

**REFORMING EDUCATION AS A NECESSARY PREREQUISITE FOR EDUCATIONAL
PLANNING***

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* This paper would not have been written if the **Systems Research Institute** (17-A Gultekdi, POONA 411 037) had not been kind enough to invite me to stay with it and share views with its staff members from 4th September to 11th November, 1981. To the Director of and the staff in the Institute I am immensely grateful.

PREFACE

We at the Systems Research Institute were glad that Professor Kodjo could accept our invitation to visit India and to spend some time with us this year.

Professor Kodjo has had a rich and varied experience in many countries - of his birth, Togo, in Germany where he spent many years teaching after obtaining his doctorate and professorship at Cologne, and in Nigeria provided leadership in the Social Sciences at the University of Nigeri, Nsukka. Currently he is the Director of the Economic Development Institute at Enugu.

I am very pleased that Professor Kodjo has been able to write out succinctly his thoughts on educational reform while at the Systems Research Institute, While at Pune, Professor Kodjo has also actively participated in the Planning Commission's project on the Western Ghats which will involve Universities and Colleges in new forms of learning.

His ideas are cogently presented and are based on a lifetime's careful reading and thought. This manuscript was the basis for a seminar organised jointly by SRI and the IIE at the Indian Institute of Education, Kothrud, Pune, on November 9, 1981. We hope in presenting Professor Kodjo's ideas here to share them with other educators, teachers and policy-makers, in order to alert them to some of the fundamental issues are often overlooked.

November 9, 1981

J. G. Krishnayya

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In September 1980, a discussion Group meeting on the future development in Asia and the Pacific took place at Pattaya, Thailand, under the auspices of the UNESCO. Countries represented at that august gathering of experts were India, Japan, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka and Thailand.

Assessing the ensuing UNESCO report on that meeting, it would appear that no convincing clarity was achieved on the specificities of educational planning and educational reform and on how both concepts relate to each other. Consequently, issues in educational planning and educational reform, if they are not lumped together, are presented side by side without any purposeful attempt at applying to them some kind of priority scale that would indicate how pressing reforms are in the countries studied. It cannot then surprise that the report is tacit on the question as to whether or not planning and reform in the field of education are identical and therefore perform the same function. This silence over basic conceptual issues,

however, has serious implications since it affects the understanding of educational problems in the areas concerned. The report profusely makes mention of the quality, relevance and efficiency, external as well as internal, of education - without connecting them with problems of planning. It therefore creates a vacuum that the non-initiated group of readers may not be in a position to fill adequately. Further, viewing the quality, relevance and efficiency in education as purely qualitative characteristics of education, it becomes glaring that a presentation simply juxtaposing planning per se and problems of the quality of education cannot but contribute to confusing people, even authorities in charge of education. Then in reality, planning largely understood as a quantitative economic technique can hardly account for the qualitative dimensions of education. If it happens to do so, then this is only with respect to quality in its most restricted technical sense of teaching performance in the classroom as will be discussed later. For these and similar reasons, there is an urgent need to point out clearly, without any ambiguity, that **planning based essentially on the conventional manpower requirements approach appears only meaningful if education has satisfied some fundamental qualitative conditions**, and thus has achieved a certain high degree of qualitative viability.

It amounts to saying that, in countries that have adopted and are implementing a foreign, Western, system and pattern of education, the question of the quality of education cannot be taken lightly; it is a most crucial one and, as such, must be given a special consideration, if it must not have precedence over quantitative preoccupations of educational planners. In the absence of that quality, increased educational efforts and commitments are bound to generate unanticipated, acute, socio-economic and eventually socio-political malaise that individual Third World countries may not be able to face effectively. To emphasise it accordingly even if the pursuit of quantity and quality in education could go hand in hand, such simultaneity is not granted spontaneously of its own, a priori. Hence a special policy action is required to make a concomitant occurrence of enhanced educational output and increasing educational quality possible.

Advocated in this paper is that planning and reform are not synonymous all the time and, in this way, are not necessarily achieved instantaneously.

The problem that faced the educational specialists at Pattaya is however not peculiar to them alone. As Adam Curle points out, problems pertaining to the quality of education in developing countries are side-stepped by most writers. "Most of us pay lip service to the need for quality in planning but, having advocated it, pass rapidly on to more tangible (quantitative) issues. ... A great deal of thought is now being directed toward educational planning, but for the most part we have been concerned with procedures for effectively expanding the quantity of education and we have ignored the implications for quality - a concept we have not even begun, to define satisfactorily."² Such a plight is a manifestation of a situation where it is found difficult, maybe even uneasy, inconvenient, to have a fairly relevant operational definition of the quality of education. More precisely in H. Correa's words: "**It is difficult to determine with precision the elements that constitute the quality of education.**" To be more correct and fairer, the problem encountered in an effort at defining the quality of education is due to limitations immanent in our intellectual capabilities. An opinion similar to that of H. Correa is generally held in different variations one of which is expressed in particular even by C.S. Beeby who has devoted, a whole book to the **study of the quality of education**. Planners were not all agreed on what constitutes quality in education, and they certainly had no universally accepted method of measuring it. There is no reason to expect that, in any ultimate sense, men are any more likely to come to an agreement on what constitutes good education than they are on the good life, and, in a book (his book) of this size, an attempt to arrive at a definition of 'quality' in education would probably do more harm than good. For that matter, one of its underlying themes is that the concept of good education varies, for all practical purposes, with the stage of development of the school system and of the teachers who serve it. Yet the onus is still on anyone who

refers to 'quality' to describe the limits within which the term will be used, and this may be a good point at which to do so."⁴ With these observations, the problem is evaded altogether, leaving it at the mercy of the whims and caprices of anyone who happens to be concerned with education. In this form the problem of the quality of education is no longer a scientific one that merits scholarly scrutiny. Thus the various leading opinions on the on are agnostic in essence, and defeatist; thereby largely discouraging possible attempts at consciously organising education to suit special needs and requirements. That this under-currently favours some kind of fatalistic attitude towards the implementation of foreign ideals in Third World countries, must be self-evident. But it would appear highly intriguing that the notion of development, a notion as ambiguous so that of the quality of education, is being found impossible to define with the consideration of the problems of under-development.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

While not necessarily negating possible links that could exist between educational planning and educational reform, the above discussion based on practical observations takes note of the fact that such possible links are not established automatically by mere planning. Even though qualitative issues are usually stated in official plan documents, such qualitative problems tend largely to be side-stepped during plan implementation exercises, problems as already indicated in the body of this work. Because of the singularly subtle nature of the quality issue in education, a situation that may be seen as accounting considerably for a quick loss of hope in attempts at improving the quality of education, it has become indispensable to write this paper. **Underlying it is the hope that it would be some kind of contribution towards a meaningful and workable definition of the quality of education.** The ultimate aim of the work is, however, to demonstrate how the instrumentality of education can be achieved in Third World countries. Implicit in the paper is that planning based foremost on the conventional manpower requirements approach can lead *ad absurdum* if the issue of the quality of education is not tackled properly and frontally.

The listing of problem areas as identified and presented is by far not exhaustive. Each problem area has its own technical aspects worth studying in detail, an undertaking that could not, however, be intended and concluded in the short paper. Thus, the paper is and remains a document whose modest ambition it is to create awareness of the urgency of reforming education and to delineate, as clearly as possible, major areas of education in which such reform is most required.

Finally, there is one exceptionally relevant and pressing issue implicit in the work, which, though clear in the mind of the writer, could not receive the attention it deserves. It has to do with both the socio-economic and socio-political order of the system in a country on the one hand, and the attendant political will to undertake an educational reform of the kind and magnitude contemplated in the paper on the other hand. In other words, the political implications of the work are not considered. The writer is fully aware of the loopholes present in the work but thinks that, to fill the gaps, additional work is needed that cannot be incorporated in this paper at this stage.

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