is then interpreted by experts in education to ascertain its educational value. Next this curriculum material will have to be tried out in some selected schools. This is to evaluate whether this material is effective in the local situation and feasible under existing resources. In the light of these field trials, curriculum material is revised and reconstructed. The final version thus obtained can be considered as well tried out and therefore will cater to the needs of the individual child as well as the teacher and society. This process of curriculum construction takes about 5 years. It is relevant to state that in Sri Lanka, curriculum material is never tried out and revised before it is despatched to schools.

Some glaring weaknesses of school curricula in Sri Lanka
Goals

It is indeed convenient to consider school curricula under Primary (1 to 5 years), Junior Secondary (6 to 11 years) and Senior Secondary (12th and 13th year classes) levels. It is significant to note that the curricula at each level did not have a set of goals for the total curriculum, the only exception being the Primary level total curriculum introduced in 1985. A consideration of the purposes and goals of the total curriculum is the very starting point in the process of curriculum development. The goals will indicate the purpose of formal education and therefore bring to light the kind of people we expect our children to be after they leave school. Hilda Taba emphasises the value of goals in the following manner.

"A platform of objectives is needed to provide a common consistent focus for the multifarious activities we call the curriculum. The programme of the school is managed by many people. There are many subjects, classes and teachers. Some unity of emphasis, some common focus is needed to make these efforts converge on common consistent goals.

Furthermore, many types of growth cannot be developed without a consistent emphasis throughout the whole programme".[9]

A clear set of goals derived from a detailed situational analysis gives guidance on "what to cover, what to emphasise, what content to select and which learning experiences to stress".[10] The Sri Lankan curricula however have lists of objectives for each subject. Without stating the goals of the total curriculum, it serves very little purpose in providing the objectives of each subject. As stated by Taba,[11] every subject has to act in concert in achieving the major goals of the total curriculum. Denis Lawton[12] goes to the extent of expressing the view that such a situation can even lead to the anarchy of the total curriculum as widely different and inconsistent objectives may be achieved under different subjects. Curriculum developers have warned that a total curriculum without goals is like a rudderless ship. It moves hither and thither without making any progress towards reaching anywhere.

Relevancy
Demands on the curricula

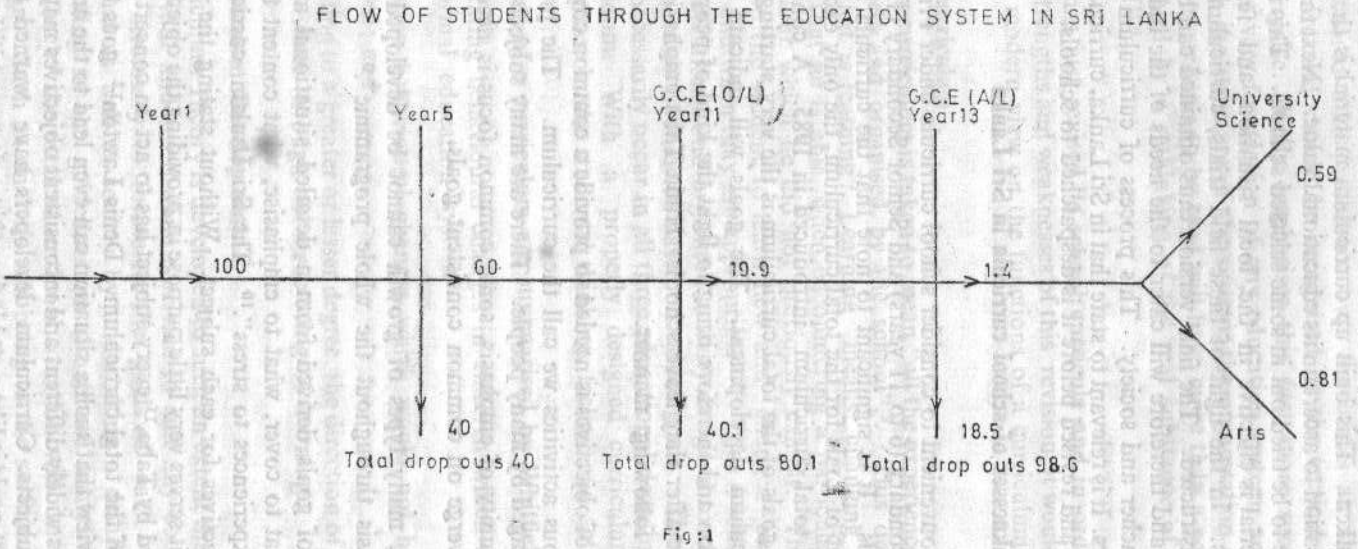

Fig :1

Sources of Data :

1. School Census, 1981
2. Statistical Hand Book, 1983 U.G.C.

The writer interviewed teachers, school children and parents to find out whether they have at least conceived any goal or goals for the total curriculum. It is generally accepted that the goal of the total curriculum and even individual subjects is to prepare students for public examinations. As there are public examinations at Standard 5 (Scholarship examination), G.C.E. (O.L.) and GC..E. (A.L), every parent and child aim to get good results at these examinations. It is a fact that students start attending private tuition classes from second year of their schooling. (age 6 years). It is estimated that side by side with 9650 government schools there are 7500 private tutories scattered throughout the island. The creation of an examination centered system of education has led to a prosperous and booming network of private tutories.

Preparing students for public examinations is only a very narrow goal for a curriculum. Such a situation has obviously hindered the attainment of other more worthwhile objectives. The situation in Sri Lanka brings to the surface a warning given by R. Mager. "If you are not sure where you are going, you are liable to end up some place else - and not 'even know it"..[1] An examination into this aspect is relevant in the context of Sri Lanka and this paper attempts to find out whether ill planned school curricula have led the country on a path that was neither desired nor expected.

The diagram given above is utilised in this study to reveal the curricula needs of the students that go through the school system. Out of every 100 students who enter the first year class, as much as 40% leave school before they end the Primary school. (5th year). The other 60% enter the secondary school and study to sit the G.C.E. (O.L) Examination (11th year). It has to be noted that many students leave the school at every grade and the rest prepare for the G.C.E.(O.L) Examination. Statistics reveal that another 40.1% leave school during or at the end of the Junior Secondary school. (6th year to 11th year). Thus as much as 80.1% would leave school at the end of the Junior Secondary level. Only 19.9% enter the Senior Secondary school (12th and 13th years). They sit the G.C.E (A L) Examination which selects students for the universities. Only 1.4% get selected for the universities. Therefore 18.5% will have to leave school at the Senior Secondary level. A disturbing feature of the Sri Lankan situation is that students leave school at every Grade and only 1.4% manage to get to the cherished destination-the universities.

For this discussion it is helpful to classify students into 3 distinct categories.

1. Those entering the universities (1.4%). We may call them university bound.

2. Those who leave school at the Senior Secondary level. (18.5%) They may be identified as Senior Secondary school leavers.

3. Those who leave school at the Primary and Junior Secondary levels. (80.1%). They are the early school leavers.

University bound

What are the curricular needs of these 3 categories of students? For the university bound, a firm conceptual foundation is necessary to undertake specialisation at the universities. This firm foundation has to be laid at the Primary, Junior Secondary and Senior Secondary levels. The Primary school curriculum should prepare the students to undertake studies at the Junior Secondary level. Similarly a firm conceptual foundation has to be laid at the Junior Secondary level to undertake narrow specialisation in 4 subjects at the Senior Secondary school. It is a widespread complaint that the Junior Secondary curriculum does not lay this foundation. Senior Secondary school teachers often complain that they have to start laying this much needed foundation at the 12th year. The G.C.E. (A.L) Examiners' Reports[14] confirm this fact. The advertisements in daily papers reveal that the private tutories have started courses to 'fill the gap between G.C E. (O.L) and G.C.E (A.L) first year'.

Such a situation has arisen as a result of designing a common Junior Secondary school curriculum that can be taught even by the inexperienced G.C.E. (O.L) or G.C.E. (A.L) qualified teacher teaching in a rural school with little or no equipment. The outcome is essentially a curriculum without sufficient depth and breadth in each subject area. The latest Junior Secondary school curriculum (1985) suffers from the same weakness. The content of this curriculum has not changed very much. Apparently the Ministry has not given consideration to this weakness.

Senior Secondary school leavers

Almost all the Senior Secondary school leavers are those who sat the G.C.E. (A.L) examination and failed to gain admission to the universities. These school leavers manage to gain admission to institutions such as Teacher Training Colleges, Technical Colleges, Law College etc. The others join various professions in the public and private sectors. For them too the Junior Secondary school curriculum has to lay the conceptual framework to undertake studies in institutions mentioned earlier and to engage in professions that are available to them. Here too the same criticism is valid, judging from the few studies[15] undertaken so far.

Early school leavers

A glaring weakness of our system of education is that as much as 80.1% leave the school at Primary and Junior Secondary levels. It can best be compared to a train fully loaded with passengers where the passengers leave the train at every station it stops. Only 1.4% reach the desired destination. Such a system of education is considered to be very inefficient but it is the bounden duty of the Ministry of Education to prepare these school leavers for adult life. This 80.1% will eventually become the citizens of this country.

They will be the future mothers, fathers, workers, tax payers, consumers, and voters. Even future political leaders are sure to emerge from them, Numerically a very large group, the preservation of peace and democracy, the prosperity of the country depend to a great extent on them. It would not be an exaggeration if we say that the future of the country is in their hands. They must be able to arrive at the correct decisions themselves. This is indeed a great responsibility thrust on the primary and Junior Secondary school curricula. As stated by Peter Williams "the destiny of school leavers is the key to identifying what we mean by a 'relevant' education"[16]. Have the curricula lived upto expectations ?

M. B. Rowe in a recent paper submitted to a UNESCO conference in 1980 puts forward 12 questions to which every adolescent seeks answers in order to understand the world in which they live. "Late in pre-adolescence and during the years that follow, youth in every country begin to develop a world view, a set of attitudes -a nexus of beliefs if you will- that ultimately affects their behaviour. .....They form their own answers to a recurrent set of 12 questions.

1. What kind of country is this ?
2. What values control activities ?
3. Where do I fit in ?
4. Do they expect me to succeed or fail ?
5. How much effort do I need to make ?
6. Is success worth the effort ?
7. Can I get help ?
8. Do I have the energy and endurance ?
9. What happens if I do not make the effort ?
10. What am I up against? What is the competition ?
11. What difference can I make ?
12. Do I care? Does anybody care ?"[17]

How would the early school leavers in Sri Lanka answer these questions? Unlike the university bound and the Senior Secondary school leavers who get some form of employment directly as a result of the education they received, the early school leavers mostly engage in piece—meal jobs. They do not get a fixed income. Although the Junior Secondary school curriculum is expected to provide at least the illumination necessary to answer these questions, has it been successful in providing these answers? The behaviour of these early school leavers suggest that this curriculum is not performing as expected.

During the years that follow after leaving school, they try to find answers to these questions by observation, through experience, and by talking seriously with any one who will exchange ideas with them. Eventually they only realise that for them the right to work, to social security, to leisure and recreation, to a decent meaningful and cultured life are not realities. They only end up as frustrated men and women.

As much as 86% of those who participated in the insurgency of 1971 were unemployed school leavers It is also reported that a large majority of the terrorists who engage in violence in the North and East are unemployed youth who have either left school recently or those who joined the terrorist movement while still studying in school. Lanka Puwath reports that there are terrorists who are only 12 years old fighting in the North and East.

Studies show that both the Sinhala insurgents and Tamil terrorists are victims of indoctrination. An indoctrinated person is one who holds certain beliefs unshakably.[18] These youth are indoctrinated by a few power hungry men whose main aim is to overthrow the existing social order in the country. They have posed as saviours who will provide worthwhile answers to the 12 questions cited above. They have even offered easy solutions to their problems.

Youth were indoctrinated for the execution of the 1971 insurgency by a mere course of five lectures.[19] The Tamil youth are taken to India for indoctrination. The interesting question is 'Why are these youth susceptible to indoctrination so easily?' A person gets indoctrinated especially when he does not possess the mental abilities and skills to analyse a situation rationally and arrive at the truth. Indoctrination "is intended to produce a state of mind, which constitutes the relevant achievement, in which an individual has either no grasp of the rationale underlying his beliefs or a type of foundation which encourages no criticism or evaluation of his beliefs".[20]

Let us now focus our attention on the behaviour of students who are still studying in schools. There is widespread student unrest in universities as well as in schools. Ragging is rampant in all universities. Studies indicate that at times ragging takes the most inhuman form.[21] All the efforts taken so far by the authorities to stop ragging have failed. Today newspaper reports indicate that ragging has spread to schools as well. Frequent strikes by students in universities and in schools are a common occurence today.

It is a well known fact that school children especially those who are in the secondary schools have taken to drugs. Newspapers reveal that there are drug addicts among school going children as well. This is most prevalent in the schools located in urban areas.

Let us now turn our attention to the youth who joined the armed services recently to fight the terrorists. Most of them are either Grade 8 or G.C.E.(O.L) qualified. Today there are nearly 40,000 serving in the armed services scattered throughout Sri Lanka.

It must be admitted that they come under the category of 'early school leavers'. Evolving trends indicate that they too could be indoctrinated.[22] They are now given a training in the use of sophisticated and highly destructive weapons. What will be the fate of the country if some power hungry leader indoctrinates them and gets them to turn their weapons against the Government?

Why do the products of our school system, especially the early school leavers, behave this way? As said earlier, the school curriculum is responsible for changing the behaviour of school children. Changes of behaviour also take place as a result of the 'hidden curriculum' that is unique to each individual. The 'hidden curriculum' that is a result of the relationships between the individual and home, neighbourhood, social services, temple etc., is however. not planned. Intentional behavioural change is deliberately accomplished by means of the school curricula. Therefore our school curricula are responsible for the behaviour patterns we observe among the products of our schools.

As stated earlier our school curricula have no accepted goals. The perceived major goal is to get the students to pass examinations. However, Sri Lankans continuously boast of the achievement in the literacy rate of 84%. This is indeed a very great achievement for any developing country. However in the light of the observations made earlier on the products of our schools, it is possible to conclude that Sri Lanka's system of education produces highly literate people who to a great extent do not possess the tools of thought that are so necessary to engage successfully in everyday activities. This is particularly so in relation to the early school leavers.

Prof. Lauwreys of the University of London predicted more than 39 years ago that literacy simply increased the possibilities of political exploitation "Those who cannot read are the victims of some form of verbal illusion Merely teaching them to read does not free them from verbal illusions, but in addition makes them more liable to exploitation through print. Mass media of communication considerably complicates the situation".[23] Literate people without tools of thought would be the ideal raw material for successful. indoctrination. "Some leaders incited the massess to ugly shows of violence and bloody revolution. To do this is no doubt one of the arts of politics, which is, it has been said, always in part a process of influencing, manipulating, and controlling group and individual behaviour".[24]

In essence we can arrive at the conclusion that our school curricula—Primary and especially the Junior Secondary-have dismally failed to produce individuals who can think and act rationally. In the present context in Sri Lanka this has to be a major goal of the school curricula. Let us now go into the details of the charateristics of such an individual.

Such an individual "should be skilled in the use of speech, symbol and gesture, factually well informed, capable of creating and appreciating objects of aesthetic significance, endowed with a rich and disciplined life in relation to self and others, able to make wise decisions and to judge between right and wrong, and possessed of an integral outlook,. These are the aims of general education for the development of whole persons".[25] Today, Sri Lanka cannot afford to settle for anything less.

Redesigning of school curricula

This study reveals the need to redesign the Primary and especially the Junior Secondary school curricula. It would be essential to derive the goals of the curricula by undertaking a detailed situational analysis. It is then and only then that we can ascertain the type of curricula that our country needs. The goals of curricula copied or imported from foreign countries will have to be rejected. As said before the derivations of goals is the starting point in the development of relevant curricula. In the context of Sri Lanka the development of individuals who can think and act rationally would take precedence over the other goals. Further, each curriculum under each level, should lay a firm conceptual foundation to pursue studies at the higher level. There will obviously be other goals as well but this study is delimited to a discussion on the designing of curricula to achieve the first objective-namely the production of individuals who can think and act rationally.

It was pointed out earlier that our school curricula have failed to equip our students with the tools of thought. Individuals act irrationally largely because of the lack of knowledge to comprehend a life situation. "We are the kind of individuals we are, largely because of the knowledge we possess, and therefore the school has a very great responsibility in opening as many kinds of knowledge as possible".[26] This essentially means that education must be conceived as developing the mind in the various forms of knowing and experiencing the world. The knowledge explosion has however opened up more than 100 new subjects worthy of study by every secondary school student. The real problem is that all these subjects cannot be included in the curriculum although every one of these subjects may be important to every individual living today. The curriculum developers are therefore faced with a problem of selection. If we drop some important subjects like science and mathematics in preference for others, then we may be depriving the students some knowledge and experiences that are very necessary for their every day living. Modern curriculum developers have put forward very ingenious solutions to this dilemma. Paul Hirst[27] is one among many who put forward a worthwhile solution. He has shown that the 'map of knowledge' (compare this with the map of the world where every part of land and sea are indicated)

can be categorised into seven "autonomous forms, each of which possesses a distinctive network of related concepts and ways of procedure".[28] Each form is a logical demarcation of knowledge that has its own distinctive kind of test for truth. These 7 forms are :[29]

1. Mathematics and logic (deductive/analytic forms of knowing in which relations are expressed symbolically).
2. Physical science (empirical form of knowing in which truths are tested by observation and experiment).
3. History and the human sciences (forms involving propositions connected with intentions).
4. Literature and fine arts (aesthetic forms).
5. Morals (rationally deduced from a broad base of other understandings).
6. Religion.
7. Philosophy.

Thus all knowledge is telescoped into 7 forms. Several subjects or disciplines may be categorised under each form. For example all branches of Mathematics come under the first 'form'. All empirical sciences fall under 2. If we take 'form' No. 2, namely Physical Science, all the concepts are derived from experimental investigations. To arrive at the truth, it would be necessary to undertake experimental verification. For example, if we want to test whether a current flowing in a circuit is 1 ampere, we have to conduct an experiment to test it. A student who has mastered this 'form' is able to behave in a particular way when he is confronted with any situation where science is involved. The thinking associated with this 'form' is loosely known as 'scientific thinking' but scientists prefer to call it 'hypothetico-deductive thinking'. The same is true for other 'forms' as well. Knowledge based on the 7 'forms' will lead every student to arrive at the truth in 7 different ways. All knowledge fall under these 7 'forms' and they constitute the 'map of knowledge'. It therefore follows that a student conversant with these 7 'forms' will be able to comprehend life situations and arrive at the truth unaided. This is the value of this map of knowledge.

Curriculum Developers agree that it is essential to include all forms of knowledge in a liberal curriculum such as that designed for early school leavers. The mastery of these 7 forms of knowledge will enable every individual to arrive at the truth regarding any life situation. Today the 'forms of knowledge' is referred to as the 'curriculum diet'. It is compared to a balanced diet an individual has to take for healthy living. What will happen if any

individual is deprived of, say, protein in his daily diet. He will show deficiency symptoms at first and then fall ill. The implication for curriculum building is that every curriculum should necessarily include all forms of knowledge "At present, we select our pupils' educational diet more on the basis of hunch, historical accident, and expediency, rather than rational inquiry, in the hope that the qualities possessed by the contents will produce the desired results. A brief look at society indicates alarming dietary deficiencies, for example, in moral and personal relationships, and we surely cannot be satisfied with this recipe for chaos".[30] Sri Lanka too is guilty of this omission.

The mere inclusion of all forms of knowledge does not ensure that the students will acquire all the tools of thought required in daily living. Research has shown that "every pupil should reach a minimum level of understanding and experience in each of these forms of knowledge".[31] The minimum would be the ability to use the forms of knowledge as a tool to understand any life situation and behave in a socially acceptable manner.

The Sri Lankan Junior Secondary school curriculum suffers from this weakness. To illustrate let us take the present G.C.E. (O.L) science curriculum. A major aim of teaching science is to train the students to behave like scientists. To do this every student should receive an adequate training in the methods of the scientist. Translated into a tool of thought, it is 'hypothetico - deductive thinking'. Essentially this includes the formation of hypotheses and then testing every hypothesis experimentally before arriving at firm conclusions. E. A. Jayasinghe[32] in an evaluation of the present G.C.E. (O.L) science curriculum reveals that out of all the learning experiences offered, only 7.74% involve hypothetico - deductive thinking. The rest are all inferences made after direct observations. This is the trend that exists throughout the Junior Secondary science curriculum. We may therefore conclude that the present Junior Secondary school science curriculum trains students mostly in observation and does not train in hypothetico - deductive thinking adequately. Studies, if undertaken in other subject areas, would reveal the same sort of deficiency, that the students have not reached the minimum level expected in those forms of knowledge offered in the present Junior Secondary Curriculum.

Specialisation

In view of the need to master the forms of knowledge, the trend today is to delay specialisation as far as possible. In developed countries such as the U.K., schooling is compulsory till the age of 16+ years. During this period every student is expected to follow a liberal curriculum where all forms of knowledge are necessarily included. Streaming and specialisation take place after the period of compulsory schooling. It is assumed that all students would have reached the minimum level under every form of knowledge before specialisation is undertaken.

A disturbing feature in the proposals made in the White Paper (1981) in Education is that specialisation takes place after Grade 8. This is quite clear when one reads paragraphs 22, 23 and 137. When the trend is to delay specialisation, Sri Lanka will initiate specialisation in the future at the tender age of 13 years. As it stands now, specialisation starts after the G.C.E. (O.L) Examination (15 years). Even after 5 years of schooling in the Junior Secondary school the students are not equipped with the tools of thought. One wonders what the situation will be when specialisation starts at 13 years (after only 3 years in the Junior Secondary school). Such a proposal, if implemented, will aggravate the social situation in Sri Lanka.

Religious and Moral Education

It was pointed out earlier that there is widespread indiscipline among school children and their moral behaviour has dropped to very low levels. The Ministry is aware of this situation and is making some efforts to remedy this situation. It intends to inculcate moral values by teaching religion in an organised way in all schools.[33]

In Sri Lanka religion was taught in all schools without a break. Although religion served as the basis of moral behaviour for 2500 years, it has to be admitted that religion does not serve this purpose as before. This is not to argue that religion should be dropped from the curriculum. Religion, no doubt, serves to inculcate moral values in some individuals but not in all. There is an acceptance throughout the world that religious instruction is not an adequate basis for morality today. Lawton[34] points out that even Roman Catholics doubt whether religious instruction alone can improve morality among children. Surely it is not necessary to believe in heaven and hell to recognise that one form of behaviour is better than another.

Educational reforms are introduced in most countries to improve moral behaviour of children. This is done by making moral education compulsory for all children attending Primary and Secondary schools. The curricula on moral education are based on the findings of Piaget and Lawrence Kholberg.[35] Very encouraging results have been reported in U.K. and U.S.A.

In Hirst's forms of knowledge, Moral Education is one of the 7 forms. If we accept forms of knowledge then we have to include moral education in the curriculum. However, this form of knowledge was never included in the Sri Lankan curriculum. In order to balance the educational diet of our children Moral Education will have to find a permanent place in the curriculum.

One significant factor that entered the Sri Lankan scene makes it more necessary to include moral education in the curriculum for early school leavers. It is now generally recognised that the introduction of the free economy leads to a deterioration and even decay of moral values as night follows day. Singapore[36] is bold enough to admit this fact. It introduced educational reforms in 1984 to arrest this situation. It introduced moral education as a compulsory subject in addition to religion in all schools in the island. Four distinct areas are discussed under moral education. These are :

1. Righteousness and self discipline
2. National identity and commitment
3. The concept of self
4. Respect for law

Needless to say, Sri Lanka can gain a lot from their experiences.

Methods of teaching in the Junior Secondary school

The success of a curriculum based on Hirst's forms of knowledge is largely dependent on the teacher. In his teaching methodology he has to recognise two important aspects—the process and the product. The process is the means utilised to arrive at the final product which are the concepts. As said earlier there are 7 processes and a student is expected to master them. The products or concepts are the 'knowledge' that the student learns. In the Sri Lankan context processes are as important as or even more important than the products. In an examination centered system as that of Sri Lanka, teachers prefer to teach the concepts (knowledge) and neglect the processes because knowledge is tested whereas processes are not.

This brings us to another significant problem which is the training of teachers. Up to now the methodology of teaching was geared to impart knowledge to the students. If the students are to acquire the tools of thought underlying a particular form of knowledge, then teacher's role will have to change from a transmitter of knowledge to that of a learning facilitator. He must undertake teaching on the strict understanding that a form of knowledge involves processes, concepts and criteria. Here he becomes a resource rather than an authority. The major weakness of the process model.....is that it rests upon the quality of the teacher. This is also its greatest strength. The process model is committed to teacher development. If teachers are to develop understanding, develop and refine their criteria of judgement and their range in their subject, they must be able and they must have time and opportunity for professional development".[37] Unfortunately the training of teachers of this nature cannot be accomplished by Distance Education Methods. Getting the teachers to teach processes of education by Distance Education Methods would be similar to teaching someone to swim by correspondence.

Conclusion

It would now be clear that Mager's statement "If you are not sure where you are going, you are liable to end some place else and not even know it", is valid when applied to the Sri Lankan school curricula. Sri Lanka has missed a golden opportunity of designing relevant school curricula at the revisions carried out in 1985. It is very unfortunate that the Ministry has not even identified the nature of the problem, let alone solving it. The Ministry is definitely on the wrong track as far as school curricula are concerned.

A great responsibility is thrust on the Curriculum Development Centre in the development of relevant school curricula. In this attempt, Curriculum construction should not be considered as an ad-hoc collection of topics that anybody can undertake. The modern view is that all educational practices should be based on sound educational theory. "Educational theory is logically complex and multidisciplinary in character. It is not an intellectual no man's land, where pundits may say as they please. It is rather a field in which all the main disciplines of educational study may be used to support practical recommendations, and its validation will depend on work of a critical kind, at various logical levels"[38] Today curriculum theory is well developed and it is quite possible to draw up relevant curricula. However the designing of relevant, effective and feasible curricula takes at least 5 years. All curriculum material will have to be tested before they are despatched to schools.

From what is presented in this paper, it would be clear that the reforms of the White Paper (1981) referred to in this article, if implemented, will lead to an aggravation of the social situation. The very future of the country will be at stake unless remedial action is not taken immediately. Therefore a great social responsibility rests on the Ministry of Education. The Ministry has no option but to recognize that the urgency of the situation is so great that action postponed for tomorrow will be too late.

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