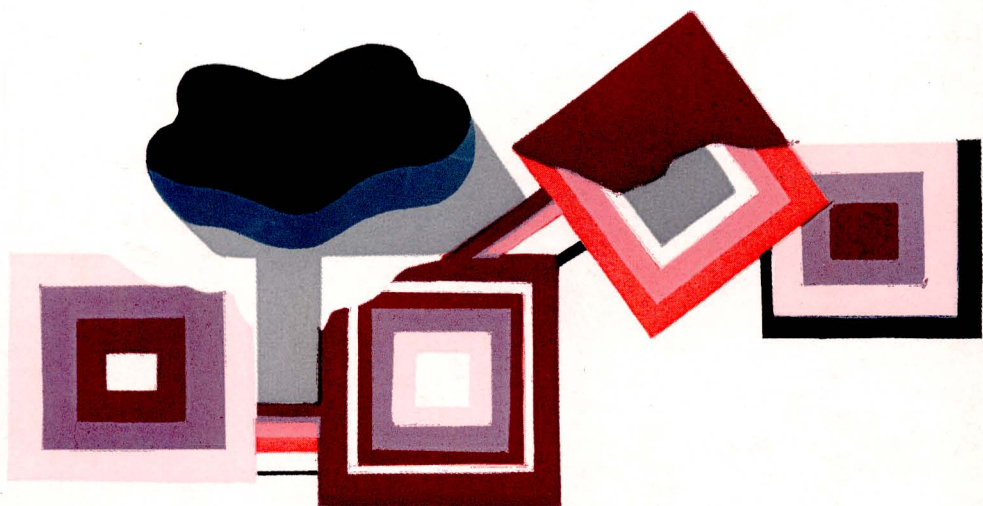


# **BARRIERS AND BRIDGES**

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# **FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT**



**NICHOLAS BENNETT**

ปก: สมปอง ดวงใสว

# **Barriers and Bridges**

**for**

**Rural Development.**

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จำนวนพิมพ์ ๑,๐๐๐ เล่ม

ลิขสิทธิ์เป็นของมูลนิธิโครงการตำราสังคมศาสตร์และมนุษยศาสตร์,

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# **Barriers and Bridges for Rural Development**

by

**Nicholas Bennett**

**The Foundation for the Promotion of Social Sciences and Humanities  
Textbook Project.  
Bangkok, Thailand.**

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## Preface

Nicholas Bennett is an unusual "expert". His previous work includes a travelogue as well as scholarly treatises published by international organizations. His articles and books have also appeared in Thai. I wish his dream for writing a novel will one day be fulfilled.

Although he is employed by UNESCO, he has been attached to the Siamese Ministry of Education for seven year—an almost unprecedented record of international service. His superiors and colleagues are Thai and he identifies himself with the Thai position and value, especially in the field of peace, justice and freedom. Indeed he was active in nonviolence movement since his undergraduate days at Oxford. A certain Minister may find him too unconventional but most government officers in the ministry respect him though they may disagree with him. Nicholas regards education as real life and real life as education. Furthermore I find Nicholas blends Buddhist elements harmoniously into his scheme of education. His courage, patience and wisdom have been admired by all who have regard for human rights and human dignity.

Although I was never employed by the Ministry of Education, I may perhaps be regarded as a colleague of his, if viewed in the context of education for life and training in nonviolence approaches. And I am not only his colleague, but am also his friend, who values his judgement and counsel.

It was a pleasure and privilege for me to be able to introduce the manuscript of this book to the Editorial Board of the Textbook Project, while I served as an honorary secretary of the Board. I am glad that the book is now ready for publication.

In my opinion this book is important because it draws upon Nicholas's detailed experience of education in Siam (and to a lesser extent in other countries), and represent a balanced, careful approach to education in the Third World. At the same time he limits himself, wisely, to one particular aspect of the problem, namely the education at primary, and immediate post—primary levels, of people in rural areas.



My personal experiences are drawn mostly from the level of higher education, so I have learned a great deal from his writing.

The scholarship, by which I mean the careful assessment of the condition in such countries and the relationship of these realities to social, economic and educational factors, seems to me to be adequate, or more than adequate. It was this realism which made a big impression on me. For me it was something new, and very pleasing to find the facts of rural society so carefully scrutinized and interpreted. Since reading this work I have become aware, through references elsewhere, that Nicholas's proposals may not be entirely original, and he himself refers to experiments in various parts of the world which are proceeding, or have been carried out. However, Nicholas argues his case with conviction and force, without hiding the difficulties in implementing his proposals for educational reform. I would therefore consider this an important contribution to educational thinking.

Although based mainly on the situation in Siam (and therefore of particular value for those concerned with education in this country) it seems to me that the book has much to say to educationalists in other Third World countries.

I whole heartedly recommend this book to readers who really care about education in its proper sense of the word.

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## INTRODUCTION

For anyone who is prepared to open their eyes, and look at the school system in virtually every country in the world without any bias or preconceived notions, it is quite obvious that it is not meeting its stated objectives. In addition it is making a large proportion of the population feel that they are failures; is not increasing equality of opportunity, but is strengthening and maintaining existing class structures; is not providing most children with useful life skills, nor teaching the skills really needed by employers; is inefficient; is boring; tend to increase urban unemployment and rural stagnation; and fails to take sufficient notice of the rich educational environment that exists in every society.

It is therefore my contention that the school system is facing a crisis of immense proportions. This crisis appears to have three root causes; first, the present school system is merely an expanded version of the old elite-producing system; secondly, present school systems are based on the assumption that there is a universal homogeneous world and that the same system can meet the needs of the U.S.A. and Thailand, modern Bangkok and an inaccessible traditional village; and thirdly, because they originate in western materialistic society, and this society itself is facing an immense crisis. Some further elaboration of these root causes might be useful.

### Historical Development of the System

The formal school system with "teachers" lecturing to "students" on literacy, numeracy, religious and moral philosophy, national history and other academic subjects within the four walls of a classroom, has existed (largely unchanged) for more than two thousand years. However, such formal education, up until the beginning of the nineteenth century, was restricted to the children of the existing elite, and was designed to provide future "rulers" with the type of knowledge and skills they would need to carry out their pre-ordained functions in society. However

with the “democratization” of societies in countries all over the world (which started in the early nineteenth century, and has been continuing ever since) attempts were made and are still being made to democratize education by expanding educational systems (designed to train pre-ordained elites) to cover larger and larger proportions of the population.

It is not surprising therefore, that as elite-producing educational systems are expanded rapidly (with little change in either curriculum, methods or structure), until they have almost universal coverage, that they increasingly transmit values, and attitudes (for example, towards mental as opposed to physical work) and even skills and knowledge, inconsistent with the existing realities of society.

This expansion has been so great that in Thailand for example (in common with other countries) schooling is the second biggest industry in the country, involving about 20% of the population on a full-time basis and using up about 20% of the government budget, and 4% of the national income. This huge industry expands at increasing rates, as it chases after an impossible and internally inconsistent dream—how to achieve democratization, and universalisation of an institution which by its very nature is elitist.

By chasing after this dream, the school system forgets the main purpose of education—to provide the mass of the population with relevant skills, knowledge, attitudes, and ideas which will enable them to lead more fulfilling and satisfying lives. Instead, schools concentrate on producing people with certificates which prove nothing except that the student has put up with so many years of schooling, successfully repeating in examinations what the teacher (or text book) has said, however incorrect or irrelevant this might be. These certificates are then used to distribute the positions in an unequal society. The higher the cost of “educating” a person into a certificate (most of this cost being borne by government) the higher the position, salary, and social status the person is allowed to enjoy.

## **Lack of a Universal World**

The school system, in common with many other modern institutions, assumes a universal homogenous world. The same system exists in a

middle class U.S. district, where the people are well-housed and fed, have small families, are saturated with material goods, work in modern offices and factories, drive cars, and feel that they are in a spiritual wilderness, as exists in a poor village in the N.E. of Thailand, where the people are hungry, wracked by disease and poverty, have families which are too large, work long hours on infertile soil, have no hope of ever possessing most of the material goods of western civilisation, and have full faith in their religion.

Quite obviously the learning needs of people in these two extreme situations (and thousands of other diverse situations) are absolutely different, but for some inexplicable reason both internally and internationally the same system exists. If an educational system meets the needs of one situation, the same system cannot meet the needs of other completely different environments.

## **The Fading Materialistic Development Dream**

The nineteen-fifties and early nineteen-sixties was a period of unbridled world-wide optimism. Everywhere people became increasingly confident that the solution to the problems of poverty, ignorance, and disease, and the unsatisfactory quality of life faced by the majority of the world's population lay within man's grasp, as long as the threat of nuclear annihilation could be removed. These were the years of the economic and technological dream. The economist assumed that all problems had material causes, and showed with increasingly complicated models how *theoretically* all development problems could be solved with the aid of technology, whilst the technologist propagated the myth that with sufficient resources modern science and technology could provide a solution for any specific problem. Neither ever really stopped to consider the real nature of man, for they *assumed* that with economic development, and the creation of ever more complex machines, the dissatisfaction of the mass of the population, the flagrant inequalities in the standard of life of different people, and the lack of harmony between man and his environment would automatically disappear.

The first serious flaws in this dream began to appear in the mid-1960 's with the realisation that population growth was getting out of control, that the world's resources were not unlimited, that the biosphere did not have an endless capacity to absorb all the filth produced by industrial societies, and that all the technological and economic advances did not seem to be bringing man (even in the most "developed" countries), any closer to satisfaction and happiness.

Schooling was closely integrated with this dream, with economists insisting that more and more "high level manpower" was needed for the eventual take-off, and with individuals realising that the only way they could ensure that they would have a place in the materialistic nirvana was to get higher and higher certificates from the school system. Now however, with huge numbers of educated unemployed, both the economist's hope of manpower-based economic take-off, and the individual's dream of materialistic nirvana are disappearing into the realms of pure fantasy.

As thinkers increasingly challenge the premises of materialistic and technological development, the foundation on which the school system is constructed also begins to shake.

It is thus obvious that the belief in existing school systems and in education as an end in itself can no longer be maintained by those who have an open mind, and who are prepared to challenge even basic premises.

Knowing that an institution is unjustified is one thing, knowing what would be a better institution, and one that would at the same time be a feasible alternative is, of course, a much more difficult question. Nor can it be answered purely objectively. The answer must stem from a person's own subjective values and subjective interpretation of the particular situation.

## **Subjective Starting Point**

At the outset I must emphasize that I do not believe that there is any objective reality. All researchers, including those in education, start from hidden subjective assumptions and then create around these

assumptions a host of research methodologies, and quantitative techniques to give their subjective assumptions the appearance of objectivity.

This is not my approach, for I conceive of education solely as an instrument for creating more happy individuals, and a more harmonious society with less suffering than exists at present. *I do not subscribe to any doctrine*, nor believe in jargon phrases, but instead evaluate all possible alternatives according to my own subjective analyses of whether a particular proposal will lead to greater or less suffering, and to greater or less harmony between man and his environment.

I also tend to be anti-materialistic, and dubious about many of the products of modern technology, and believe that there is absolutely no chance that everyone in the developing countries can achieve the level of material consumption that exists in the Soviet Union or the U.S.A. I believe therefore that alternative development strategies are needed, strategies that emphasise people and their feelings instead of things, strategies that are based far more on spiritual and individual development and harmony than on materialistic development and conflict.

I am not, however a, Utopian, but am a practical operator in a real situation, and thus always I have to adjust my ideas so that they have some chance of being implemented.

In the following chapters therefore I analyse schooling in developing countries (particularly in rural areas where most people live) from my own subjective standpoint, and on the basis of this analysis attempt to create a feasible alternative system which could help Thailand (particularly the rural areas) and other countries find a pattern of development which really is designed to help eliminate the problems that cause people suffering, instead of merely maximizing some non-human statistical indicators.

Too often educators tend to conceive of education, not only as an end in itself, but also as something that always must have teachers and pupils, school buildings and books. It should be emphasised that I share neither of these hidden assumptions. On the one hand I

believe that it is only possible to begin to understand what an educational system is, and what it could be doing, if one first analyses man and his nature, the society in which he is living, his culture, and the economy in which he operates, for without such analysis no educational programme can be seen in its true perspective. On the other hand, if other educational influences such as the mass media, the community, and the family are ignored, and the school system and its affiliates are assumed to have an educational monopoly, any conclusions drawn are likely to be inherently incorrect, for the school is only one (and certainly not the most important) of many educational activities taking place in any society.

Thus in this book a wide range of topics is covered; from instinct to culture, from economics and political philosophy to mass media and its effects. Only if an educational system is studied in the totality of its surrounding environment is there a chance that any new alternative, in *interaction* with this environment, will produce a better, more humane society.

Since by my nature I am a practical operator, but unwilling to accept things as they are, this book is a balance between desirability and feasibility, between ideas and what I think might actually be possible. It should be understood however that I am not proposing a solution, but only a direction in which change should take place.

Quite obviously, since for the last five years I have been living and working in Thailand, my thinking and conclusions have been very much influenced by my analyses of the Thai situation. Nevertheless, there is sufficient in common between what is happening there (e.g. the conflict between traditional and modern cultural values including the value-imperialism of the modern sector, the spread of mass media, rural-urban migration and rural impoverishment, and the growing monopoly of the school system) and in other poorer countries for some of the arguments included in this book to have wider validity. Thus, though many of my arguments are based on a specific analysis of the Thai situation, it is hoped that both this analysis, and the more general conclusions will be useful for those working in other social, economic and cultural environments.

However, there can in my view be no one universal solution even for a country as homogenous as Thailand. Any definite solution that might be implemented must result from a specific analysis of the problems in a specific social, economic and cultural area of a country, for there are no universal remedies to the problems of the world.

The ideas and proposals I have outlined here would be as destructive as the existing school system if accepted on faith and universally implemented. They are proposed therefore not as universal panaceas, but in the hope that they will catalyse people towards thinking what role education could play in the real human-centered development of a country such as Thailand.



# CHAPTER 1

## PROBLEMS OF THE POOREST

### Introduction

In this book I will argue that education should never be considered as an end in itself but should always be thought of as a tool to solve particular problems, or as an instrument to achieve certain objectives. In addition it will be continuously emphasised that no educational system can be considered in isolation from society, nor in isolation from the development strategy being pursued by that particular country.

Thus before even beginning to talk about education, it is necessary to devote some time to the basic problems facing the poorer countries of the world, and to an analysis of some possible strategies that might be used in solving, or at least minimising the detrimental side effects of such problems. As the title of this chapter suggests, I will be restricting myself to a discussion of the problems of the poorest regions of the world and will thus be concentrating on the problems of rural areas (where the largest part of the world's poor live), though many of my comments will hopefully apply also to urban slum areas.

Even before one can start talking about problems and solutions, it is of course first necessary to define subjectively an overall objective for existence, for unless this is first done no problem can be identified. If the overriding purpose of life is seen as serving God, then the problems are likely to be different from those that might exist if the objective is to increase as rapidly as possible the mass availability of consumer goods.

Obviously, the philosophical objectives of life differ widely from culture to culture, within and between countries, so that any objective established should be as wide-ranging as is consistent with the formulation of a relatively specific development strategy on which an educational structure can be built. Thus I suggest that our basic objective should be the creation of the necessary preconditions so that every individual (or every individual in a small community) is able to lead

a productive and fulfilling life, and is mentally and physically able (if he so chooses) to play a significant role in making the important decisions that affect him in his life.

Though many problems are absolute to the extent that the above objective cannot be achieved without at least their partial solution, there are no absolute solutions, for the solutions themselves will create new problems. For example, greater production is necessary if people are to have enough to eat, but the more production there is the more people are likely to become the slaves of efficiency and the more pollution is likely to become a problem. Thus I would like to emphasise that "limits" will have to be imposed on most fields of human activity if people are to be physically and psychologically free to find their own inherent creativity.

As all the major problems facing the world's poor are interrelated and can be considered both as causes of other problems, and absolute problems themselves, any classification is likely to be rather synthetic. However, for the purpose of discussion, six major problem areas will be identified :—

- a) Insufficient Production of Goods and Services,
- b) Inequalities and other Problems of the Reward System,
- c) Nutrition, Hygiene, and Health Problems,
- d) Lack of Awareness,
- e) Population Growth and Migration Problems,
- f) Difficulties of Adjustment to a Changing Environment,

All poor or backward regions will not necessarily face all the above difficulties, and some might face other serious constraints (for example, the hierarchical social structure in Thailand, or the caste system in India) that do not fit neatly into any of the above problem areas. Nevertheless it is felt that if partial solutions to the above problems could be worked out for a particular society, that society would be progressing towards achieving our overall objective. Before going on to elaborate what is included in each of the six areas, it should be emphasised again, that all are interrelated and thus the order in which they will be discussed does not have any great significance.

### a) Insufficient Production

Though it is true that poverty is often only relative, and it is also true that many great and enlightened men have lived highly fulfilling lives with very little food, and virtually no possessions, (for example, Ghandi, Buddha, and Mahavira, the great teacher of Jainism) in many countries the ordinary man does need to produce and consume more if he is to lead an active life, and not to feel imprisoned by his environment.

For example, if someone is on the borderline of starvation he will be unable to do much except to work inefficiently to produce an insufficient quantity of food; if he does not have tools to help him produce his minimum requirements then he will have to devote all his waking hours to labour with no time left for other channels of fulfilment; if he does not have a reasonable area of waterproofed, warm or cool living space (depending on where he lives) for him and his family, then not only will his activity be reduced through uncomfortable rest, but also he will feel imprisoned by his dwelling; if he has no access to objects of communication (books, tape recorders, newspapers, radios, etc), then his ideas will be limited to those existing in his community; and if he does not have sufficient clothing to protect him from the climate, to live with a reasonable degree of cleanliness, or to satisfy social norms of behaviour, then he will either be frequently sick, or be socially ostracised. In addition, in many societies, some form of artificial lighting is needed if an individual is not to spend half his life asleep, and also some simple transportation facilities might need to be provided *to save some of the large amount of time* devoted by some groups for essential travel (for example, in some villages I have visited in Africa, women have spent three or four hours a day collecting water). Finally, material goods should be able to serve man and thus should by themselves be able to bring occasional happiness: a piece of jewelery, a toy, some beer or wine, etc. all, if closely limited at the outset, (so that open-ended and insatiable desires are not created) can produce considerable satisfaction. With such inessential luxuries it is of course extremely difficult to establish a meaningful and logical limit, thus

priority should be devoted to providing the essentials before the production of luxuries is encouraged<sup>1</sup>.

Thus in the poorest countries more effective work is needed in order to free individuals and communities from material chains through the production (not necessarily on a large scale) of more goods and services. Any development strategy that does not concentrate on producing sufficient food, production tools, housing, communications, objects, clothing, and lighting for all will not make a significant impact on the mass of the population. In many countries a large proportion do not have enough. In Thailand there are atrocious urban slums, and rural families living on less than \$ 50 a year, in India the situation is even worse, with hundreds of thousands of people with no permanent shelter, and more than a hundred million people estimated to be living on an income of less than \$ 15 per year. Of course at the same time in both countries there are large numbers of people who have considerably more than the basic necessities. This brings us on to our next point, the need to develop a more egalitarian reward system that does not encourage production for production's sake, and consumption for consumption's sake.

#### **b) Problems of the Reward System**

Unfortunately, the basic minimum is not a fixed but a moving target, for as inequalities increase (both inside a nation and between nations), and as people become increasingly aware of these inequalities, their desires and aspirations also multiply.

In the past, traditional societies tended to distribute the positions with high social and material rewards on the basis of hereditary factors,<sup>2</sup> and social indoctrination was such that the majority of people did not even aspire to possess the material goods owned by their "superiors." Now, however, there is not only the egalitarian myth created by educa-

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1 Exactly the opposite happens in most developing countries, with soft drink factories usually being the first modern industry to be established.

2 In India for example even a person's specific occupation was determined by the sub-caste or community to which he belonged.

tional systems (to be discussed later in this book), but also, through greater mobility, the poor peasant can now see his urban brethren with cars, radios, big houses, clothes, watches, T.V. and fridges. In addition, advertisers, shops, travelling salesmen, loan sharks and various types of carpetbaggers are all trying to increase the desire for inessential spending beyond immediately achievable levels. Also, in many countries, politicians indulge in conspicuous consumption to increase their status, perhaps not realising that this further widens the gap between people's aspirations for material goods, and reality.

The traditional system of allocating social and material rewards is rapidly dying out, with most elitist positions now being distributed on the basis of success in schooling (except perhaps political positions, and even these require the individual to have a certain minimum education). In general there is a clearly defined dualistic system of rewards, one for peasants and unskilled labourers, and one for technical, professional, and administrative workers. The rewards of the former can be considered to be based on the past traditional situation in the country, whilst those of the latter are more closely related to salaries in western, developed countries. Thus in Thailand a poor peasant might earn \$ 4 a month, someone with a B.A. degree in government service would start at \$ 60 a month, whilst the highest paid civil servant would earn up to \$ 500 a month. In India the range is even wider, with the equivalent figures being around \$ 1½ p.m., \$ 27 and \$ 300 respectively. It should be noted that this two hundredfold range exists *despite* the socialist, egalitarian policies being pursued by the Indian government.

It is not surprising therefore that the rural peasant earning, say, \$ 50 a year or less, with a chance of only doubling his income through motivated and hard work, wants his child to proceed in school so that he will become at least eligible for some of the top positions, or that he migrates to the towns (often leaving his family for years) on the chance of getting a two or even a five-fold increase in income by finding an unskilled position. Nor is it surprising that in many developing countries examination papers are stolen, safes blown, invigilators

threatened (and even killed), to such an extent that the army sometimes has to be called in to help supervise the pretence of examinations where all are supposed to have equal chances.

Finally, when a person has successfully overcome all the hurdles (exams) put in his way to stop him achieving an elitist position and having obtained his B.A. or M.A., can then find no suitable position, it is obvious that he will become vocally dissatisfied and cause considerable political problems.

Thus the present reward system, with its huge income differentials based largely on educational achievement (however unrelated this achievement is to the job) makes a pretence of equality of opportunity but with little reality to this pretence. (This is not only because poor families cannot afford the high indirect costs of schooling, but also because middle class children, with their higher role expectations, and more sophisticated home environments, automatically achieve better in school).

This myth of equality of opportunity justifies the high range of incomes (based on "merit"), raises people's minimum aspirations to unfeasible levels, increases rural-urban migration and visible poverty, and thus increases the concentration of resources on the urban areas at the expense of the rural areas; increases the proportion of total educational resources concentrated on secondary and higher education, again at the expense of the masses; and finally through creating a large group of schooled people with unfulfilled aspiration, creates many political and social problems.

Thus a change in the reward system is not only central to the solution of poverty and rural stagnation, but is also central to the question of significant educational change. It is however one of the hardest problems to tackle as any change will be in direct conflict with the interests of existing elite groups.

### **c) Nutrition, Hygiene, and Health Problems**

Hatha Yoga, which has existed in some form for about five thousand years, assumes that before a person can gain control over his

mind, he must first have control over a healthy and physically fit body. Its message is still valid, for if someone has a poor diet he is unlikely to be either healthy or particularly active; if he lives in unhygienic conditions he will often be ill, and if he is frequently wracked by parasites, malaria, and other endemic diseases he is unlikely to have much energy left to devote to improving his quality of life.

Modern nutritional research has shown that a large proportion of the world's population have insufficient food; whilst considerably more than the majority, though perhaps eating enough in bulk, do not have the minimum nutrients necessary for full health. In many countries the poor eat little more than the basic starch staple and thus not only suffer themselves the weakness and lethargy of under-nourishment but also, through maternal malnutrition at the pre-and post-natal stages, cause their children irreversible and permanent brain damage which is made even worse through infant and child malnutrition. Children from such under-nourished families have significantly lower intelligence than well-nourished children from similar environments, and can also be up to 10% smaller. Thus, unless there is proper nutrition, all other development activities are doomed to failure, because there is no other way of breaking the vicious circle of poverty—malnutrition—lethargy—poverty. On the other hand, if proper nutrition is not accompanied by other attempts to satisfy peoples' aspirations, such activity is likely to produce an explosive situation, for it is perhaps only the lethargy created by malnutrition which enables the mass of the population in many poor countries to accept, with considerable docility, the gross inequalities which surround them.

Poor hygiene is not nearly as universal as malnutrition for it is largely a result of social customs. For example, in Thailand and much of Africa, outside urban slums, there is a considerable degree of hygiene and cleanliness, the only real problems being caused by ignorance (defecating in a river above where water is drawn from, failure to boil water, or leaving it to stand, etc.) In parts of India however the situation is quite different, with there seeming to be absolutely no

sense of hygiene at all. For example, driving through the country at night one can often smell the presence of a village long before it can be seen. Hygiene (obviously again with limits, and not to the extent of the germ-free living being put forward in various developed country advertisements) is important, for by taking a few simple precautions (digging pit latrines, protecting water supplies, separating animals, and personal washing), the incidence of various parasitical and bacterial diseases can be greatly reduced.

Curative and preventative health measures are also very important if people are to be fit enough to produce more for themselves, and think clearly about their own lives. In many parts of the world, for example, the majority of the population permanently have parasites, which can usually be easily killed off with simple medicines. In other places people are dying of malaria, being blinded by trachoma, catching small pox, cholera, and polio. Though death is inevitable and people have to die of something sometime, there are a few diseases which can be easily prevented or cured, which, if left to run their course, might either kill people in their prime (or before) or permanently incapacitate or cripple them. Even without large numbers of sick people, most poor countries face the problem of very high dependency ratios, and with so many easily curable sick even fewer people are able to work hard for self and community development, and thus the pace of development in all its aspects is slowed down. Of course, again, limits are necessary so that the weaknesses caused by endemic diseases, and a dependence on chance are not replaced by weaknesses caused by overdrugging and a dependence on doctors.

#### **d) Awareness**

Because of disease and malnutrition many poor people are to a large extent unaware not only of their own position, but also the details of their own immediate environment. Through institutional inflexibility, religion, and traditional social indoctrination many others, though aware of trees, flowers, spirits etc, around them, are not aware of their own situation and its inherent irrationalities (in the western, logical



sense). Due to either of the above reasons, a large proportion of the world's population are not aware of their own strengths and potential for creating a better life for themselves and their families. Nor are they always aware of the excessive exploitation under which they live. As Paulo Freire has emphasised in his "Pedagogy of the Oppressed" the creation of an awareness through the exposure of the contradictions inherent in most people's lives is an essential part of and precondition for development, for without such an awareness people are not the subject of their own lives but merely objects manipulated by others.

Given the great scarcity of monetary resources in poor countries, if any rapid progress is to be made towards partially solving problems of production and health and so on, most of the efforts will inevitably have to come from the potential beneficiaries themselves. But before such people can devote their own time and energy towards solving a problem they must first be motivated. Such motivation has as its precondition, an awareness of the realities of the existing situation.

For example, peasants in many parts of Africa and Asia live in *very small* mud-walled huts. This is not because there is insufficient mud for bricks, nor because they do not have enough spare time to build a large house, (they have plenty of time in the dry season), nor because traditional building technology is inadequate (this is not so, as there are a few larger mud brick houses in most villages), but is mainly because the peasants cannot see the purpose of having a larger house. Similarly there are examples of peasants who are living at a very low subsistence level while refusing to use free irrigation water even though this would enable them to double their crop production and provide plenty of good food for their families. Again they are unaware of the bad side effects of eating only a stable starch, and thus are not motivated to produce more. In one irrigation project in a very poor area of Thailand only 0.2% of available water was being used due to lack of interest on the part of the majority of peasants living in the area covered by the irrigation network.

Thus the creation of awareness in poor people, and their motivation is a necessary pre-condition for the solution of any of the problems

being discussed, but because of the lethargy caused by malnutrition and poor health, survival is struggle enough, and the creation of effective awareness and motivation is thus extremely difficult.

### **e) Population Growth and Migration Problems**

Though there are still some people in important positions who argue that rapid population growth is not a problem in its own right, and only sometimes causes difficulties by exacerbating other problems, such people are fortunately becoming dwindling minority. In the poorer countries, where large portions have insufficient food, inadequate shelter, and non-existent health care, the economist who argues that an expanding labour force is good for growth, or the religious leader who "believes" that rapid population growth is God's will seem to pay scanty attention to the relative emptiness and suffering of the lives of the existing poor. To me their arguments reflect a strange concept of the purpose of growth, and an even stranger concept of God.

They perhaps do not understand that current world population growth rates are a thousand times higher than the growth rate during the first few hundred thousand years of man's existence. Migration also is taking place on a much larger scale than ever before, with tens of millions of people in every region of the world migrating from rural areas to the towns each year. In the past migrations not only involved relatively small numbers of people (thousands, or at the most hundreds of thousands of people), but also took place gradually. For example, Moses wandered in the wilderness with the Israelite tribes for forty years before reaching his promised land. Now, however, huge numbers of people are migrating in a very short time, leaving their homes one day, and a few days later arriving at their destinations. For example, during "the great leap forward" in China more than 10 million people a year were migrating to the towns, whilst after the cultural revolution, forced rustication of urban educated youth produced a reverse movement of more than 5 million people a year.

The growth and migration of population are not by themselves problems, it is their implications which are serious. For example, at

present something like 60% of the world's population do not have their basic minimum needs of adequate food, housing, and medical care satisfied. As the growth of the population of the poorest countries is more rapid than that of the rich, and as within any country the poorer people have a higher fertility rate than the rich, by the end of this century it is quite possible that as much as 70–80% (depending on what steps are made to equalise the distribution of essential goods and services within countries) of the world's population will not have their basic minimum requirements satisfied.

Similarly with environmental pollution (which is also increasing exponentially) the more rapidly the total population, and, in particular, the urban population increases, the sooner we will reach a point at which the biosphere can no longer absorb all the various types of filth produced by modern civilisation and technology, and thus the less time will we have to find ways of dealing with the wastes of industrial society before they reach crisis proportions.

There has always been a gap between rich countries and poor countries, and between the rich people in a particular country and the poor people, but what is different now is that with education and modern communications the poor are becoming increasingly aware of these differences, which because of population growth and other factors, are becoming wider and more apparent. Unless these inegalitarian trends can be reversed there are likely to be social and political disturbances the like of which the world has never seen. In addition the existence of these inter and intra-national inequalities will effectively prevent any limits to individual materialistic consumption from ever being established. Without the imposition of such limits there are strong arguments to suggest that within a relatively short period the world will face an insoluble economic crisis which will further speed up the process of social and political disintegration.

Thus the implication of population growth and migration are two of the most serious problems confronting humanity at the present time, because the mere pressure of numbers (as long as these people

have enough to eat) is likely to lead in the short or the long run to savage wars and other conflicts which will have the effect of restoring population to equilibrium levels. Already over the last decade there have been a large number of conflicts noted for their savagery and pointlessness, and most of these have occurred in the most densely populated parts of the world. For example, the massacre of half a million "communists" in Jaya, the Batutsi-Bahutu slaughter in Ruanda and Burundi, and the Bangladesh war.

Man is not the only animal that faces population pressures, but unlike most other species he does not seem to have instinctive population growth control mechanisms. Many species (particularly amongst birds, but also with other animals including some fish and deer) cannot mate unless they control enough territory to provide sufficient food for their offspring. Other species periodically commit mass suicide when their numbers become too large (for example, lemmings and certain species of American deer), whilst yet others become sterile in conditions of acute over crowding (for example, rats).

Every culture has a traditional demography which determines when people should get married, whether there should be polygamy or polyandry, how frequently women should give birth, whether pre-marital procreation is permitted, and so on. Though these traditional demographic beliefs differ widely from culture to culture, up until quite recently they all had one thing in common—they allowed different groups of men to live in reasonable balance with their environments. Most groups of people had only a very marginal increase in population (just enough to counter the effects of periodic epidemics and natural disasters) and thus the traditional demographic beliefs could be considered rational. Of course, from time to time a technological break-through would make the traditional demography unbalanced for a particular group and this would therefore be followed by a period of emigration and war, and perhaps also a change in values, which would restore the balance. But now not only are virtually all traditional demographies out of balance (due to a rapid and dramatic fall in the death rate through the introduction of a few simple medicines) but because of the existence of nations,

with clearly defined borders, large scale emigration is no longer possible. In other words the most common traditional safety valve has been closed. Thus the solution to the population problem rests in updating the traditional demography very rapidly so that it is consistent with the realities of the present situation.

The traditional demography (for any ethnic group that still exists) was successful in so far as it enabled each woman to produce slightly more than two children who would survive until reproductive age, but now (through the reduction in the death rate) it enables each woman to produce considerably more than these two children. In time the traditional demography might readjust itself to the realities of the present situation, but such readjustment is unlikely to take place rapidly enough, as traditional beliefs are ingrained in society because of their existence over thousand of years.

Thus, if population is to be controlled by man humanistically, (instead of by war, natural catastrophes, or a complete breakdown in social order), immediate and drastic measures will have to be taken. All national policies, from education (both in content and financing) through employment to taxation, should be designed to change the particular traditional attitudes which would need to be altered if population equilibrium is to be restored. It is absolutely essential that the existing inconsistencies of government activities be changed (for example, at present mass media campaigns might be directed towards family-size control, but at the same time taxation and school financing might be encouraging large families), if any impact is to be made. In addition, the efforts must be concentrated on those groups of people for whom rapid population growth produces the most detrimental side effects, i.e. those who are already very poor. At present most efforts at family-size control have much greater impact on those who need to limit their number of children least (i.e. modern sector middle class families).

#### **f) Difficulties of Adjustment to Change**

The lag between traditional demography and reality is just one aspect of a much larger problem. In developing countries there are large

numbers of people, traditionally educated in a relatively static rural environment whose values have existed for many centuries, who now have to cope with a completely different modern urban environment which requires, for successful integration, a completely different set of values. For example, in Uganda many high-level civil servants came from rural peasant backgrounds, and a considerable number, though "schooled", when allocated modern, western style electrified houses, would cook on charcoal and light their houses with crude oil lamps (so that all the walls were covered with lamp black), and spend more than all their money<sup>1</sup> on the symbols of development such as cars, and suits. Such people were also in the forefront of the fight for "decent dress" and would go to extreme lengths not only to get various nomadic people to cover themselves, but also to get "minis" and "maxis" and other fashions which conveyed the wrong symbolism banned.

These products of the "cultural-generation gap" are occupying elite positions in many countries at present, and thus development efforts are often concentrated on the *facades* and *symbols* of development. To show that their country is developed everyone must wear a jacket and tie; there must be a T.V. station even though there are few receivers (I have visited a T.V. transmitter which was transmitting to only two T.V. sets, both in the local hospital); and there must be a modern and architecturally beautiful university providing degrees (including post-graduate degrees) which are internationally acceptable in the most erudite but irrelevant subjects.

Not only is it difficult for people educated by one environment to understand and cope effectively with a completely different environment, but also in some cases the situation is complicated (particularly in urban areas) by the environment itself changing so rapidly that even without any immigration there are difficult problems of adjustment. If

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<sup>1</sup> When General Amin, President of Uganda, was promoted from the ranks by the British, prior to independence, he was given a cheque book as a sign of his new status. Within the first six hours he had written cheques for more than £ 2,000 on a salary of less than £ 50, all for purchasing various status symbols.

our efforts at rural transformation prove successful, then the most traditional segments of rural society will also have to face problems of "future shock". Very great care will therefore have to be taken in designing any development strategy to ensure that the expected benefits are not outweighed by the psychological problems of adjustment to dramatic change. (This problem is discussed further in chapter 3)

In concluding this section I would like to emphasise that any development strategy has to take account of all these problems (and almost certainly others as well), and must also take account of the total society and all the individuals in it (just as medicine should take account of the whole man in his community, and not just his spleen, or liver, or mind). Each of these problems is interrelated and the partial solution of one is dependent on the partial solution of all. If one is tackled there might be temporary relief, but there will be no relatively long-lasting solution unless the whole of society is shifted to new tracks.

## II. Some Development Strategies

Although there is an infinite number of possible development strategies, placing differential emphasis on the myriad of potential factors important for human fulfilment, there has been a surprising consistency in the pattern of development being pursued by countries all over the world. Development has been invariably defined in economic terms such as "sectoral change in the economy" "progress towards economic take-off" "growth in real production or G.D.P", etc. In all such objectives people are only referred to indirectly (i.e. if all things go well with the economy people might be able to have more material possessions). Details of the development strategy (for example, whether the state, or private persons and groups, should own the means of production) do differ from nation to nation, but only a very few countries are consciously trying to improve the quality of life of the population directly (instead of indirectly through the instrument of economic development).

Future historians might very well refer to the nineteen-sixties as the decade of the economic dream, the decade when politicians and

policy makers in virtually every country in the world saw their own power, the satisfaction of their people and the stability of their countries almost totally related to overall statistical increase in wealth. It was felt that as long as G.D.P. in "real terms" was increasing more rapidly than population growth, then all other problems in the long run were solvable. It was believed that individual satisfaction was very closely related to the quantity of material possessions the individual had at his disposal. I use the past tense because the fantasies of this economic dream are now being realised, and thus sometime soon the emphasis of development is likely to move away from the physical and material towards the achievement of certain more personorientated objectives. For this new development new strategies are needed.



## **CHAPTER 2**

### **TOWARDS A STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE (PARTICULARLY IN RURAL AREAS)**

#### **1. The Futility of Modern Development Strategies**

It might at first sight seem surprising that here in the middle of the second UN development decade that most of the problems outlined in the previous chapter are no nearer solution than they were fifteen years ago. In fact the world seems to be further and further away from providing the social, cultural, and economic environment necessary if the mass of the world's population is to have a more satisfying and fulfilling life. Whether "development" takes place rapidly or slowly, there is a near-universal pattern, with the poor (particularly those in rural areas) becoming increasingly poorer, both spiritually and materialally, whilst the rich continue to expand their consumption of material luxuries.

This failure seems to be caused by the fact that the ideas of "development" are not only built on multiple foundations of false assumptions, but also tend to ignore the fact that individual people are not just instruments who can be useful in achieving certain statistically and easily quantifiable goals, but are both the primary means and the end of development.

The relegation of man's quality of life and satisfaction to a position of minor importance in the developmental and educational processes is a reflection of a much wider malaise that is affecting virtually all countries throughout the world. There seem to be two major reasons for this trend, which is, in Thailand, relatively recent. First, in the desire to evaluate progress there are increasing attempts to express everything in quantitative terms so that "objective" comparisons can take place, and whereas it is relatively easy to quantify production, or enrolments, it is virtually impossible to quantify social disruption, self-understanding, cultural disintegration, quality of life, or serenity. Thus our goals are expressed in quantitative terms on the assumption

(usually unproved and often false) that the achievement of these will lead to the achievement of certain more humanistically oriented objectives. Secondly, because of the increasing complexity of modern society the world is being divided into tightly insulated specialist compartments, with each speciality having its own private language, and surrounding itself with protective myths. Even more serious however is the fact that each speciality normally defines its own criteria of success, and these criteria are chosen not so much because their achievement will increase the "social good", but because it is in the interests of the practitioners of that particular specialism. For example, success in education is normally defined in terms of increase in enrolments, no matter how useless the subjects are that are being learnt by the students; medical achievement is judged in terms of the number of esoteric illnesses for which breakthrough cures can be found, and the number of ill people that are "cured", even if the cure involves establishing a permanent dependency relationship between the patient and his doctor; achievement in transportation is normally equated with increases in the speed of travel, even if, in total, people spend an increasing proportion of their time in travelling. Finally, and most serious of all, the economist evaluates the achievement of whole countries in terms of their increase in G.D.P., improvement in their balance of payments, or their industrialisation, even though these can be, and often are accompanied by a decline in economic welfare. For all these specialisms there could be "people oriented" goals which would, however, be harder to quantify, and much harder to produce self-congratulatory breakthroughs. For example, the objective of medicine could, and probably should be to reduce that total number of times people are ill, and thus to reduce the need for doctors; the objective of transportation could and probably should be to reduce the total amount of social time spent in travelling, and at the same time reduce the non-renewable resources used in transportation to a minimum, and so on.

As was mentioned above, probably the most serious of all the self-defined criteria of success are those of the economists, for not only have most economists completely removed the individual human element

and expressed everything in terms of money and things, but also their criteria for progress have been widely accepted by most political elites. One has a feeling when one looks at development plans, with their targets expressed in terms of increasing G.D.P, improving balance of payments, increasing exports and industrialisation, and building up an infra-structure necessary for economic take-off; and with people only mentioned statistically as labour force, as manpower, as consumers and as savers, that because of the immense complexity of human societies and cultures, and the diversity of human needs, there is an escape into a more simple game, a fantasy that assumes that statistical tables are far more important than human satisfaction. How, for example, does a new textile plant with the latest equipment imported from overseas, using imported raw materials, imported foreign expertise, and a small number of local nationals working in repetitive tasks, and exporting its product and most of its profits, help in the real development of the country? Does it reduce the suffering of those citizens who are wracked by poverty, does it increase quality, does it increase the harmony of the people with their environment, and does it increase anyone's serenity?

It is not as if many thinking people really believe that economic development as presently practised will solve any problems by itself, because there are countries already fifty or more years ahead of the poorer regions of the world in the development process where these problems still exist. In the U.S.A. for example (at present consuming almost half the world's supply of non-renewable resources) there is still abject poverty in the midst of conspicuous waste, increasing drug addiction, increasing crime, and a rapid disappearance of any value system around which the people can build their lives. The same frustration is evident in most if not all other so called "developed" countries.

In a way the world is in a vicious circle at the moment, with increasing numbers of people realising that development as it is presently practised leads to more human problems than it solves, but forced to continue to aim for more and more economic development for two main reasons. First, because there is a fear that if growth stops there will be

complete collapse and chaos; and secondly, and more importantly, because the only way to justify existing inequalities within and between countries is to say that these inequalities are only temporary, and if growth can be accelerated these inequalities will disappear. Usually however growth is accompanied by increasing inequalities both between and within countries. In Thailand, for example, incomes in the north-east (the poorest part of the country) are almost certainly falling, whilst those in Bangkok are rising.

What is even more disturbing is that not only do we see a country such as Thailand (in common with most other countries in the world) rushing headlong into a process of conventional economic development when we know that this in itself is not likely to do much to increase the level of human satisfaction, but also we know that because of the limited supply of non-renewable resources, and because of the limited ability of the biosphere to absorb pollutants, she will never be able to reach the level of material development of the USA or England, let alone the unspecified higher level needed to produce equality and satisfaction. To quote from Everett Reimer :—

“Raising world consumption standards to US levels would multiply the combustion of fossil fuels fifty times, the use of iron a hundred times, the use of other metals over two hundred times. By the time these levels are reached the standards in the U.S. would again have tripled, and the population would already have tripled. Such projections lead to results as absurd as the premises from which they come.”

Thus at the moment Thailand and the world seem to be rushing after a goal which not only is unrelated to the quality of life and the satisfaction of the mass of the people, but is also quite obviously impossible.

The materialistic and technological civilisation that is sweeping the world at present is relatively young—only a hundred or so years old, and despite the fact that huge cracks are already appearing in the edifice, there is still a widespread arrogance that in this second of evolutionary time man has the solution of all the problems of the

universe in his grasp. If a particular activity is failing, the answer of the optimists is to expand that activity. The educational system is failing to meet its objectives so we must have more education; doctors are now creating as many illnesses as they cure so we must have more doctors; economic development is failing to produce an egalitarian society, so we must have more economic development; and technology is dehumanising life and polluting the biosphere so we must have more technology to solve the problems of pollution etc.

Looking back over recorded history there are a large number of very successful civilisations that have risen, flourished and fallen (i.e. the Buddhist cycle of birth, suffering and decay). Where for example are the civilisations that created Angkor Wat, or the Pyramids, or the Parthenon? They all have died. It seems that the decay of these civilisations was caused by two main factors, firstly, they assumed that the natural environment was there to be exploited, and thus over the centuries those resources which enabled the civilisation to grow were destroyed (a surprising proportion can be found in arid places or deserts); secondly, whereas the birth of these civilisations was characterised by a flourishing of new alternative ideas, as the civilisation aged it became less and less flexible and less able to respond to changing circumstances and knowledge.

The same process seems to be happening to western materialistic civilisation which is raping the environment on a world-wide scale, and increasingly wasting the few non-renewable resources available. Despite the fact that people realise that this is happening, and that at some time in the future (precisely when no one can predict), a collapse is inevitable, the system seems to be so inflexible that its direction cannot be changed.

In comparison with the more developed countries, Thailand is still in a fortunate position, for outside Bangkok and a few other "developed" areas, western materialistic values have not yet completely dominated the value system of the society. She is also fortunate in comparison with many other "developing" countries because she does not yet face insoluble problems of absolute poverty intensified by over-

population. It is thus still just possible (if the political motivation exists) to work out a new development strategy whose main objective would be to reduce suffering, increase satisfaction and the quality of life, and increase the harmony between Thais and their environment.

The basic elements of this development strategy can be found in Buddhist philosophy, through aiming at a limitation of desires and an avoidance of extremes, concentrating on spiritual (as opposed to material) self-development of individuals, evolving gradually rather than making quantum jumps, and seeking harmony rather than conflict and competition.

In simplistic terms satisfaction can be seen as a function of fulfillment over desires, in other words satisfaction can be increased either by increasing fulfillment or by reducing desires. The western pattern of development aims at increasing satisfaction by increasing desires in the hope that this will lead to a greater proportional increase in fulfillment (in fact satisfaction tends to fall because desires generally increase more rapidly than fulfillment). Buddhist philosophy on the other hand would suggest a strategy for increasing satisfaction by reducing desires, so that inevitably the proportion of desires fulfilled rises.

Western development and value systems aim at extremes—the richest fastest, biggest, most knowledgeable is the best, whilst Buddhist philosophy would suggest that a more moderate path would be more effective in abolishing suffering and finding satisfaction (the middle way).

Western development sees satisfaction being produced by physical things outside the individual, whilst Buddhist philosophy suggests that true satisfaction can only be found internally by self-reflection, meditation and awareness.

Buddhist philosophy assumes that everything changes gradually and that this is the natural order of things, whilst current development strategies assume that countries and people can jump from one static situation (traditional society) to another completely different situation (modern technological materialistic society).

Finally westerners believe that man can conquer and control his environment, whilst Buddhist philosophy says that man is just one

part of the total universe, all parts of which are interrelated, and thus man must aim to live harmoniously with his environment.

Before even a highly motivated government can work out a strategy for changing the direction of development away from one based on materialistic values towards one based more on Buddhist values, it will be important for them to have some idea of why present materialistic values have achieved such widespread acceptability, since few countries or individuals have been forced to accept these values. Very briefly and simplistically, there seem to be eight main reasons :-

- i) Some men have an inherent desire for power, and it is quite obvious that in the past, and still at present (though not necessarily in the future) countries with materialistic development are more powerful than those without.
- ii) Power and high social status are closely related. Those with power in the world also have high social status and have many material things. Since the desire for social status is probably inherent in man (in common with many other animals) people increasingly aim for such status through possessing more things.
- iii) Those with power and high social status no longer share traditional values, and thus the traditional value system increasingly is seen as a second best system.
- iv) As communications open up, and new ideas permeate, the security of traditional beliefs is destroyed leaving confusion and a need for some simple values to cling on to.
- v) Because of the importance of profits and growth to the western educated or oriented urban elites, efforts are made (through direct advertising, or through indirect examples) to persuade individuals to want more (partly in order to compete with other individuals.)
- vi) People are never asked to make a choice on the right questions. For example, in terms of air conditioning, people might be asked whether they prefer to be cool or hot,

instead of being asked whether they prefer to be cool in a concrete box, isolated from any community, or hot in an open house with trees and friends and family all around.

- vii) Because of the complexity of modern western society, and thus the need to divide things into their specialist compartments, few people ever study or are aware of the broad social and cultural implications of any particular development.
- viii) Finally, and perhaps most serious of all, is the basic inferiority many people from traditional environments feel when faced with the huge, complex, and almost magic products of technological industries. There is often a bewilderment, and severe culture shock, and a complete loss of faith in traditional values, and the traditional patterns of life, when the average peasant first becomes aware of a modern urban technological society.

A considerable amount of space has been given to a discussion of the problems of overall development, because rural development must inevitably be conceived as a part of an overall development strategy, and I myself do not believe that present patterns of development are either feasible, or can possibly lead to an increase in the satisfaction and quality of life of the majority of the world's population, particularly that of those living in rural areas. Thus in what follows I will try to outline a strategy of rural development that is designed around Buddhist principles, involves evolution from where rural people now are economically, socially and culturally, rather than an uprooting and imposition of an entirely new culture, and which, taking account of world resource scarcities, does have some chance of being feasible in the longer run. Of course it is obvious that such a dramatic change in the direction of development, away from material things, and the open-ended desires of elite groups, towards the real needs of the mass of the population, will involve considerable opposition, and thus will require strong political motivation if it is ever to occur.



## II. Rural Development

With the possible exception of Communist China there are few developing countries that can report any large scale rural development successes. Even when one measures development in purely conventional economic terms. On average, per capita production and earnings in rural areas are increasing (if at all) at a much slower rate than in urban areas, and when one considers the disruptive and destructive effect modernisation has on family relationships, value systems, and other aspects of the existing society and culture, the overall impact of most rural development efforts is, generally speaking, negative. There are of course some *small scale* and isolated successes, normally in richer rural areas, and normally dependent on the mobilisation efforts of a small group of dedicated workers, but these examples do not detract from the general negative aspect of most rural development activities.

Perhaps the main reason for this general failure is the dualistic nature of the society, culture and economy in virtually all developing countries. In the west the industrial-technological-materialistic culture evolved gradually out of the existing culture over a period of a hundred or more years, whilst in Thailand (or at least in Bangkok), for example, it has been superimposed on, and bears little relationship to, the traditional culture. For modern industrialisation and urban development special conditions are needed—special non-indigenous transportation, educational, and organisational systems, and special working and living habits. Thus poor countries, in trying to jump from where they are into an industrial technological society of the 1970's are inevitably creating a dualistic system, with a small proportion of the population involved in operating the modern sector, having work habits, life styles, consumption patterns, and even to some extent thought processes of a pattern derived from the West, whilst the majority of the population continue to live much as before, except that the security of their past value system has been or is being destroyed.

Because there is no broad power base in most developing societies, and power is in the hands of a small urban elite, oriented towards

the "modern" sector, available scarce resources are first devoted to the symbols of western development—cars, roads, air-conditioned houses, oil refineries, etc. This deprives the rural areas of resources, and thus tends to increase rural poverty and create a sense of inadequacy, since few rural people have access to the symbols of development. This in turn encourages rural-urban migration which increases urban unemployment and the need for an expanded urban infra-structure (housing, water supply, drainage, schools, hospitals etc.) Because these urban unemployed are physically close to the political elite, in an attempt to keep political pressures under control there is a further concentration of resources in and around the capital through the creation of expensive (on a per capita basis) work places and infra-structure, thus further impoverishing the rural areas and speeding up the pace of migration.

It is unfortunate that virtually all the decisions about development are based on preconceived western assumptions rather than on a humanistic study of the real problems. For example, in order to make a minute impact on the traffic congestion in Bangkok a vast sum of money was spent on various insignificant urban road developments, when the same amount of money could perhaps have been used to provide enough free bicycles for everyone in Bangkok, so that cars could be banned from the city streets. However westerners have superhighways, so if poor countries are to be "modern" their capitals must have sufficient similar facilities for its cars, even if this makes them unfit for humans.

Thus in Thailand, the centre of Bangkok and of a few other towns can be seen largely as products of western society surviving on the exploitation of rural areas. This exploitation takes many forms. There is the traditional colonial form of exploitation with the "metropolitan power" depending on the raw materials and cheap labour from the "colony", and also depending on the colony for exports (e.g. rice) to provide the metropolitan elite with the foreign exchange they need for their consumption of luxury imports. Secondly, Bangkok attracts

most of the highly ambitious people from the rural areas because prospects seem greater since "everything happens in Bangkok", thus draining the rural areas of just the type of people who would be needed to promote rural development. Thirdly, there is increasing direct exploitation, with sophisticated city dwellers taking advantage of the credibility and lack of understanding of the rural people of modern institutions, and cheating them (whether they are being cheated or not according to concepts of bourgeois justice they are still being cheated). Fourthly, and perhaps most important, is the value exploitation. All modern institutions (e.g. the school), whether intentionally or otherwise, tend to consider traditional values as old-fashioned and useless, and build up new value systems which are really only applicable to those who live in the modern sector. Thus aspirations and expectations are created which cannot be achieved in the rural areas, which leads to a rapid disintegration of rural society.

I have emphasised above that humanistic rural development can only take place through a gradual *evolution*, but it seems that such an evolution is impossible if at the same time an alien modern sector is being created in the capital city and other towns.

Thus a pre-condition for rural development is that the pattern of urban development be changed so that there is not the quantum gap that exists at the moment between urban and rural areas, or that a system of walls and narrow bridges (symbolically speaking) be built round the large towns so that a relatively undisturbed pattern of rural development can take place. Neither of these alternatives will be easy to implement, but if we are to take rural development seriously (as opposed to gradual urbanisation and industrialization of rural areas, which is statistically impossible, and almost certainly undesirable) then it is absolutely necessary.

Let me give a few examples of why one or other of the above alternatives is essential. Local small scale industries, with humanistic and creative work for the employees using local raw materials, cannot develop in competition with modern large scale industries, with inhuman

and repetitive work, and large advertizing and marketing budgets. Open communications (roads and mass media) open the way to migration, and prevent a gradual change in value systems. Modern education (i.e. designed and administered by those in the capital city) helps create aspirations and expectations that cannot be met by the majority of people, at the same time as it dissociates those who pass through the system from their rural community. Modern medical values (i.e. a doctor is needed to cure a person) help destroy the confidence of rural people in proved traditional practitioners without providing an alternative. (Most doctors don't like working in rural areas). Modern transportation systems (i.e. trucks, buses, and cars) increase the dependence of rural people on those who can afford these expensive vehicles, whereas previously most people provided their own transportation.

In other words it seems to me that the present open contact between the modern urban areas, and the rural areas seems mainly to have the effect of opening up options of frustration for rural people, whilst at the same time destroying the individual's sense of importance and pride in his community. I am not of course saying that all products of modern technology are bad, or that there should be complete isolation of the modern and the rural society, but only that there must be a very careful selectivity in respect of the direct and indirect implications of any modern innovation before it is allowed into the rural areas.

The next basic but related aspect of a rural development strategy is for the rural people themselves, (perhaps with a minimum of help from outside), in relatively small areas which are socially, culturally and economically homogeneous, to identify the conditions which are causing suffering for people in their community, and to work out ways (with outside, and modern sector assistance) of how these conditions can be removed. Problems of absolute poverty, of insufficient food, of malnutrition, lethargy, poor hygiene and bad health; problems of exploitation, of difficulty in adjusting to change, of social

relationships, and even of population growth—all of these have to be considered. As rural people become increasingly aware of their environment, they will become aware of an increasing number of problems. A rural community-oriented development strategy should concentrate on solving these problems rather than maximising statistical indicators of growth, and the solution should :—

- i) Involve an evolution from what actually exists, rather than the creation of something new.
- ii) Be harmonious with the surrounding environment.
- iii) Support traditional cultural and social values which seem worthwhile.
- iv) Not be too dependent on long term assistance from outside the community.
- v) Not create new desires and expectations that cannot readily be fulfilled.

Thus I am not advocating an open-ended development process for rural areas, but instead am suggesting a process whereby problems which are causing people suffering are solved largely by the people themselves, without at the same time creating new problems which are impossible to solve in a rural environment. I would like to see a society without absolute poverty, without huge inequalities (which will inevitably lead to unfulfillable desires and hence suffering) with opportunities for creative and fulfilling employment, with an infra-structure which helps people find serenity, and where every community is to a considerable extent self-sufficient.

I can certainly be accused of being utopian, but would reply that it is better to have a development philosophy that is feasible in the longer run, and might lead to a higher level of satisfaction for the people, than one which not only seems to decrease satisfaction, but also is leading towards eventual collapse and chaos. Obviously such a philosophy cannot be immediately implemented, but even now it can be used as a yardstick against which various development proposals currently being discussed can be evaluated.

### III. Some Specific Proposals

I would like to end this chapter on a slightly less utopian note with some proposals for a development strategy not couched so much in philosophical and Buddhistic terms, and thus one which might have some application in several of the different cultures and political systems prevalent in the poorer countries of the world today. However, yet again it should be emphasised that no strategy can be universal. For example, it is unlikely that India, China, Thailand and Uganda could pursue at present the same development strategy, and it is even more unlikely that such universalisation would be desirable.

Nevertheless, on the basis of our discussion in this and the previous chapter some of the following basic criteria could form the basis for a change in the direction of development :—

—Problems should be tackled directly, now, rather than left to hopeful self-solution through an increase in G.D.P. in the long run.

—The basic objective of development should be to maximise the sum total of individual welfare and minimise suffering, rather than merely to increase G.D.P. and other quantitative indicators. This will involve the creation of a new concept of efficiency which does not just take account of the increase in production, but also of the distribution of the benefits of this increased production.

—As a general rule, the problems of the poorest members of the communities where there is the greatest suffering should be tackled first. Until such a time as the rural sector has begun to catch up with the modern sector, very little attention should be paid to developing the modern sector—only sufficient to provide the goods and services needed for rural sector development. In this respect, methods both to control rural-urban migration, and encourage urban-rural migration will have to be worked out.

—Man should be treated as “both the primary means and the end of development”. Thus far less attention should be paid to generating financial resources (and such resources should be considered less of a constraint) and far greater attention devoted to mobilizing people to improve their own lives.

—The infra-structure and services being developed should not merely be copies of those that exist in the more industrialised societies but should be specifically designed to be relevant to the situation that actually exists in the particular countries in question.

—In order to avoid some of the more serious irrationalities of the system existing in many of the richer countries, limits on both production and consumption should be established. These limits should not necessarily be completely inflexible. In order to establish limits, conspicuous consumption (by both local and foreign elites) will have to be strictly controlled. If limits on growth (which for the poorest countries are likely to allow considerable further expansion) are to be established, other types of “personal motivation factors” will have to be worked out so that an alternative to the materialistically motivated production-consumption of society can be made viable. For example, there might have to be much greater concentration on the development of spiritual and creative factors.

—Whatever pattern of development is finally chosen, great attention should be devoted to minimising environmental pollution and wastage of non-renewable resources. With the bulk of the population of the poorer countries living in the rural areas, and with this situation likely to continue for several decades, if not centuries to come, development, if it is to have a significant impact on the lives of those who exist now, will have to concentrate on rural development.

If development is to be concentrated in rural areas then there are certain additional criteria that will have to be applied, if such a strategy is to have any chance of success. For example:—

—No attempt should be made to solve all problems at once. The problem areas (including related causes) that have the most serious impact in preventing rural populations from improving their quality of life (or that are producing the greatest suffering) should be tackled first. In other words the problems should be ranked according to priority (taking a ccount of their inter - relationships), and the limited resources available (human more than financial) used to tackle the highest priority problems first.

—Great care should be taken not to increase the aspirations and expectations of the population more than it is feasible to satisfy in the short and long run. This will necessitate a very careful control both of the new mass media as well as the school system. In addition rural-urban migration will have to be severely controlled if there is to be any chance of preventing the concentration of resources on urban development (caused by pressures of visible unemployment close to the homes of the elite, which is much more pressing than the equally serious invisible under-employment and deprivation in remote areas).

—If the problems of rural development are at least to be partially solved there needs to be a very careful co-ordination of all rural development activities so that some of the problems outlined earlier (irrigation not being used, health care preceding the productive capacity of the community to properly feed the increased population, children lapsing into illiteracy after schooling through a lack of a literary environment etc.) can be made less serious.

Finally, because many of the problems in rural parts of a country differ from one locality to another, it is necessary to center rural development efforts on individual communities, or at least small localities which are socially, economically and culturally homogenous and contain a small number of communities. Such a decentralization of development activity will also allow there to be much greater individual participation on the part of rural populations in the development process.

It is however quite possible that many of the poorest areas of the world are insufficiently strong to resist the pressures for the introduction of a development policy concentrating on the creation of a modern industrial technological sector at the expense of the rural areas. Such a modern-sector orientated policy is (in the poorest, least well endowed countries) likely to create all the problems of urban unemployment, rapid population growth, widening gap between expectations and reality, and an increasingly dualistic structure in both the economy and the society already discussed. In addition "modern" development efforts (accompanied as is usually the case, by unplanned and uncon-



trolled use of the mass media, and a modern-sector orientated educational system) will create severe problems of "future shock" and difficulties of adjustment to changing social situations. In the poorest countries, least well endowed with natural resources, and often also facing administrative and communication difficulties, the above problems will arise whilst at the same time there will be very little chance of making any positive and significant improvement in the quality of life of the mass of the population through such modern-sector orientated development.

In other words, the old system will be destroyed without any real chance of replacing it with any remotely desirable alternative. The change that might take place at high social cost is unlikely to produce many benefits. There are many countries in both Asia and Africa where the disadvantages of modern sector development are likely to far outweigh any possible advantages. For example, Nepal in Asia, has the majority of its population living in mountainous regions only accessible by foot or by helicopter. It is a landlocked country with few natural resources apart from its beauty, and the kindness of its people. Despite the relatively little modern development that has taken place, already life in the major towns is being completely disturbed by the infinitesimal proportion of the population who have cars (hooting their way through narrow streets built for walking along), unemployment of the schooled is increasing rapidly due to the creation of a few higher education institutions (often with foreign aid) without any possibility of large scale industrialization, and population booms thanks to the introduction of a few simple drugs. Many other countries are in a similar position, for example, Sikkim, Bhutan, and Afghanistan in Asia; and Upper Volta, Niger, Chad, and the Central African Republic in Africa. In addition, parts or regions of a large number of other countries are in the same position, for example, Karamoja in Uganda.

I would argue that in such areas, where the ruling elites have neither the self-confidence nor the strength to properly analyse the disadvantages, and advantages of "modernisation", walls should be built

round the country to stop uninvited foreign influences, whether well-meaning and philanthropic, or profiteering, and these countries left to their own pattern of gradual change which is likely to be only slightly more rapid than that which takes place in most traditional societies. I am obviously opening myself up to attack as a reactionary, but nevertheless I am convinced that if "modernization" cannot be easily resisted, and if it creates considerably more problems than it can solve, then the resistance to such "modernisation" should be institutionalised through the creation of "walls" so that the process of change is slowed down to a pace which can be coped with by traditional societies. This does not however mean that attempts should not be made to solve some of the problems and irrationalities that exist, only that no outsider (including myself) should be allowed to try to sell some partial or supposedly complete solutions.

In the majority of poor countries the process of development has already so affected the structure of traditional society, that the majority of the population has already lost much of their traditional security, and are facing many problems caused by misdirected development efforts. This process cannot be reversed, and thus in these countries solutions to the problems are needed rapidly, from whatever source and however partial.

## CHAPTER 3

# THE PROBLEMS OF CULTURAL COLLISION\*

### I Introduction

Since many people are not aware of the psychological and social problems that the spread of western materialistic cultural values are having on the mass of the world's population it might be useful to digress more deeply into the Thai situation in order to demonstrate conclusively that this spread of western values (whatever their inherent merits or demerits) cannot possibly lead to greater human satisfaction in the short or long run.

As culture is not something that can be dealt with abstractly I have decided to specifically spell out some of the problems of cultural collision presently being faced in Thailand. However, readers from other countries will be aware that though the specific areas of collision might be different, in their countries too the clash between western and traditional cultural values is a phenomenon that is producing such suffering that the reduction of the collision zones must be one of the prime objectives of any human-centred development strategy.

### II Cultural Evolution

From the dawn of mankind human beings have been evolving at both the societal and individual levels. Societies and whole races have grown and prospered or withered away depending on whether their values have been in harmony with the existing environment. Similarly individuals have survived to reproduction age or passed away depending on whether their genetic endowments have enabled them to cope effectively with their surroundings, including the society

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\*Most of the ideas in this chapter are drawn from a paper "Cultures in Collision—An Experience of Thailand" prepared jointly by the author, and Khunyng Ambhorn Meesook, who was at that time Deputy Under-secretary of State for Education, Thailand.

in which they are living. Only those societies that have been able to adjust to the changing environment, and to the changing nature of man have survived; and only those individuals who have had the necessary physical strength, and have been able to make adjustments to the changing society have been able to continue their ancestral line.

Thus just as there is no such thing as a "pure race" so there is no such thing as a "pure culture". Every single present-day culture is a mixture of a large number of different influences. All over the world homogenous groups have been meeting and absorbing gradually many facets of each other's society. Thailand is no exception, with what we now call Thai culture being a mixture of distorted south Chinese and Indian influences, a more recent absorption, particularly in the border areas, of Burmese, Khmer, and Malay tendencies and the present impact of western materialistic ideas and technological values.

Whereas in the past, if individuals could not adjust to a changing culture they would be unlikely to survive, and similarly if societies could not adjust to a changing environment they would die, now survival is no longer the issue but instead the mental stress and low degree of individual and cultural satisfaction caused by inter-and intra-cultural disharmonies is the problem.

In addition, previously the problem was much less serious for, except in times of war, there have been few cultural collisions, but instead neighbouring groups have gradually absorbed certain advantageous facets of each other's culture over many generations. Few individuals have had to face a complete transformation of their values in a lifetime, or even during the life of a three-generation family. The pace of change was so slow that in any one locality there was a high degree social homogeneity.

The position now is different from any earlier situation in man's history, and for the first time huge cultural collisions are taking place all over the world. Even in the most developed countries, because of the exponentially increasing rate of social change, there are serious inter-generational collisions, but in developing countries where, in

addition, two or more cultures of different origins are existing side by side, the collision is of much more serious proportions. Because of the recent world-wide expansion of mass communications and internationally homogenous school and economic systems, urban elites in most countries adopt—at least on the surface—western materialistic values, whilst in the rural areas traditional cultural values still hold sway. This collision, caused by the dualistic or multiplistic nature of most developing societies, is particularly significant in Thailand where the values of an old and well-established national culture are often in conflict with those of modern democratic technological societies.

We would like to emphasise that the present cultural collision between generations, and between western and traditional Thai values will get worse unless increasing numbers of people begin to realise that there is no inevitability to the changes now taking place. We now have the institutions which can enable us at least to control the direction of change of our social destiny. But in order to effect the change there first must be an understanding of what is happening. Unfortunately, another facet of the existing cultural battle-ground is that human activities are being divided into increasingly narrow specialist empires, each with their own mystiques and private languages. Thus it is becoming more and more difficult for any one man (or group of people) to have an overall understanding of what is happening. Without such an understanding there can be no possibility of control.

In this chapter I will concentrate on two serious side effects of the current cultural collision in Thailand. Firstly, at the individual level, I will give examples of how the changing society, and the value conflict between cultures of different origins, produces serious mental stress. And secondly I will explain how at the societal level, there is a danger that the results of millenia of social evolution will be wiped out by the wide-scale adoption of western values, with Thais thus becoming second-class copies of western man, losing the valuable parts of their culture as well as the bad.

### III Cultural Collision and Mental Stress

#### 1) From Village to Urban Living

Thailand, in common with most other developing countries, has, since the second world war, been undergoing a process of rapid urbanisation. On the one hand, villages in advantageous locations have been growing into rural hub-towns, and on the other hand, Bangkok, and a few other much smaller cities, have been attracting migrants from all over the country in increasing numbers. Overall urban populations have been increasing at more than one and a half times the national average, with the fastest rate of increase being registered in Bangkok (which already has a population more than ten times that of the next largest city). This urbanisation has been accompanied by the creation and establishment of a number of bureaucratic institutions, involving a considerable change in the way things have to be done or problems solved.

In the past most villages in Thailand could be considered as large joint or extended families. Everyone knew each other and was related<sup>1</sup> to each other, and problems were solved, conflicts settled, and other things done through personal contact between related individuals.

This reliance on personal contact with relations has continued despite the urbanisation, and creation of bureaucracies of the last few decades. Thus everyone, from the elite to the poorest peasant, still tries to deal with bureaucracies through personal contact, and not through the officially established channels. If a man is in trouble with the police he will contact his brother-in-law's son who works in the another police station long before he considers paying a fine or seeing a lawyer. Similarly if a father wants to get his child into a particular school he will see a friend of a second cousin who has a high position in the Ministry of Education before he fills up the application form.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Thai language there are dozens of words expressing different family relationships and ages. These words are also used when addressing non-relatives as a sign of respect or close friendship.

However, as the bureaucracies are increasingly institutionalised these traditional approaches become less and less effective. Thus not only do ordinary people no longer know how to get anything done, but in addition those working in the bureaucracies suffer criticism from their relations and friends because of their apparent betrayal of family responsibilities, thus weakening further the family structure.

The extended family in Thailand was built up on the basis of a clear cut set of hierarchical relationships. Each family member *knew and accepted who he had to pay respect to, and whose judgement he should defer to (and vice versa of course)*. Those at the top of the hierarchy (e.g. grandfathers and grandmothers) were thus able to control the activities of their families to a large extent. This was possible particularly because the members of an extended family used to spend most of their lives within the confines of the village, and villagers were most of the time aware of each other's deeds and misdeeds.

In rural areas now these fixed intra-family hierarchical relationships are becoming less clear, and the younger generation is not showing the same respect to their elders as they would have in the past, thus producing a conflict situation. This reduction in respect is partly caused by the fact that younger people usually have had more schooling than their parents; partly by the opening up of mass communications, and the consequent adoption of some modern values by the young often in conflict with those of their elders; and partly by a large number of other factors, particularly the increase in mobility.

Though signs of inter-generational stress are beginning to appear in the villages in Thailand, the situation is much more serious in the urban areas. In the towns there are many three-generation families in which each generation has been brought up in a very different environment from the others. For example, the grandparents might have migrated to the town, whilst the children could have spent all their lives in an urban modern sector setting. Thus quite often in one family there can be as many as three very different conceptions of the role and importance of the different family members. The stress

produced by these different conceptions is intensified because in the towns it is no longer feasible for the older generations to keep an eye on the activities of the younger, and as the towns offer a large number of opportunities for doing wrong, mistrust grows.

There are other ways in which an attempt to combine urban living with traditional social patterns of behaviour produces stress. For example, in the village there is a tradition for everyone to support each other in times of joy and grief (birth, ordination into the Buddhist monkhood, marriage, and death). When someone dies their family will arrange a wake (in which free food is provided for all the villagers) for up to seven nights, and then often also once a week until the funeral and cremation a hundred or more days after the death. This custom originated in order that friends and family could provide support and consolation for the close relatives in their time of grief. Such activities were also a part of the day to day life of the villagers. In the urban environment not only is a person's circle of acquaintances much larger, but also there are many competing demands on his time. However, as status considerations have also become involved (and thus the size of the wake, funeral, or wedding is important) people can easily find that they "have to go to" social support functions every night of the week. Not only does the necessity of attending these functions (rather than doing something else more interesting or enjoyable) often create frustration, but, more seriously, the need to spend large sums of money in order to keep up appearances can result in considerable financial worries. Thus social support obligations, which in a village setting have a significant stabilizing function, in the towns can have the opposite effect.

For many centuries the "Wat" or Buddhist Temple has played a central role in the life of the community. Buddhist monks provided a large number of essential services including the education of boys, psychological counselling, the resolution of conflicts, and medical attention. The Wat helped maintain the existing culture through involvement of monks in the social support activities mentioned above, and



through the custom that all men should spend some time as a monk before they could get married. In addition, Buddhist philosophy, myths and the form in which the religion was practised, provided people with some feeling of what the purpose of life might be. People thus had a meaningful framework around which they could run their lives.

As modernisation and urbanisation spreads the "Wat" becomes less and less important. The services that the monks used to provide are now obtainable from schools, hospitals, courts and other modern institutions. The social support functions in which the monks participate are seen as a burden instead of a strength-giving joy, and modern man no longer has enough "time" to spare to be a monk. The temple, which in the village was the center of the community, shrinks hidden in the distance in the town, and the respect for monks falls as new methods of status allocation develop (for example 95% of those who enter the monkhood only have a basic elementary education). Even the philosophy is thrown in doubt as "modern" ideas of open-ended materialistic consumption<sup>1</sup> spread. We are not saying that Buddhism, monks and Wats, no longer play an important role in Thai society, only that they occupy a less central role in the lives of increasing numbers of Thais, and thus more and more people are not only finding it harder to accept their position in society as the result of deeds in past lives, but also are finding that their lives have little meaning. As the central foundation of Thai society is weakened the whole structure begins to shake and individual's insecurity grows.

Migration from the rural areas to the towns is also a prime cause of mental stress both for those who migrate and for those who are left behind in the villages. Those who migrate face years of problems adjusting to the new environment and learning new patterns of behaviour, and in addition have competing financial pressures, on the one hand

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1 One of the basic principles of the Buddha's teaching is the need to limit craving if there is to be any chance of finding satisfaction. According to the Buddha craving can only lead to suffering.

desiring to indulge in conspicuous consumption to impress their peers in the towns, and on the other hand having a duty to send money to their families back in the village, if their status there is to be maintained.

Most serious of all is the havoc migration plays with the traditional family structure. For example, in the central region of Thailand as many as 70% of young people are migrating to the towns. Parents are thus losing the sense of security that their children used to bring, and the children lose respect for their parents, as with their new "modern" values they often tend to look down on their parents as uneducated, backward peasants. Thus the family disintegrates, and with this disintegration, and the declining importance of the Wat, young people lose their sense of cultural continuity, and the values that family and religion used to provide. This "value vacuum" not only leads to greater insecurity and a clinging to the symbols of development, but in addition opens the way to increased crime and drug usage amongst young people.

All these problems faced by individuals or families moving from one culture to another, very different one, tend to re-inforce each other. Not only does the first (and even second) generation migrant not know how to use the urban institutions, but also he has increasing family conflict reducing security, increasing social responsibilities with decreasing returns and higher costs, and finally a decreasing understanding of who he is and what his role should be. It is not only the migrant who suffers these problems but also those who are left behind, as their values, and hierarchical position are continuously challenged by the more articulate youth.

## **2) Status, Hierarchy and Democracy**

Every human culture has mechanisms for attributing social status and in different cultures different methods are used. Thus, in a situation such as that existing in Thailand at present, with two cultures colliding, traditional status-attributing mechanisms are being

replaced by new methods. In the past status was partly determined by family, partly by age, and partly by merit (generosity to the Wat and the community). The system was relatively flexible and someone from a family low in the hierarchy could himself achieve high status if he frequently "made merit" and he was respected for his wisdom. As Thailand gradually developed, the position of someone in the government bureaucracy, or his military rank began to replace traditional methods of status determination. More recently, as western materialistic and democratic ideas have spread, wealth and education have increasingly begun to play a role. Thus in Thailand at present there is no longer one universal system of status attribution, but many sub-systems, often in conflict with each other. People who reach a high position in one system often find that this does not produce the status or respect they expected, and this inevitably leads to frustration, and often also misuse of power. For example, high ranking government officials, and military officers no longer have the respect they used to have, (partly because they have neither high educational qualifications or wealth) and they become open to corruption. With the opening up of mass communications those who are left in the rural areas rarely manage to achieve the status they had in the past, and the only way open to them to improve their position is through their children if they manage to get a higher education. Thus in certain families there is tremendous pressure on the children to achieve well in school.

Though many conflicting methods of status determination are in operation, all involve a very hierarchical organisation of society. There is little dialogue between those in high hierarchical positions and their social inferiors, but instead those of lower rank are expected to listen to, agree with, and support those of higher rank. Increasingly this tradition is producing tension, for both western education and western democratic ideals are spreading rapidly.

This hierarchical organisation is reflected in the government bureaucracy with the whole process of administration clogged up because even the most minor decision has to be approved at the highest

level. Thus the top administrators do not have time to devote to the most serious problems, whilst the "young barely have an opportunity to get their ideas on serious issues accepted. Both the young and the old are therefore frustrated.

The frustration of the young and educated is intensified in the political sphere, as the various attempts at democratic government have failed, mainly because of the inherent inconsistency between a hierarchical social structure, and democratic ideals. In a situation where leaders are neither prepared to accept advice nor criticism from hierarchically inferior members of parliament, democracy cannot work.

Thus there are increasing numbers of young, articulate, educated Thais who are eager to play an active role in improving their country, but can find no outlet within the existing system. There is thus a tendency for many of these people to reject all that is Thai, and to place all their faith on the adoption of some external socio-political model.

The spread of western ideas is also affecting the roles of the sexes in the family. In the rural areas, though the Thai man certainly enjoyed higher status than the woman, the use of the family income, and the responsibility of looking after the family fell on the woman. The husband traditionally would hand over all his income to the woman, and the woman would decide how this money should be used (including how much should be given back to the husband). Now, however, amongst western educated families, the husband is often no longer prepared to provide her with the necessary means, and keeps part or all of his salary. (The cost of schooling aggravates this tendency) This fact, combined with consumption pressures, ensures that a very large proportion of educated women feel that they have to work. However, as in western countries, it is very difficult in Thailand for women to reach high positions. In addition, despite the fact that the woman still has the traditional responsibility for the care of the family, she has very low legal status. She cannot for example sell her own property or travel outside the country without her husband's permission. These facts,

combined with the different standards of sexual morality for men and women, are not only depressing large numbers of women, but are also encouraging increasing numbers of young educated women not to get married.

### 3) The High Stakes of Schooling

The formal school system was developed in Thailand about one hundred years ago, as elsewhere in the world, as a method of providing the children of the existing elite with the type of knowledge and skills they would need to carry out their future ruling and administrative functions in society. For the first fifty or so years of formal schooling in Thailand the function of the school remained restricted to the training of elites who, it was hoped, would play a crucial role in the modernisation of the country. However, with the spread of democratic ideals, attempts were made and are still being made to democratise education by expanding existing systems to cover larger proportions of the population.

It is not surprising that, as the elite-producing educational system is expanded rapidly (with little change in either curriculum, methods or structure) until it has almost universal coverage, it increasingly transmits values and attitudes, and even skills and knowledge inconsistent with the existing socio-economic realities.

Considerable research has been done in Thailand which shows that parents do not send their children to school for what they might learn, but in the hope that they will succeed in school and pass up through the educational system into elite positions. However, in a basically rural society such as exists in Thailand, elite positions requiring higher education are very limited.<sup>1</sup> Thus in order to satisfy the parents' conception of the school (as the only channel for social mobility), and to maintain a semblance of equality of opportunity, not only do the

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<sup>1</sup> Of every one hundred children who entered elementary school sixteen years ago (the length of the formal school system) only two graduated for university this year. Many new graduates are in addition finding it difficult to find suitable employment.

majority of children have to study a curriculum not particularly relevant to the future lives they are likely to lead (thus helping to alienate them from their environment), but in addition the majority are made to feel that they are failures, because they do not succeed in reaching the highest levels of the system.

Obviously, the pressure on children from parents to achieve in school is not restricted to Thailand. However, in the West (where the school system originated), a child from a poor background who fails to make it to higher education does not suffer nearly so much as his developing country counterpart, either absolutely or relatively: absolutely, because he can still be sure that he will be able to earn enough to adequately provide for himself and his family; and relatively, because in most western countries there is not more than a four or five-fold range in earnings between those with little schooling, and those with higher education. In Thailand the situation is quite different, for it is extremely difficult for someone from a poor family who has failed early on in school to have a reasonable standard of living either absolutely or relatively. In absolute terms, according to recent statistics from our national planning organisation, workers in rural areas earn on average about US \$ 60 in cash per year, which, despite additional subsistence production, is unlikely to be sufficient to provide an adequate standard of living. In relative terms the spread in earnings between those who have only had compulsory schooling (four years) and those who have reached the highest levels is extremely wide, there being about a twenty-five fold range. Taking these facts into consideration, and also the fact that parents see their children's educational achievement as a way they themselves can increase their status, it is not surprising that tremendous pressure is put on children to achieve in school. Many of those who fail are made by their parents to feel like failures, whilst others crack up in exams as they cannot take the strain any more. Unfortunately, increasing numbers of students appear to be turning to drugs as an escape from the pressures put on them to achieve well in school and the expectations of their parents.

Many educators in Thailand are aware that their efforts at

democratizing and universalizing an institution which by its very nature is elitist, in a society which socially and economically is hierarchically organised, is not only putting tremendous pressure on children, but is also helping to alienate the majority from their traditional rural environment.

#### **4) The Widening Gap Between Expectations and Reality**

The process of economic development involves the creation of new consumption desires which in theory will persuade people to work harder or more efficiently, so that they can earn more and thus satisfy their increased demands. As mentioned earlier, these ideas are in conflict with Buddhist philosophy which suggests that the path to satisfaction is through the reduction of desires, rather than their creation and subsequent achievement. Be that as it may, most Buddhists and non-Buddhists would agree that the existence of a large number of desires which can never be achieved is not conducive to mental peace and stability.

At present in Thailand various factors are tending to increase people's desires and their expectation for material things and social status at a much faster rate than the society and the economy can possibly satisfy. The school system, the mass media, the example of elites, and the breakdown in traditional values and beliefs all tend to help widen this gap between expectations and reality.

The school system, for example, carries the message that all children, as long as they study hard and succeed in their examinations, have a chance of getting a highly paid job which will enable them to have the material comforts they desire. However, it does not provide the majority who fail at quite a low level with the skills and knowledge they would need to earn enough even to partially satisfy their desires. In addition, because of the emphasis in the curriculum on academic subjects and intellectual effort (as opposed to practical subjects and physical effort) the school carries the hidden message that physical work is not important, despite the fact that the vast majority of those who pass through the school will have to earn their living through physical work.

The mass media is organised and operated quite obviously by educated Thais living in urban areas. Thus most of its content or programming inevitably reflects a modern sector bias. Thai films and T.V. programmes, for example, usually show some of the characters living in complete luxury, with the hero or heroine in the end marrying a rich man or woman and living happily ever after, whilst foreign films and T.V. programmes usually are centred around a character, or nuclear family having all the comforts of western materialism (cars, fridges, T.V. etc.). In addition to the actual programming or content there are of course also the advertisements extolling people to buy more luxury goods in order to have sex appeal or status. Obviously the media in the west also tends to create demands for things that cannot be satisfied, but as the range between the "middle class norm" and the actual standard of living of poorer people is much narrower, the gap between expectations and reality is obviously much less serious.

The media also helps widen this gap by drawing attention to the conspicuous consumption of many leaders, in an attempt to enhance their status. Though this might increase the respect the people have for their leaders, it also helps reinforce (as a norm to be aimed for) a pattern and style out of reach of the vast majority of the population.

Finally, as the hold of Buddhist beliefs on people decreases, not only is the need to limit desires forgotten, but more importantly Thais increasingly are not prepared to accept their position in life as a result of their "karmic balance", and thus no longer see their poverty as something inevitable.

Whatever the main cause, it can certainly be claimed that the gap between expectations and reality of the majority of Thais is widening at an alarming rate. More and more people are finding no legal ways of satisfying their desires, and thus either become disillusioned and frustrated or turn to crime or corruption.

We have outlined several of the ways which the current cultural collision is producing stress, frustration, insecurity or disillusionment in Thailand. For some of these, action can be taken to reduce the



tensions that individuals are suffering, whilst other solutions, (particularly those discussed in the section "From village to urban living"), will be much harder to find as increasing urbanisation is an inevitable part of the development process. We would, however, like to conclude this section by emphasising that the objective of all development is not to produce more things, but to improve the quality of life and satisfaction of the mass of the population. If existing development strategies are not achieving this end it is the strategies that need changing, not the people they are supposed to be serving.

#### **IV. The Need to Maintain Certain Facets of Thai Culture.**

There is a tendency in certain segments of Thai society to welcome automatically all that is "Western" and technological and to reject all traditional Thai values. If, however, it is accepted that the objective of all development should be to increase the total level of satisfaction, and the quality of life of the mass of the population, then many of the basic characteristics of Thais should be maintained, or altered, but not rejected. In addition, there is much that the West can learn from Thailand.

Unfortunately, "development" as it is currently conceived and practised in Thailand, has its origin in Western culture and Protestantism. Such "development," concentrating as it does on increasing national and individual incomes and consumption, can only succeed if the western cultural values which play an integral part in the process are also adopted.

For example, the basic individualism of Thais is inconsistent with the large scale organisation of activities necessary if modern technology is to be efficiently applied. In modern enterprises, where the majority of workers carry out boring and repetitive tasks, individuality is not an asset. In addition, because of the need to produce large quantities of any one product in order to obtain economies of scale in production, a homogeneity of demand is needed rather than a market where different people need and want different things. Thus

industrialisation and the adoption of western technology is tending to result in a homogenisation of Thais.

This institutionalisation of demand means that the development process which should provide greater choices and options for the people is in fact reducing the choices. For example, before the second world war in Thailand, people could travel by boat, on foot, by bicycle, by horse, by elephant, by samlor (three wheeled taxi), by car, by bus, by tram and by train. Now increasingly transportation is being institutionalised and equated with the private automobile. In Bangkok the canals have been filled in, the tram rails torn up, the roads made unsafe for bicycles and even for walking, the buses so crowded that only those who have to, use them, and samlor banned to speed up the flow of traffic. Thus anyone who can possibly afford to is forced to buy a car to travel at a slower speed than he could have using other means twenty or thirty years ago. Increasingly other services are being institutionalised, education being equated with schooling, health with doctors and hospitals, etc., etc. Thus the scope for individual choice in many crucial fields of human activity is rapidly disappearing.

“Development” and the desire for efficiency involved in modernisation is also changing the Thais, conception of time, which is increasingly becoming a scarce commodity which has to be “spent” and should not be “wasted”. The relaxed attitude, and gracefulness of Thais is thus diminishing, and the feeling that something can be done just as well tomorrow as today no longer possible if institutions and enterprises are to operate efficiently.

As the extended family breaks up, and gradually the gap between expectations and reality widens, co-operation is replaced by competition, with each person trying to grab more of the limited “pie” for himself. The desire not to cause offence diminishes and the natural warmth and friendliness fade.

As man is increasingly seen as a consumer and producer of things instead of an individual travelling the long path to enlighten-

ment (involving many lives), spiritual values decrease and insatiable open-ended physical craving grows.

As the old traditional values are buried by the uncontrolled march of urbanisation, and western technology, a vacuum is created with a consequent increase in insecurity. This insecurity is often so great that there is a need to cling to certain static "symbols" or "facades" of development, which, no matter how inapplicable or out of date they might be, at least provide a certain stability that people can cling to. To show that the country is developed everyone must wear a western style jacket and tie, and have short hair, several colour T.V. channels must be available, there must be architecturally beautiful and expensive universities offering post graduate degrees in the most irrelevant and erudite subjects up to international standards; and so on.

Perhaps the most serious problem is that the development process involves chasing after a dream of something that probably doesn't exist: and in this chase there is a danger that the desirable facets of the Thai character will be destroyed, and Thais turned into second class copies of western man.

Our worry is that the ability of Thais to find simple enjoyment, their politeness, their family relationships, their relaxed and graceful attitude, their inherent kindness, their acceptance of certain Buddhist principles, and their individuality might be destroyed by a race after the Western development dream which certainly in the West itself is not producing either the individual satisfaction, or the social stability that its proponents must implicitly assume.

It is in addition a race that cannot be won, for long before Thailand ever catches up with the more developed countries, resource scarcities, population pressures, and pollution threats will drastically change both the concept and the reality of development.

The question that Thailand (in common with all other developing countries) will have to answer in the near future is whether or not she wants to copy the development pattern of the West (thus

always being behind) with all the suffering and mental stress this causes, if in so doing she destroys the good points of her culture, and turns Thais into second class copies (all copies are of course second class, as they do not involve the creativity of the originator) of Western man, in a hurry and short tempered, whose main function is to serve the machines of technology and consume its plastic products?

This is the real and most serious dimension of the cultural collision that is taking place in the world at the moment. Is the world to become a homogenous whole, or is diversity and individuality both within and between countries to be encouraged and nurtured?

## **Conclusions**

On a subject like this there obviously can be no definite conclusions. In today's shrinking world it is as unrealistic to assume that the collision of conflicting cultures can be avoided as it is to pretend that Thailand, or any other country can return to the fantasy of traditional rural community living without accepting any Western values.

Nevertheless a cultural collision of unprecedented dimensions is taking place at present throughout the world. This collision is not only negating many developments by causing mental stress, a reduction in security, and frustration in large segments of the population, but in addition might in the long run destroy the culture on which both the indigenous individuality, and also the stability, creativity and meaning of the traditional society is based.

With such a collision everyone who is concerned with improving the quality of life, and the degree of satisfaction of the mass of the population, must neither blindly follow after the West, nor search for solutions through the narrow perspective of one specialism, but must be selective in choosing those elements of both Western and local culture which will help lead to the type of society we might desire.

Of course, before it is possible to select, at least a vague vision of the type of society and the role individuals will play in this society

is needed. Only then will it be possible to choose the elements of the colliding cultures that need reinforcing, through existing and new social mechanisms, and to discourage those that are inconsistent with the vision.

This selectivity on the basis of a long term vision is not easy in Thailand, for as the Thai is more concerned with the immediate future of his own small circle of relatives and friends no consensus is likely. In addition, as the Thai does not like causing offence it is extremely difficult to get any clearcut decision about the direction society should be taking, as such a decision would inevitably cause offence to some people occupying important positions in the hierarchy.

Thus a precondition for dealing with the cultural collision is on the one hand to maintain the flexibility of Thais, their tolerance, and their adaptability to diverse conditions, and on the other hand to reduce their short term perspective and stubbornness on the individual plane. Only then will it be possible to selectively adapt the Thai culture so that it can continue to serve the people in a rapidly changing world. If this cannot be done, all Western influences will be both accepted and rejected at the same time with the net effect that Thais will become rather disturbed second class copies of Western man.

## **CHAPTER 4**

# **THE CRISIS IN FORMAL EDUCATION AND THE NEED FOR EDUCATIONAL CHANGE**

### **Introduction**

During the early 1960's rapid educational expansion at all levels was seen by rich and poor countries alike as the key to significant economic and social development. Thus throughout the decade enrollment expanded at unprecedented rates; and budgets increased even faster, so that by the end of the decade many developing countries were spending 30 % or more of their government resources on education. However, instead of the "Development Take-off" that this resource concentration and enrollment expansion was expected to produce, economic development was slow, rural-urban migration grew much faster than employment opportunities in the towns, educated unemployment grew rapidly, and student dissent became more and more vocal. Nevertheless it seems that the rapid educational acceleration (particularly in developing countries) was to some extent successful in breaking down traditional social structures without however creating viable alternatives.

Whilst some countries consider that if there is "more of the same", national and development objectives would be met, increasingly thinkers and governments all over the world are looking for alternative structures and even systems of education that are likely to use more effectively the vast resources presently devoted to education in meeting national objectives and the real needs of their countries.

In this chapter, through emphasising the crisis in formal educational systems throughout the world, it is intended to demonstrate conclusively why change in those systems is urgently needed. In all that follows one very crucial fact should be borne in mind, and that is that an educational system is at one and the same time both a product of the social system in which it is situated, and a prime tool for forming that social system. Thus really significant change in education cannot

take place in a country, without significant social change also taking place. Or in other words, educational and developmental strategy are inseparably intertwined, with different education strategies involving different development strategies (and vice-versa).

## **Why Change Education ?**

Perhaps one of the main reasons that there is at present, throughout the world, a crisis in formal education is because the formal education system has become a huge universal monster. In the introduction to this book it was pointed out that it was strange that roughly the same school system existed in the most technologically advanced, and in the most traditional rural areas of this planet. It is this fact which ensures that schools can only possibly serve a useful purpose in a very small proportion of the environments in which they are situated, and that their usefulness rarely extends to poor rural areas, as they originated and were designed to serve western urban elites.

It is just foolishness to assume that one educational system can be equally effective in a modern industrial city with a literary environment and a large use of mass media; and in a rural peasant community with an oral tradition. Apart from the attempt to democratise the elite (discussed in the introduction), how did this strange assumption arise?

Before this question is answered, it is necessary first to analyse the world-wide stated objectives of education. Though these might differ from country to country in marginal respects, like the educational systems themselves they share more commonalities than differences. The following are some of the educational objectives that exist in most countries:

- The educational system should give children certain life skills, particularly literacy and numeracy skills to help them cope more effectively with their environment.
- The educational system should teach children how to learn so that when they leave school they can continue to learn by themselves.

- The educational system should develop the intellectual capacity of children, and their self-confidence.
- The educational system should be a channel for increasing equality of opportunity.
- The educational system should give children skills and knowledge so that they become productive and useful members of society.
- The educational system should help transmit feelings of patriotism, as well as reinforce the dominant culture and ideology of the particular country.

Few people would disagree with the majority of the objectives outlined above, or those in many other lists that could be prepared. However, in both developed and developing countries the actual achievements and functions of the educational systems are very different from the stated objectives.

In Thailand, for example, though the majority children only have four years of education, recent research has shown that a large proportion of grade four graduates are not functionally literate, and the *majority* have lapsed into illiteracy three years after graduation. Even though Thailand is a country with a reasonably strong literary tradition, and a relatively well developed elementary school system, this basic objective is not being achieved, and is probably not being achieved with the *majority* of children in the world who have only four years of education or less.

It is not only in developing countries where the school fails to achieve its basic objective of making children literate. Even in the United States, where all children come from an environment where written symbols are common, all children who pass through school do not become literate. For example, recent research has shown that in many New York school districts a considerable proportion of children completing 12 years of schooling are not literate at all. Similar research has shown that in Oakland, California, more than 10 % of high school leavers cannot really be considered to be literate.



Such evidence from the U.S.A. tends to suggest that the answer to the literacy problem does not lie through providing children in developing countries with more of the same. In a formal classroom situation, where the method of instruction is through rote memorisation, it is not particularly relevant whether a child has four, five, six or even seven years of education, as particularly in a non-literate environment, a large proportion of children are still likely to remain illiterate or lapse into illiteracy. What is lacking in the school is the development of a motivation (for those who do not realistically aspire to elitist positions) before reading and writing (or for that matter any other subjects) are taught.

The failure in terms of other life skills is probably even greater for in most countries little attention is paid in the educational system to individual skills needed in specific situations. For example, only an insignificant proportion of the curriculum in most Asian countries is devoted to agriculture, health, nutrition, house building, home making, or family planning; though these are the types of life skills that would be needed by the majority of the population of Asia, if they are to improve their quality of life. The situation is not much more successful in urban areas or developed countries where little time is devoted to teaching children how to deal with large institutions and organizations, how to use the available public services, how to look for job, or how to repair a radio or car.

Few educational systems either teach children how to learn, or try to develop their intellectual capacities. The child generally speaking (there are exceptions which will be discussed later) is taught that only the teacher has the "right answer" he must study a subject at the time and in the way the teacher tells him, he must not "disrupt" the class by asking questions out of turn, and he must rely on and eventually accept the teachers evaluation of his progress. As a general rule, education is a process whereby the pupil is "taught" certain facts, and if the teaching is successful, he memorises for a while those facts. (The reader should analyse how many of the historical, geographical and other

“facts” he was taught at school normally through endless repetition, he still remembers.)

Coming now to the objectives of increasing a child's self-confidence and also increasing the equality of opportunity it is found that the actual achievement of all educational systems is exactly the opposite of these objectives. The future employment, social status, and earnings of a child are very dependent on his level of educational achievement, however irrelevant the content of the education received is to the job that he might eventually enter. (For example, garbage collectors in some U.S. cities now need to have a high school diploma.) The first important point is that increasing numbers of parents (and even the children themselves) want their children either to break out of poverty through education, or ensure the maintenance of their middle class status through education. Thus they want their children to reach the highest possible levels of education. But as the elitist jobs in society are limited (and very limited in developing countries, where the majority must for a long time live and work in the rural areas) it is only success at the highest levels of education that will ensure a good position.<sup>1</sup> Because of the shape of the educational pyramid in all countries only a small proportion of students entering an educational system will reach the top levels, though most parents hope their children will reach the highest levels, *thus the majority of children who enter any education system will inevitably fail*, and will be forced to drop out before they or their parents want them to.

In Thailand, for example, for any reasonable job in the modern sector at least a university degree is needed, but only one out of every fifty children who enter primary school obtain such a degree. Thus for 98% of the children who enter elementary school in Thailand the *main*

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(1) Because of the rapid expansion of education, and the less rapid expansion of “elitist” employment opportunities the minimum education requirements for good jobs is rising. For example, in most countries in Africa ten years ago, a secondary school certificate ensured the holder a good job, now even a bachelor degree will not guarantee a good job and post-graduate qualifications are needed.

*lesson that they learn is that they are failures*, and even worse, that it is their fault through lack of intelligence, or lack of hard work that they are failures.

Perhaps such a system of educating the majority of people into failures might be justified if there was any equality of educational opportunity in any educational system. However, it has been proved<sup>1</sup> that even in cases where there is an equal distribution of educational resources between rural and urban schools and between middle and lower class schools, the child from a middle class urban environment will have a very much greater chance of success than a child from a peasant family.

This is because not only is success in school very dependent on literary ability, but also it is dependent on the role expectation and the motivation of the child. The middle class child not only comes from a stimulating literary environment, but also he comes from one in which he is expected and encouraged to succeed in school, and aspire towards an elitist profession. It is these social incentives which, combined with a home environment supporting the efforts of school, that ensure that the middle class child will always achieve better on average than his rural counterpart. With the educational system as it is at present there can be no real equality of education opportunity.

But on top of this there is not an even distribution of educational resources. Normally the middle class child will attend a school with better physical facilities, which is better equipped, with better qualified and more motivated teachers than his rural brother. In Thailand, for example the per pupil recurrent cost of urban schools is at least 50% higher than the average for the whole country.

Given these two factors, i.e., the home background of middle class children being more conducive to educational success, and the much better quality education middle class children receive, it is

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(1) See for example the Coleman Report in the U.S.A., or Project Talent in U.S.A., which show that educational achievement is more related to the socio-economic background of the student than any other factor.

inevitable that the middle class child will succeed far more in the "educational lottery" than his rural counterpart. In Thailand, for example, though over 85% of people live and work in rural areas, only 5% of postgraduate students come from farm families (and the majority of these probably come from families with large farms). Thus the educational system, though having a pretence at increasing equality of opportunity, tends to intensify existing class structures. The child from the poor rural family is made to consider himself a failure, and therefore to consider his present poor position as his own fault, even though he has had virtually no real chance of winning the "educational lottery" when he entered first grade. The further up the educational system he climbs before he fails, the more he is made to feel that this inevitable failure is caused by his own weaknesses.

Now turning to the objective of providing children with skills and knowledge for future productive work, at the lower levels most educational systems only give half-hearted attention to this objective. This is for two reasons: firstly, because vocational training is more expensive than academic training; and secondly, because most parents only want their children to enter school so that they will reach the next higher level of education, and thus are not interested in vocational training, as the selective examination system is based almost entirely on academic achievement. In other words, vocational training is seen as a dead-end side track<sup>1</sup> and not an integral part of the educational system leading to the big prizes at the top. In addition, usually very little attempt is made to design vocational training programmes around the real needs of industry, or to involve industries in the training taking place (there are an increasing number of exceptions to this general rule). Thus very often graduates with specialised vocational training find it very difficult to find employment consistent with their aspirations and expectations. This gap between expectations and reality that educational systems produce is another serious problem, for increasingly

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(1) And is often designed as such to reduce pressure from non-elites for entry into the elite parts of the educational system.

educational qualifications are not producing the job opportunities expected, and thus there are increasing numbers of dissatisfied educated unemployed clogging up the cities, and slowing down the development process.

It is only perhaps the final objective (the inculcation of patriotism, national culture and ideology) that is achieved with any success, and this success can at most only partly be attributed to the educational system as there are a large number of other influences that are acting in the same direction. Nevertheless, the system itself does directly and indirectly spend a large proportion of its total effort on furthering nationalistic, cultural and ideological beliefs.<sup>1</sup>

It is possible, however, that this partial success is in fact the biggest failure of the system. For example, in Thailand, though the society and the educational system together are relatively successful in maintaining stability through emphasising the importance of relying on the tempered judgement of elders, the school system itself is unintentionally sowing the seeds of social disintegration through creating expectations and aspirations that cannot be met, and through encouraging the brightest children to leave the traditional society and establish roots in the modern materialistic sector. Nor is it only the school that is leading indirectly to a disintegration of traditional values. The mass media and the mobility produced by modern communications also tend to result in an increasing dissatisfaction with traditional life.

As the process of rapid change is underway, (whether desirable or not) the school, if it is to provide "education", has not only to give the child tools which will help him improve his quality of life, but must also try to create in his mind an understanding of what is happening around him. For there to be an understanding there must first be a questioning.

Even in terms of promoting national security the school is not too successful, for it seems that such security is threatened when signifi-

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(1) It has been estimated that directly and indirectly both the U.S.A. and the USSR devote about 40% of their curriculum to "propaganda" at the elementary level.

cant numbers of people feel that they have little to gain from the present system, and thus can be persuaded to risk the little they have to fight for an alternative dream. Thus if people become increasingly exploited, or suffer severe disappointments, they become potential security risks. For example, in Thailand up till now the society has proved resilient enough to withstand pressures which in most other countries would produce considerable disturbances. Incomes in the Northeast and the South of the country have been falling over the last decade, and the exploitation of the farmer (through traders loaning money on the next crop) has if anything been increasing. It is only perhaps the hope of a better future offered by the shool system, the strong loyalty and love Thais have for the king, and the Buddhist's acceptance of his position in life (as a result of the karmic balance of past lives) that has prevented any widespread breakdown in order. As people increasingly realise that the school system cannot fulfill the hope for high salary employment it offers, security problems are likely to multiply. Future security problems will only be made more serious if expectations are lifted higher (by expanding rapidly the upper levels of the school system) before the students are crushed by the reality of there being insufficient modern sector employment opportunities.

Though the non-achievement of objectives described above would be reason enough to change the educational system, in most countries, even where the objectives are to some extent being met, considerable change is still warranted for four main reasons :-

- Education for the child is often extremely boring.
- Current educational systems are demonstratably inefficient.
- The existing structure of the educational system determines a certain pattern of development which in the long run cannot succeed.
- Existing education systems do not normally take enough account of what other educative influences in society could and are doing.

The first point needs very little further explanation. Everyone

remembers their own school days and few have joyous memories of classroom instruction. In addition in developed and developing countries alike, despite the fact that education is often compulsory (i.e. however bad, or boring, or irrelevant the education is, the child still legally has to attend school) there are high rates of dropout, and absenteeism. Such dropout is not always for economic reasons, nor is it always the most stupid children that leave school early. For example, a recent study in New York showed that the average intelligence of children who dropped out of school in some school districts was significantly higher than that of those who remained in school, (In order to realise how boring school can be it is suggested that the parent observe his child's class for one day, or even just ask his child what he learnt in school today).

What is particularly surprising about schools is how little children learn despite long periods of studying. For example, a child learns to speak with reasonable fluency in three or four years without formal instruction, takes four or more to learn to read and write with full time instruction, but can if he is motivated learn to read in three months in an informal situation. In Thailand (as has already been mentioned) most children are not completely literate after completing four years of full time elementary education. However, at the same time, the adult education programme can make a person literate in six months of part time evening study, even though during the same time other items in the elementary curriculum are taught.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there is an increasing amount of research (mainly from developed countries) which shows that variations in the inputs into schools have very little significant impact on the outputs. In other words, the school, however expensive or cheap, has a relatively uniform effect on the learning of children in any given socio-economic group.

The present system of schooling, through creating mobility and

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- (1) This point raises two interesting questions for the design of any new system: Why should such a large proportion of educational resources (usually over 95 %) be concentrated on children, and is there any particular advantage of fulltime study as opposed to part-time.

through raising the aspirations of the population, is one of the main factors causing rural-urban migration. Increasingly therefore in an attempt to create urban employment, governments have to concentrate on the modern sector, and industrial development, at the expense of rural development. However, because of the high productivity of the modern sector, unemployment in the urban areas tends to increase, (with resultant increases in shanty towns, crime, etc.), which entails further resource allocation to the urban areas just to prevent a complete breakdown in order, again at the expense of the rural areas, which lag further behind, this in turn increasing rural-urban migration even more.

It is not of course claimed that education is the only factor producing rural-urban migration and the consequent widening income differentials. There are a multitude of causes, for example, higher earnings in the towns (even after taking account of the statistical chance of getting a job<sup>2</sup>, better services in the towns, more recreational facilities, greater appearance of opportunity, more social and welfare services, which universally (whether intentionally or not) provide considerable greater material and social benefits for the urban employed than for the rural employed. In the past, however, where rewards were distributed on the basis of hereditary classes, the lower classes on the whole did not aspire to elitist position. Now, in today's meritocracies, the elitist positions, and the consequent rewards are distributed according to achievement in school, with the school pretending to be fair, providing an equal chance for all, and thus myths create expectations for a better life, and make such expectations seem realistic, whilst before they seemed and were unrealistic. Thus now, even though these expectations in fact are as unrealistic as ever, people do not believe so because of their education; they therefore migrate to the towns in search of fulfillment that

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(2) If urban real earnings are double those in rural areas, then from the individual's point of view, (taking account of economic factors only), it is worth a person's while to migrate to the town if he has more than a 50% chance of getting a job. In other words, a 50% unemployment rate would be consistent with such a situation.



only a few will find. If the educational system could be separated from the reward system, it is possible that rural urban migration could be reduced, and different strategies concentrating far more on the rural areas instigated. It seems likely that the education system is the one factor that allows and encourages people to react to all the other causes that lead to rural urban migration. If this factor could be removed the problem would still exist, but it would be unlikely to be so serious.

In any society there are a large number of institutions that automatically play an educational role. For example: clinics, work situations, exhibitions, extension services, T.V., the radio, cinemas, theatres, military service, the prisons, religious organizations, the home, the market, clubs, and community groups. Despite the fact that all these institutions and activities together certainly have a far greater impact than the formal school system, and could have an even greater impact if conscious efforts were made to exploit their educative potential, the formal school system usually behaves as if it has a monopoly of education, and operates as if none of these other educational activities exist certainly rarely trying to elicit support, or giving these other institutions some of the educational tasks it is trying to carry out.

A considerable time has been devoted to explaining what is wrong with present educational systems, as the process of changing significantly such a well established monopoly institution is so difficult that before any attempt is made, an absolute necessity for change must be proved.

In the preceding discussion the reasons for change in educational systems all over the world has been emphasised. However, the case has perhaps been overstated, and could be interpreted as an argument for "de-schooling society." This is not intentional for though there are a very large number of shortcomings in the present educational system which require urgent and structural change, the system as an institution still serves some essential functions not presently carried out by any other institutions in society. For example, it helps teach children to

socialise and interact with their peer groups, it looks after children whilst the parents are working (particularly in urban areas), it allows some mobility from one social class to another (however statistically limited this might be), it teaches some people some life skills (and in some cases with exceptionally motivated teachers, does considerably more than that), and finally it is one of the few "total institutions" which can be planned and is available to be used consciously to change people's attitudes, and to give them the skills and knowledge for improving their quality of life. In the struggle to provide the population of a country with a decent standard of living, an institution as extensive as the educational system, with branches and personnel (schools and teachers) in every part of the country, and 20% or more of the population participating on a full time basis, cannot be ignored. Alternative systems and structures must be developed and experimented with, and the existing system altered, but until such a time as these alternatives have been proved to be more effective than the old system, the existing system should be used extensively as an instrument to improve the lives of the majority of the population as much as possible, however inefficient it might be. Nothing would be gained by abolishing it, even if this were possible, (which it is not), and a great potential would be lost.

It can justifiably be argued that all our attacks on educational systems are in fact attacks on society, for the school can be considered as a microcosm of the larger society in which it exists. This is particularly so when one considers the reward system, and the way in today's meritocracies whereby the reward system and the educational system are inextricably intertwined. If the educational system stinks because society stinks, should we not first try to change society, or at least try to change society and schools at the same time? As a pragmatist, I would say that though society needs changing there is no way of ensuring that the change will take place in the direction required. Democratic political action, and revolutions, all fail more often than they succeed. If we can see ways of changing school systems before we have ways of changing society, we should try these out without waiting for a promised social utopia, both in order to reduce some of the shortcomings of existing systems and also in order to

change society at least marginally. If on the other hand the social changes seem easier (which I think unlikely) then these changes should take place first, closely followed by changes in educational systems.

Finally in the foregoing discussion I have not emphasised the hidden agenda of schools. This has been intentional, for though I would not challenge the importance of this hidden agenda, and the need to carefully take it into consideration when planning any new system, most of these hidden curricula are not universal. For example, the new English primary schools and formal Thai schools have only some hidden objectives in common. Whereas the former encourages the child to find himself, to follow his interests, to establish his own relationships with his peers and to move about freely in his (limited) environment, the latter teaches reliance on elders, teaches that there are right answers to all problems, teaches obedience and docility, and helps children adjust to a boring and static environment. Nevertheless there are still many near universal commonalities in the hidden agenda. For example, children are encouraged to compete rather than co-operate, to value physical labour less than mental work, and to value urban living more than rural living. In addition, the school almost always carries the message that children are children and do not have the same rights as adults, that education is schooling and participation in education must be continuous, regular, and usually full time, and finally that someone else other than the child has the right to decide whether that child will progress into elitest education (and hence into elite positions in society) or not. As all these points are so tied up with the existing organization of society rather than the educational system per-se, they are almost certainly unchangeable without some forms of revolution considerably more radical than any that has yet taken place in any country.

In conclusion, therefore, it can be safely claimed that there is a crisis in the formal educational system in most countries in the world. This crisis is a structural crisis, and is partly caused by the fact that an elitist system has been expanded with little change, so that it now serves many more people than the potential elite; partly by unrealistic objectives and an inapplicable structure; partly by the fact that the

existing system is treated by some policy makers as an empire that must be expanded (like all empires); and partly because the direct and indirect implications of the system on the development of society have never really been studied in depth.

This crisis can be demonstrated by showing that despite huge investments the formal education system's objectives are not being met; that the system produces increasingly high expectations and aspirations that more and more people cannot achieve (thus producing dissatisfaction); that it involves a very inefficient way of achieving its objectives; that it produces pressures for its own expansion at a rate that can never be achieved; and finally that it unwittingly promotes a pattern of development which will not only not produce satisfaction and happiness, but also which (because of the world situation) is doomed to eventual collapse.

If a real crisis is to be avoided then a radical transformation is needed. Such a transformation inevitably involves a deformatisation of the system, with new systems being designed to help people in different parts of the country solve their problems. There should no longer be any universal national curriculum, nor a universal structure, nor teachers as we now know them. In addition, adults should be involved as much as children, and the whole environment (not just the school) used as the classroom. Modern media might be able to play an important role in a new system, but only if it is flexible and can respond quickly to the real and differing needs of the people in different parts of the country.

Obviously no complete change in the system can take place overnight, but if an irreparable crisis is to be avoided, both in terms of schooling and the whole development of the country, then action has to be taken now so that the educational system is gradually redirected to become an instrument to serve the educational needs of all, instead of just being an institution providing certificates, which for the fortunate few enable them to have high earnings and social status, and for the unfortunate majority produce feelings of dissatisfaction disillusion and impotence.

## CHAPTER 5

### EDUCATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT THE ATTEMPTS OF MANY COUNTRIES

Before going on to describe a new system of education designed to solve the most pressing problems facing rural areas in developing countries, it will be useful to draw attention to some of the large number of attempts that have been made in many developing countries, both to completely transform existing educational systems, and to make marginal changes, hopefully to make the system more closely meet the real needs of rural areas. Though few (if any) of such experiments can be considered either entirely or even largely successful in terms of producing a concentration of development efforts on the rural areas where the majority of people in most poor countries reside, important lessons can be learnt from such schemes, both about what is possible, and also about the practical problems that have to be faced when implementing any considerable reform.

What is surprising is that despite the fact that the majority of the world's population live in rural areas so little attention has been paid to using schools as instruments for rural development. Of the many attempts that have been tried, with most, very little effort has really been made (aside from the enthusiasm of their instigators), since rural education has always been starved of resources, and real priority attention. Of the few schemes that have been introduced with a real and widespread desire for them to become effective (not just mere words), most have not succeeded, and only a very few have had widespread implementation. The major reason for the comparative failure of projects in Thailand, the Philippines, colonial Africa, and many other countries is not hard to find. It is because in all these the educational system has had two completely different functions, to produce new efficient urban elites and to give rural people the necessary life skills. Both parents and school administrators (the latter being products of the modern elite, the former

aspiring for some share in the rewards of the modern sector for their children) have attached far greater importance to the first of these two functions, and thus little real attention (in terms of concrete programmes, training, funding, or selection process) has been devoted to the second function. Only in cases where very great political importance has been given to rural development have such schemes had even limited success, for example in India at the time of Gandhi with the Basic Schools, in Cuba and China, and also to some extent in Tanzania. But all these countries have to struggle continuously to try to keep even a part of their educational system serving the majority of the population. For with the wide range of earnings existing between educated and uneducated, the pressures for using the educational system as a "lottery" for the limited number of highly paid jobs, particularly from the elites themselves eager for their children to "succeed" in life, are almost insurmountable.

Nevertheless there is a resurgence of interest in rural education with many countries now sincerely trying to redirect their systems (both geographically and in curriculum) away from the urban areas to the villages. In order to provide some useful guidelines for the design of new systems a brief description of four such schemes will be given :

- a) The rural education system in Upper Volta. A system founded by foreigners with very little local support.
- b) Education for Self Reliance in Tanzania. The problems of executing a major educational reform with the existing educational personnel, through the existing educational system
- c) Red Chinese Education after the Cultural Revolution. A combination of force and local initiative being used to try to rush through a complete change in the system.
- d) Some isolated examples from Cuba.

**a) Upper Volta**

Upper Volta is one of the poorest countries in the world with relatively infertile land, a scattered population, very little urbanisation

and one of the least developed educational systems in the whole world. It is one of those countries where normal formal schools are so irrelevant to the needs of the whole country, so unlikely to produce for the participants the rewards expected, and also where the possibility for universal schooling is impossible for centuries, that it is difficult to understand why the politicians emphasise school expansion (except perhaps because even though current elites make up a miniscule proportion of the population, they make up the only effective political force). Upper Volta in common with many of its central African neighbours is one of those countries where the chance of any effective "normal" economic development is so slight that unless an attempt is made to design a relevant development process (involving of course a relevant educational system) it would be much better, and kinder to the population to build a wall around the country, and leave the people to the slow (but relatively painless) path of gradual change.

Just prior to independence (whatever this term might mean in the context of Upper Volta) it was realised that some new educational system (different from the French system, which was then and still is largely in operation) was needed. Thus foreign experts were called in to design a new system.

These foreign advisers realistically thought that there was little immediate chance either for industrialization, or for any western type of universal education. They thus proceeded to design a system to meet what they thought was needed by the country, one which would also be financially feasible.

The new scheme was introduced in 1959 with the "Plan Christol". This plan suggested that the primary school should have limited enrollments and be designed just to provide the basic training needed by the few who would enter secondary school. For the masses a new system of education should be provided. The basic principles of this new system were as follows:—

- The age of intake should be 14 or 15

- The course should only last three years.
- Two and a half hours a day should be devoted to general education (literacy, numeracy and French); one and a half hours to civics and agricultural instruction; and three and a half hours to practical instruction in agriculture and other vocational skills through the students actually working.
- There would only be one class in any one center, and new entrants would be admitted only every three years.
- The local community would be required to build the classroom, provide a house for the teacher, and the land for the practical activities.
- The production activities of each center should be run on a co-operative basis.
- Teachers at the centers should have one year of specialist training on top of ten years of general education.

What is particularly apparent in the design of the scheme was that the new schools were supposed to do most of what the existing schools were doing (literacy, French, Civics, etc.), and a whole host of new, more relevant subjects in a shorter time than ordinary schools, with fewer resources, and less qualified teachers. Whether this basic inconsistency between the curricula and the resources devoted to the scheme was due to unwarranted optimism on the part of the designers, or due to compromises that had to be made between the designers and traditional educationalists, is not particularly relevant, as the result (no matter what the reasons) was that scheme was open to attack because it did not meet its objectives. It neither provided a good academic education, nor a good, relevant practical education.

Also no real attempt was made to coordinate the new system with the existing formal school system (with, for example, a special compensatory cycle designed to prepare a very few students for competing in the formal system after completing their rural education) and thus any parent who was particularly motivated for his child



to progress to further education, would send his child to an ordinary school (however inconvenient this would be) thus adding to the pressures for conventional school expansion, with the consequent reduction in resources available for the rural schools. If the scheme was really to have succeeded, it would perhaps have been desirable not to have offered children the option of attending formal or new types of schools, but have insisted that all rural children should have to attend the new rural institutions (with of course arrangements being made to prepare a few, in special compensatory schools, for further education).

Though this rural education system is still in operation, and though a few centres have made a significant impact on rural development, enrollments have only reached about one sixth of their planned level (aiming at universal coverage by 1980), whilst enrollments in the academically orientated formal primary schools are much higher than planned. Community interest and involvement in the schemes was much less than anticipated, with most communities providing only poor quality land for the centres, and only accepting a centre at all if they were convinced that they had little chance of obtaining a normal primary school. As far as the Ministry of Education is concerned it is the lowest priority of all the activities that they are responsible for.

Though the scheme was reasonably well designed, at the outset there were several mistakes which should not be repeated by other countries envisaging a similar type of development. First, the centres were not designed to meet the particular individual needs of the communities in which they were situated, but had a common national curriculum; secondly, the curriculum was much too full, including in three years literacy training, the learning of a foreign language, theoretical instruction in agriculture, and a great deal of practical work, (in all communities French was of dubious value, and in most literacy was not essential); and thirdly, the teachers were not drawn from the community itself, nor were they given

sufficient training to carry their task effectively, and in addition they were not provided with any real supervision or contact with the outside world.

However, despite the shortcomings in design, the system could have succeeded had it not existed alongside ordinary elementary schools in rural areas, or schools which were at least open to some children from the rural areas. These, though offering a curriculum of dubious value to rural communities did provide their pupils with the slight statistical chance of getting out of the rural areas into elitist positions. Most parents preferred their children to have a chance of getting the top prizes rather than a certainty of getting a consolation prize. In other words, the scheme failed because it did not pay sufficient attention either to the political realities of the country or to the motives that prompt peasants to send their children to school. If any rural education system is to succeed it must at least appear to offer its participants a chance of going on to higher education,<sup>(1)</sup> or else must be the product of a strong government which has the power to enforce a dualistic division of society.

#### **b) Tanzania—Education for Self Reliance**

Tanzania is considerably richer than Upper Volta; has a relatively strong political party and system of administration; has a moderately developed educational system (50% of the school age population in elementary education, and about 8% in secondary education); and has an inspired philosopher leader trying to develop his country egalitarianly. Nyerere, the President, is trying to use the modern educational system (formed by the British in colonial times) to develop his country along a path of "African Socialism".

In 1967, after developing a political philosophy for Tanzania, he then set about elaborating an educational philosophy consistent with his political ideas. This document, "Education for Self Reliance",

(1) Admittedly some children did, and still do manage to progress from these rural schools to further education, but these children are exceptions and chances for such progression are not built into the system.

is the base on which a large number of educational reforms have been built in recent years. The basic principles of "Education for Self Reliance" are as follows :-

- Elementary schools must concentrate on providing a meaningful education for the 87% of children who do not proceed to further education, and this must be complete in itself.
- Secondary and higher education should only be expanded to produce manpower needed for modern sector and rural development.
- The education system should inculcate a sense of commitment to the total community.
- School must be integrated with society, and should not be separate.
- Schools should not give people the wrong expectation, or make those who succeed feel that they are an elite.
- Education should not be bookish and academic.
- There should be no separation of manual work from learning, nor practice from theory.
- Education must teach people basic skills needed by society.
- The importance of examinations must be down-graded, and a spirit of co-operation rather than competition must be introduced.
- The age of entry into elementary school should be raised.
- The students fortunate enough to receive an education should be prepared to work on productive activities to cover part of the cost of their education.

The implementation of the scheme has proved very difficult, and in general it can be said that Tanzania still has an elitist educational system. Nevertheless, considerable reforms have taken place. First, almost all of the unskilled and semi-skilled tasks necessary for running schools are now carried out by the pupils themselves; all schools are involved in some productive activity

(normally farming) and this activity is organised on a co-operative basis with the students keeping accounts; all pupils are involved frequently in community development activities; and all secondary and higher education students have to serve one year in a National Service activity (non-military) with relatively low pay<sup>(1)</sup> before they take full time employment. Secondly, the curriculum has been revised so that it reflects more Tanzanian and rural needs. Thirdly, the examination system has been partially downgraded, so that now at least the top child from each primary school will go on to secondary education, and the proportion of children going from primary to secondary schools in all regions is the same. Finally, in some situations there has been a real involvement of the school in the community and the community in the school.

Three major problems have stopped the reform being as effective as it might have been. First, the responsibility for implementing the reform has rested largely with existing teachers and administrators who themselves are members of the elite, and products of the old educational system. Even the new teachers coming into the system are trained by old teacher educators or university professors, and thus share to a considerable extent the old values. Thus in theory though much of the teaching should be practically orientated towards the needs of the rural areas, in practice there is still a great deal of academic teaching. In addition, these teachers do not have much incentive to change what they are teaching because the examination system has not been basically altered (though attempts have been made to reduce its inegalitarian effects). Related to this, a second and perhaps more important point is that despite the President's efforts at producing an egalitarian society, the educated worker is still **very much** better off than his peasant counterparts. Thus parents still realistically see the educational system as a path to elitist prosperity for their children, and therefore want the teacher

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(1) Though low compared with civil service' and other elites' salaries, their pay is high compared with the standard of living of peasants.

to concentrate on academic subjects so that their children might be amongst the fortunate few that make it to the next level of education and eventual urbane employment. The elitist nature of secondary and higher schooling is made completely obvious to everyone by the physical plant of the different types of school: primary schooling takes place in simple, often traditional type buildings; secondary schooling in modern concrete buildings with dormitory facilities considerably more comfortable than the sleeping accomodation that most peasants are accustomed to; and higher education takes place in incredibly expensive, beautiful, palatial buildings which bear virtually no relationship to the rest of society. The third major reason why the reform has not been as effective as could have been is that there has not been sufficient co-ordination with other rural development activities. Thus though the school is meant to teach children relevant skills and knowledge, the people most able to provide such teaching are outside the school system, (extension workers, health workers, community development agents, party cadres, etc.), and do not participate in the school process in a systematic way. Thus the school, and the provision of relevant skills and knowledge remain separated, with agriculture being the responsibility of the Ministry of Agriculture, health of the Ministry of Health, and **schooling** of the Ministry of Education.

Thus, Tanzania, like Upper Volta and many other countries, is faced with the problems of having to change the attitudes of the whole population about education, so it is not longer seen as a path to elitist positions, but as an instrument for serving community needs. This is particularly difficult to do, as in fact the only way to be sure of a well paid job is to succeed in the educational system. In other words, the parents as individuals are not wrong.

### c) Red China after the Cultural Revolution

Red China is a particularly interesting country to study for those interested in the problems of introducing educational reform which leads amongst other things to greater real equality, and to

rural transformation and development. In a short paper such as this it is impossible to cover virtually any of the multitude of educational reforms that have occurred since the revolution in 1949. What is most interesting, however, is the tenacity of the old elitist educational system, which has continued to exist through the first five year plan period; through the "hundred flowers campaign" (when criticism of any type was welcome); through the "great leap forward" when enrollment multiplied several fold; through the establishment of part work schools in all factories and many communes; through the introduction of manual labour; and large doses of political indoctrination into all educational systems; through the direct involvement of party cadres and people's liberation army personnel in the schools; and through local financing of schools, and the participation of ordinary people as teachers. Only with the cultural revolution, which closed all the schools down for more than a year, and which attempted to destroy most of old values of society, have real signs of change in the academic elitist system begun to appear, and it is still too early to say whether these changes will be able to be maintained,

During the first two decades after the revolution, many of the reforms that took place in education were extremely significant, and in any other country would have been considered to have been considerable achievements. The literacy rate was increased from 10% to 45%, enrollments increased many-fold, the skills of the labour force upgraded, many millions of teachers trained, the whole educational system was reorganized several times, and education made far more relevant and less academic.

Despite all these achievements, the educational system still enabled a large proportion of the children from "the black classes" (intellectuals, capitalists, ex-landlords and rich peasants, and rightists) to reach the highest levels and thus obtain the highest paid positions, (there is still more than a twenty fold spread in salaries in China). This was because there were still examinations, based largely on academic achievement, and as elsewhere in the world, children from educated families tended to achieve better in these examinations.

Thus with the cultural revolution certain basic reforms were introduced :-

- The academic curriculum was reduced to the barest minimum at all levels of education.
- The length of each cycle of schooling was drastically reduced. For example, whereas before the cultural revolution it used to take 17 to 20 years of schooling to obtain a university degree, now it only takes 12 years.
- The time devoted to practical labour and indoctrination has been further increased so that the two together now make up about 40% of the curriculum.
- Before a student is qualified to enter a higher educational institution he must work (normally in the rural areas) for at least two years.
- Selection of students for higher education is no longer based on the results of academic examinations but on the recommendations of the local communes or work brigades, based on the student's socio-political background.
- Examinations are no longer used for evaluating students, only for the evaluation of the effectiveness of the learning process. Thus no students are allowed to repeat, if they fail.
- Children of elite parents are not "encouraged" to work in urban areas. Large numbers of educated youth (5 to 10 million a year) are sent *for life* to remote rural areas, and are expected to establish roots, and act as "agents of change", in these areas.
- Through large scale involvement in productive activities (e.g. most urban schools have a small factory as part of the school) schools are generally self-financing, and thus are universally free.
- The administration of education has been completely decentralised, and schools are largely run by the local communities. Within certain limits, communes can organise their school

activities however they want to. There is not even any fixed structure of education, and this can and does vary from community to community.

- Finally, teachers are periodically "reaeducated" through long-term involvement in manual labour, and political indoctrination in May 7th schools.

These reforms have been introduced to achieve certain basic objectives. First, to prevent the separation of school from society; to make education an integral part of the production process, and production as an integral part of education; to prevent the formation of powerful groups of intellectuals separated from the masses; and to ensure that education is responsive to the needs of the mass of the population. Secondly, to prevent the formation of self-perpetuating elites with a vested interest in the maintenance of any particular system; and to ensure the continuation of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thirdly, to reverse the normal development process whereby towns and cities are developed at the expense of rural areas, and to concentrate a large proportion of educated manpower resources on the rural areas; by stabilizing urban populations (at 110 million until at least the end of this century) and transferring all surplus educated personnel to the countryside. And finally, by using "the entire country as an enormous school in full revolution" to create a new homogenous man "who is at the same time a worker, a peasant, a soldier, and an intellectual."

Besides these overall objectives, and the important structural changes that are taking place, a very large number of extremely interesting innovations have occurred in the schooling and educational processes, which, unlike the structural change just discussed, could be introduced in almost any society. Obviously in a short space it is not possible to do justice to two decades of continuous innovation. I would, however, like to mention a few of the improvements which I think are most relevant to the majority of poor countries.

First, with regards to schooling, China is attempting to make all instruction relevant to society and its problems, with purely academic



teaching directly discouraged, and also concentrating on a project approach to learning. For example, instead of learning history in a classroom, students might visit a local factory, and on the basis of discussion with the older workers produce a history of that industry, and relate this history to the socio-economic situation of the country at the particular time being studied. At the higher levels, where lectures are given, the full version of the lecture is distributed before the session, so that the student is able to be clear about what is being said, and is also able to prepare questions that he will raise during discussion. At the other end of the system, in rural elementary schools, very great efforts are being made to ensure that schools do not interfere with the existing life patterns of the rural populations. The school now often takes place in a room in an ordinary house in the village; the teachers are just as likely to be progressive farmers or party cadres, as professional teachers; children are allowed to take their younger siblings along to class with them (thus continuing to carry out their traditional child-care functions), and sometimes in the more remote areas, travelling teachers, who meet with the children periodically by the side of a track or any other location, are used.

Secondly, in respect to the education of the entire population, great strides have also been made. For example, just as all schools are partly becoming productive enterprises, at the same time many factories are partly becoming schools. Virtually every enterprise is supposed to have an active political and job-orientated educational programme; most have professional teachers on their payroll, and also use many particularly skilled workers or party cadres in part-time teaching. Reports indicate that there is a high level of worker participation, not only during working hours, but also during their free time. In addition, realistic steps are being taken in the organisation of literacy campaigns. Before any attempt is made to mount a literacy campaign in a village, party workers spend some time in trying to motivate the population to want to read and write. When there appears to be a sufficient degree of motivation, the environment is often then literalised, with signs being

put on every possible object in the village, naming them with written symbols, in order to introduce a familiarity with the symbols. Only when this motivation and literalization has been achieved is any attempt made to teach literacy, and in this attempt everyone in the community is used who has some literary abilities (for example, children teach their parents) so that personalised instruction can be given. Of course, the Chinese script has been simplified, and large numbers of publications with very limited vocabularies made available.

It is still far too early to say with any confidence whether China will be able to succeed in its egalitarian and developmental objectives. For example, will parents ever really be able to fully accept that their children will have lower paid, and perhaps less interesting employment than they themselves have, or will elites continue (as they have done since the revolution) to exert pressure on the system so that it continues to favour their children? Or will the indoctrination of the schools, the party, and the revolutionary committees succeed in establishing a set of values where there is equality of status between manual and intellectual workers (*even though there is no equality in incomes*)?

Closely related to the above point is the problem of producing the highly qualified top professionals needed to staff the planned military and industrial development. After the revolution in the USSR, students for higher education were for a decade selected on the basis of social class criteria but this system had to be replaced in 1933 by conventional examinations due to the low level of achievement of many students from worker or peasant backgrounds. Will China, through a system of social selection, with a drastically reduced curriculum, with great emphasis being put on manual labour, be able to produce the top level professional manpower she needs, or will she have to develop a separate academically orientated sub-system for this purpose, with special resources (as has been done in Cuba, for example)?

Though very great progress has been made in making higher education more relevant to the needs of the mass of the population in rural areas (at the expense of highly specialised professional training),

through the training of barefoot doctors and other similar personnel, very little attempt seems to have been made to ensure that the millions of urban educated youth who are sent to rural areas have had an education that provides them with skills which are useful for those areas. As it is known that 5-10 million youths will be "rusticated" each year, should not adjustments be made to the urban school curriculum to provide each student at least with one useful life skill for the rural areas? At present the urban youth arriving in a remote area with few relevant life skills is not necessarily likely to be a particularly useful asset to that community, for he cannot take over rural leadership positions, (as this would place a premium on urban education), and neither is he equipped to provide agricultural, health or other practical advice. In many respects "rustication" seems to be a measure designed to solve urban problems rather than one specifically intended to improve rural living conditions. It is hoped that it will play an important role in rural transformation, but as yet there is little evidence available (outside China) as to whether the conflict and frustration that the rustication movement produces are sufficiently offset by the catalytic effect that the urban youth have on rural areas.

#### **d) Cuba—Mass Literacy vs Elitist Education**

Despite the inherent weaknesses and internal contradictions of most school systems and organised educational activities, there are a large number of isolated examples of experimental, and even large scale programmes that have been made, and an even larger number of innovations attempted, which, despite commendable objectives and considerable inputs of resources, have not resulted in any significant change.

In a short discussion such as this it would not be possible to analyse even the most important of the innovations attempted, thus I will finish this chapter by describing briefly a few successful and unsuccessful educational activities from one further country—Cuba.

Cuba is economically quite different from most of the countries that we have been discussing so far, as there is a considerable degree

of urbanist and high level of wage employment (as opposed to peasant self-employment). The country is pursuing somewhat contradictory objectives, for it not only has an egalitarian social policy, (and is also trying to create a new socialist man who, amongst other things, can identify with his job, realise its importance to the larger society, and thus enjoy his work) but is also aiming for rapid economic development, in order to provide more material things for its people, and in order to safeguard and maintain its independence. Thus at the same time as there is an emphasis on industrialization, most civil servants, workers, and students have to leave their jobs during sugar harvest time and help with the harvest. This contradiction in the social and economic objectives, is reflected in the educational process.

The 1961 literacy campaign is for me one of the most successful educational programmes carried out in a short period of time anywhere in the world. I believe this not so much because 8-900,000 people were made literate, and illiteracy almost eliminated in one year; nor because the question of constraints was not considered, (it was just decided to eliminate illiteracy and the necessary resources were then mobilized) but because of the involvement of up to 300,000 people, many of them elites, or future elites, and most from the urban or peri-urban areas, in an activity which not only required a high degree of motivation (which was achieved), but also meant that these people had to live with and share the hardship of the poorest peasants for several months. In one short year not only was the dualistic division of society reduced, with industrial workers (30,000) and students (at least 100,000) participating for nine months, (involving the temporary closure of the schools) and teachers, civil servants and other people (170,000) swarming all over the countryside with increasing revolutionary zeal, and motivated to help their deprived brothers, but also large numbers of peasants were for the first time made aware that they could do something about their own poor living conditions.

Traditional planners and economists can of course attack the campaign, because the literacy was achieved at a very high cost (it

probably took something like two man months of effort to produce one literate) with the schools closing down for almost a year, and with many people being removed from productive activities to join in the campaign. Though there were obviously shortcomings in both the organisation and the implementation of the scheme, which should of course be avoided by other countries attempting a similar programme, it was right that not too much time was spent on planning and research, for had this been done, it is likely that the original motivation (on which the success of any scheme ultimately depends) would have been lost.

My other example from Cuba demonstrates very clearly the problems caused by having conflicting social and economic objectives. In the period following the revolution, a large proportion of the highly qualified manpower (about 70%) emigrated to the U.S.A., and at the same time the country embarked on an accelerated programme of modernization and industrialisation, thus multiplying the requirements of skilled people. By the mid-1960's it was decided that the existing system, despite very rapid expansion, could not produce the qualified personnel needed quickly enough, and thus special institutions were established for "brilliant" students (who obviously tended to come from elitist families), and extra resources devoted to these schools, so that highly skilled people (who would obviously occupy future elite positions) could be produced quickly. Thus, despite attempts at equalising opportunity of entry into the majority of schools, the existing elite were still provided with a channel to ensure that at least some of their children would occupy the highest positions in society.

#### **e) Conclusions**

Virtually every developing country has experimented at some time with rural oriented formal educational programmes. Many of these have had very wide coverage (such as the rural elementary schools in Thailand fifty years ago, or the elementary schools established in parts of British colonial Africa, or the Basic Schools in

India), but died out as further educational opportunities expanded, and parents began to realise that irrelevant academic training provided at least a statistical chance for their children to gain secure and high prestige white collar jobs, whilst rural education only helped their children do better what they already knew. Basically, a chance of a first prize in the educational lottery was considered more worthwhile than the certainty of a consolation prize.

More recently, a host of new non-formal rural educational programmes (such as the Functional Literacy Programme in Thailand, the Commilla project in Bangladesh, and village polytechnics in Kenya) have been springing up all over the world, often supported by mass media. Many of these have been quite successful, but have remained small and starved of adequate resources for expansion (because of the financial demands of the formal system). Whether it is possible to expand these successful projects widely, whilst maintaining their flexibility and thus their ability to respond to particular learning needs in particular localities is still unproven.<sup>(1)</sup>

Though these attempts in China, Tanzania, Upper Volta and other countries either to transform educational systems, or to use education directly to achieve certain egalitarian and/or rural development objectives differ widely in scope and even more widely in implementation, some common conclusions can be drawn :-

- Political motivation is an essential prerequisite for the implementation of any significant change. Without considerable political interest, new proposals are unlikely either to get the attention or the resources they need for success.
- New schemes must be started very rapidly whilst the motivation still exists, and must by-pass the large number of minor problems that will be confronted in implementation if they are not to become bogged down in details.

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(1) For a discussion of the process involved in the establishment of Thai rural adult educational activities, and the attempts at creating a flexible institutional structure for further expansion, see my "Non-Formal Education for National Harmony and Development in Thailand" IIEP *Paris*, 1975.

- Any new scheme must be internally consistent, and must not involve either contradictions in objectives, or between the required processes, and the resources available.
- Any educational process should interfere as little as possible with traditional patterns of life, should involve non-teachers in teaching, and the curriculum should relate directly to the local environment, and the problems of specific communities.
- Great care should be taken in implementation to avoid problems of institutionalisation. In expanding an experimental project, attention should be paid to ensuring that the conditions that produced the original success are duplicated in the expanded project.
- If the school is to serve the mass of the population, the importance of academic examinations must be considerably downgraded.
- Any education that is to be relevant to the rural population must involve practical manual work, as theory cannot be separate from practice.
- It is very difficult for a school system to serve the needs of the modern sector and the traditional agricultural sector at the same time. However, if separate systems are developed, the one concentrating on the agricultural sector is considered by parents as a second best alternative.
- As administrations and teachers are ambitious for their children, and hope that through education they will be able to obtain elitist positions, there is a tendency for those running educational systems to attach highest priority to education's modern sector training functions, at the expense of meaningful education for the masses.
- Radical educational transformation cannot be achieved rapidly, but requires complete retraining and education of all teachers, and in addition requires a long-term conscious effort to change many of the current values of society.

The most significant lesson to be learnt from all the systems described is the very great difficulty of introducing any educational reform which involves a change in the basic role of education. As even moderate changes in the system, (such as those attempted in Upper Volta and Thailand) are very hard to implement on a wide scale, many of the more radical proposals being discussed by educational philosophers at the moment can only be considered as utopian. However, even an analysis of proposals that are definitely Utopian can throw important light on the inadequacies of the existing system, and indicate some priority areas where change is essential.



## CHAPTER 6

### SOME UTOPIAN ALTERNATIVES

A utopian scheme is by definition one which cannot be implemented in the foreseeable future and thus concentrates on a description of an ideal system rather than on the process of implementation. Thus they are only of interest to practical educators in so far as they suggest directions in which practical changes could take place.

As education occupies a central position in the formation of any new society, many philosophers over the past few millennia have devoted considerable attention to education, and several of these consider that the de-institutionalisation of education is an essential prerequisite for the creation of a new ideal man in an ideal society.

Over the past decade as philosophers and thinkers have become increasingly aware that the present direction that modern societies are taking can only lead to eventual collapse, a great deal of attention has been paid to the role that education (in its broadest sense) should play in creating a more viable society. Obviously, it is neither possible, nor particularly relevant, to discuss many of these utopian philosophies, particularly since most are directed towards problems and conditions in industrial technological societies. Nevertheless, before going on to discussing the basic criteria for changing rural educational systems, it will be useful to briefly outline three of the more relevant (relevant to rural educational transformation) philosophies that have captured educator's attention over the last few years. Firstly, education through the establishment of learning networks; secondly, education through dialogue and the exposure of people to the contradictions inherent in society; and finally, education through the continuous participation of all members of society both as teachers and learners, and through the establishment of community centres in all neighbourhoods.

All three systems can be considered utopian as they could not be operated through existing institutions, nor could they take place without a dramatic change in the objectives of society.

### a) Ivan Illych, Everett Reimer and the Learning Network\*

Having argued that the present school system cannot be reformed to serve man, Illych and Reimer propose an entirely new educational process. This process involves the establishment of four learning networks or webs. First, the creation of a reference service for educational objects; this involves the creation of large numbers of libraries, rental agencies for science equipment, records, tapes, plants and other objects needed by people to further their learning; but also it involves the opening up of all factories, offices, hospitals and other places of general interest to the public, if not all the time, at least for a few hours every day. Somebody interested in a particular subject can then obtain a list of the rental agencies providing relevant objects, as well as the institutions that can be visited that are operating in that particular field.

Secondly, it involves the creation of skill exchanges, whereby people who are prepared to teach a particular skill are listed, as well as their addresses and the conditions under which they are prepared to act as a skill model. In this way a person who wants to learn a particular skill can find someone to teach him that skill, possibly without payment but in exchange for services he can perform for the other person. Such skill models would not usually be full-time educators.

Thirdly, through peer matching, whereby those who want to learn or become involved in a particular subject, and who would like to pursue their investigation with someone else can get in touch with persons with similar interests. Through the establishment of a communications network (based on computers) everyone can list their interests and be put in touch immediately with people with similar interests living in the same neighbourhood.

Finally, through the existence of a body of professional educators who would be available, both to provide advice on how a particular person should best pursue his education, and also to provide formal instruction if required.

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\*For details of this system, the reader should refer to Ivan Illych, *Deschooling Society*, Calder London, 1971; and Everett Reimer, *School is Dead*, Penguin Books, London, 1971.

Where payment is needed (for renting objects, hiring skill models, or seeking advice from educators) educational credits or vouchers could be used. Each child (at birth) would be allocated a certain credit, and could only earn more by acting as an educator or teacher himself.

In conclusion to this section, a brief description of the way in which a person might learn a new skill will be given. Let us assume that someone is thinking of becoming a professional musician. He would first contact a musical educator who might suggest that he should spend some time at the local recording studios to make sure he is really interested; having confirmed his interest he would then rent a particular instrument, and contact a skill exchange to find someone who could demonstrate and teach him the rudiments of how to play that particular instrument, (perhaps in exchange for gardening lessons, or educational credits); he would also feed into the peer matching computer his desire to find another learner to practice with him, and finally he might in the end employ a professional teacher (or join a class) to learn more about music, composition, and how to play his instrument really well. All payments needed would be made with the educational credits he has at his disposal.

#### **b) Paulo Freire : The Dialogic Approach to Education\***

Freire is much more concerned with the process of education rather than the system itself. He is utopian only insofar as he considers that education in peasant communities is synonymous with revolution, and obviously no government is going to encourage an educational process that promotes real revolution. He considers that the present educational process suffers from "narration sickness" with the teacher narrating certain facts to the student, who is merely considered as an "object" and not as the "subject" of his own learning and life. He is concerned with discovering the contradictions that exist in each particular society, and through a method of teacher-pupil dialogue, to make

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\* For further details the reader should refer to Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Herder and Herder, New York, 1972.

the students not only aware of the contradictions, but also eager to take direct action to eliminate the contradictions. Basically he sees education as a process for getting rid of exploitation and oppression, for developing in an individual an awareness of his situation; and not as a process primarily concerned with transmitting skills and knowledge. He is an optimist insofar as he expects that a peasant, once properly aware, will necessarily take the right action without any further direction.

His method involves the sending of motivated interdisciplinary teams into a local community, and after convincing the community of the need for some form of education, starting a study of all aspects of community life (jointly with certain members of that community). Then, (with involved residents) an attempt is made to decipher the situation from an interdisciplinary and overall viewpoint, and to identify the primary and secondary contradictions. These contradictions are then "codified" with sketches, and drawings, (paying particular attention to relevance of the codification, and its simplicity), and a dialogic educational programme drawn up around these contradictions, or "generative themes". He considers that at least 10% of the population of a community should be involved if there is to be a really positive effect.<sup>(1)</sup>

### **c) Education Through Community Centred Teaching & Learning**

Whereas Illych considers that people will use educational facilities if they are made available, Freire considers that before people can take any action to improve their own lives (which is the only way their lives can be improved) they first have to be made aware of the contradictions of their existence. Neither really considers the problems of how their systems could be universalised, nor how some of the other functions presently carried out by educational systems (particularly in urban areas) could be dealt with. For example, the socialisation of

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(1) Freire did experiment with such a scheme in Brazil, and had considerable success in making peasants literate. He also must have had some success in his revolutionary objectives, for though a Brazilian, he was given the option either of staying in jail or going into permanent exile. He chose the latter.

children with their peers; the transmittal of certain desirable social norms (non-aggressiveness, and co-operation); and the care of children whilst the parents are working.

In order to answer some of these problems, and to some extent combine the two approaches, a third utopian solution is needed. This proposal would include the four "networks" of Illych and Reimer, but would also involve the establishment of community centres in every community. These community centres would be designed as active learning environments (with gymnasiums, reading rooms, music rooms, quiet rooms, science rooms, etc.) and would be entrusted with the care of children whilst the parents are working, and also with the inculcation of certain undisputed social values. The centres would neither have a permanent full-time staff, nor would there be any compulsion for a child to attend class (he could, if he wanted, spend all his time in the gym). All adults in the local community would have to be involved in the running of the centre on a part-time basis, and would organise various activities for the children (or for adults in the evening) both in and out of school. The adult would be free to choose any subject or activity that he would like to teach with only two limitations: he could not transmit values opposite to those which the centre is trying to put across, and also he would have to use a teaching method that actively involves the pupils, either physically or dialogically. The adult might take some children to visit a factory, or a police station, take them gardening or fishing, discuss with them politics, astrology or any other subject; or he might just be available at the centre to help any child who has reading or other problems.

The four "learning networks" would still exist to further enrich the educational environment, and to provide more specialist training, but by putting children and adults (the center would be open all day and at night) in a learning environment with motivated "teachers" (the part-time adults carrying out an activity that interests them are likely to be considerably more motivated than ordinary teachers)<sup>(1)</sup> it is expected that interest in, and awareness of, a wide range of possible

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(1) In particularly backward areas of developing countries it is admitted that a few specially trained agents of change might have to be introduced into each centre.

activities would be developed which would not necessarily occur merely through the existence of the "learning networks". In addition, children would be looked after, there would be a centre for community activities, and all adults would be partially responsible for the upbringing and education of all children.

As the three alternatives are utopian, few lessons for feasible educational reform can be derived from them. All that can perhaps be said is that any reform should pay very close attention to the real needs of the community, should involve the community as much as possible, and should use all the educational resources available (even if this involves a reduction in productivity, or efficiency) in the society. There are no problems of implementation with utopian schemes, because they are not by definition implementable, but are only indicators of the direction in which change should take place.

Even if there is no agreement on the overall objectives and details of these three alternatives (or of many others not discussed), certain ideas that should be used in designing any rural educational systems are apparent. For example:—

— There are many different ways of learning : from things, from activities in society, from peers, and from skill models. All these should be exploited.

— Education can only really take place if it relates to issues that actively concern those being educated, and if there is dialogue between the student and the educator. For rapid learning there should be an emotional involvement of the learner.

— Educational activities should be centred in the community, use all community resources, and involve all community members as teachers and learners.

— From this and the previous chapters, (particularly chapters 4 and 5) it is possible to identify certain commonly recurring themes and ideas of what should be the basic characteristics of any new rural educational system designed to help solve problems and promote human-centred development. Thus in the next chapter, before going on to outline any illustrative new systems and specific reforms, the pieces up till now will be drawn together, and the basic characteristics for any rural educational transformation described.

## CHAPTER 7

# BASIC CRITERIA FOR RURAL EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

### **Introduction**

In the preceding discussions we have seen that the most important problems that need to be solved, if the quality of life is to be improved, vary widely from country to country, and even between different regions' within the same country. We have also seen that in the poorest countries any development strategy that concerns itself with the mass of the population (and not just on increasing G.D.P. and efficiency) must either involve the construction of "walls" around the country so that change will only take place very gradually; or it must concentrate on rural development, as it is in the rural areas where the mass of the population resides, and it is in the rural areas where the most serious but potentially solvable problems are found. We have also shown that most existing formal systems are failing to promote rural development, and how the same is true of many innovative approaches and systems designed with that objective.

At present in most poor countries the vast proportion of resources devoted to rural areas are not designed to help develop these areas, but to provide academic schooling. The main function of such schooling is to produce an appearance of equality of opportunity for rural children to pass on to secondary and higher education, and thence into the highly paid elitist jobs in the towns. There are, of course, many other stated objectives of schooling in general, and rural schooling in particular, but the achievement of these objectives is no more successful than the achievement of the egalitarian objectives.

However, as any development process, if it is to really affect the mass of the population, must also *involve* the mass of the population, and as such involvement necessarily requires the introduction of new ideas, the changing of attitudes, and the provision of new skills and

knowledge for the majority of the population, education in its broadest sense must play an absolutely central role. But with so many resources already tied up in the existing formal school system, if a rapid and significant impact is to be made, a new system cannot be developed alongside the old, but must result in a transformation of the existing school system using the scarce resources that this system is presently consuming.

Thus from the discussion that has preceded this chapter (particularly chapters 4, 5 & 6), some general conclusions of the direction of change needed in *existing* educational systems can be drawn. Before examining these very important criteria, some further discussion of various general principles is needed.

However, at the outset it should again be emphasised that no education system is entirely neutral. Just as any existing educational system must be to some extent a reflection of the type of system people in that particular country want (or think that they want), so must the objectives and criteria described below reflect my own biases about development and about the direction in which society should change. For example, I do not believe in Rousseau's concept of the "noble savage" i.e. that people taken out of the context of the modern developed environment will be inherently "good". I believe that people are neither "good" nor "bad" (though they might be by nature aggressive, and acquisitive), nor productive or lazy, nor aware or unaware of their circumstances, but are above all else a product of their environment. Because of the proportion of their youth (the period when character and attitudes are being formed) that people spend in school, formal education plays a significant role in the formation of attitudes and character. Society will not change for the better if left alone, but only if conscious efforts are made to create an environment (through education in its broadest sense) conducive to such improvement.

### **Criteria the System Does Not Necessarily Need**

Before going on to discuss some of the positive criteria and objectives that any transformed educational system should have, some



mention should be made of some of the hidden criteria of existing school systems that a transformed system need not necessarily have :—

- It need not necessarily concentrate the vast proportion of its resources on the education of children.
- It need not necessarily involve full time participation either on the part of “students” or “teachers”.
- The “teachers” need not necessarily have had specific training in teaching.
- It need not necessarily involve the teaching of literacy and numeracy.
- There need not necessarily be physical facilities used exclusively for education.

In other words, organized education should be seen as a process whereby new attitudes, skills, knowledge, and ideas, which are not usually transmitted in the normal environment (home, family, village, etc.) can be passed on to large numbers of people. In some cases, much greater returns might be received from educating adults rather than children, or by devoting resources equally to all age groups; in other cases the greatest benefits might be obtained through educating children. Similarly, in many cases, very little extra might be learnt by a student attending school full-time as compared to one attending part-time. In some circumstances a trained teacher might perform better than an untrained artisan, or specialist, whilst for other particular tasks a motivated person who knows his subject from practical experience might be more useful. As far as literacy is concerned (though it is obviously a useful tool), where there is nothing to read, and little reason to write, it is obviously not a priority area for action. Finally, the usual type of school with classrooms and laboratories is not necessarily the best educational environment; again for certain tasks, the farm or the factory, the market or the hospital might be a much richer environment in which to carry out formal instruction.

Thus for a start it can be said that many of the normally accepted criteria for organized education are not essential criteria for any reformed educational system designed to meet the particular needs of developing

agricultural countries. Any new system might include any or all of the above criteria, but there is nothing inherent in the educational process to make them necessary preconditions.

### **Some More Positive Criteria**

Now turning to the more positive criteria: education should not be seen as an end in itself but should be seen *as a tool* to solve particular problems. For example, in the poorest countries the first priority of any education system should perhaps be to help end "the eternal compulsory fast"<sup>(1)</sup> faced by large proportions of the population. In such a case an educational programme for the community involving awareness of agriculture, nutrition and family planning might be needed, with the luxury of literary and academic education left until the children and adults would have enough food to be sufficiently mentally aware as to be able to understand more abstract teaching. In other countries (or parts of countries) literacy might be necessary for further development, but over-population or exploitation by unscrupulous middlemen might also be factors preventing full individual development, and thus the educational process should concentrate on these areas also.

The problems in different countries, or even within any given country, are not necessarily the same, and thus if the education system is designed as a tool for solving particular problems there is *no* need for it to be universal or exactly the same in all countries, or even in all parts of a given country. The most important factor is that any educational institution should provide an education relevant to the needs of the community which it is supposed to be serving. Thus in many cases it might prove necessary to survey a particular area to discover what the major problems requiring solution are (both in the eyes of the government and of the local people).

The next important criteria is that no educational system should be too dependent on books and mere verbal instruction. Not only does such academic concentration mean that schools will automatically be

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(1) Ghandi.

instruments for selection and producing the ruling class<sup>(1)</sup> by separating the population into clearly defined working and intellectual classes, but also because the dependence on one or two senses is unlikely to be efficient. Why should schooling concentrate on the visual and the audio senses, when life involves so much more? Why should schooling separate the intellectual from the physical when day to day life continuously involves the co-ordination of the two ?

According to ancient philosophers and modern educationalists alike, there should be no such division, as the learning process is much more effective if it involves related physical and intellectual activities. For example an old Chinese proverb says :-

“I hear and I forget

I see and I remember

I do and I understand”.

and similarly recent experiments carried out by Piaget in Switzerland have proved that learning is significantly more effective and rapid where physical action is involved. Thus any transformed educational process should involve the students physically and intellectually at the same time.

One of the problems faced by many developing countries is that of students dropping out of school, not only between levels of education, but even within a particular level. With the present system, very often such drop-outs gain very little, as the curriculum is designed so that no subject is fully covered unless the particular cycle is completed by the student. This obviously results in very great waste. Thus any transformed system must be designed as much as possible so that something positive and lasting is gained from each year or even hour of study. Great care must also be taken to avoid letting the intake requirements at higher levels of education (attended by only a small proportion of those in the lower levels) influence to too great an

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(1) According to Mencius “Those who work with their hands are ruled, and those who work with their minds rule.”

extent what is taught at the lower levels. In order to ensure that dropouts, and sporadic school attenders gain something from their participation in school, it is not only necessary to design curricula where the self-contained quanta of knowledge (or skills, ideas or attitudes) take up as little time as possible, but also it is necessary to design the curricula so that they relate to the pupils' environment, so that what is taught is additional to what is already known. Thus each new idea should directly relate to, and be relevant to the student's background. In order to prevent intake requirements at the higher levels from influencing too much what is taught at the lower levels, it will probably be necessary to create some sort of a buffer zone, or special cycle of education between the two levels, this cycle being specifically designed to prepare students for the higher level.

This leads on to one of the most difficult problems to solve—that of the examination system and the selection process from one level of education to the next. In all developing countries, though the mass of the population live in the rural areas and require from an educational system simple basic skills to help them improve their standard of life, more specialised people are also needed, some in the rural areas, but also more specifically to man the complex technical and professional posts in the modern sector. Though the educational requirements for such posts (doctors, engineers, agriculturalists, administrators, technicians) are often overemphasised, it is beyond argument that within the framework of present society such personnel do need some specialist training or education. As these are the posts that are usually best rewarded in terms of salary and social position, there is inevitably competition for the few posts available. Such competition is normally reflected in competition for entrance into the educational sub-system which lead to the posts. Examinations are virtually always used, and apart from the inegalitarian aspects of such a selection process, examinations tend to determine what is taught at the lower levels *no matter what the curriculum says should be taught*. Thus a prior condition for an effective educational reform (which will make education more relevant to

the total needs of developing countries) is the creation of a non-learnable selection system—a system of selection which cannot influence what is taught. (The selection system should also be as egalitarian as possible). In addition, examinations should be kept to an absolute minimum, and should not generally be used for selection purposes but only for evaluating the effectiveness of any system or sub-system in meeting its specified goals.

It is also not necessary for any reformed system to be compulsory, for obligatory attendance in any system will reduce the incentive for the system to adjust to the real needs of the people it is supposed to serve. For example, in some parts of many countries the only way to get children to attend school in bare, hot and stuffy classrooms, to sit in front of an unmotivated teacher, repeating after him words that they do not understand, on subjects that do not interest them, is by force; but as the children learn little in such a situation, the compulsion achieves very little except ensuring the maintenance of the school. Ideally there should be alternative institutions offering different types of programmes, but outside the urban areas this is not likely to be feasible for some time. However, even if there is no compulsion, there should at least be equality of access, both for all who want a basic education (where all who want can attend), and for those who want to go on to higher education (where equal access should be provided to people from different socio-economic groups)

The present educational system has become so much a part of society, and so related to people's aspirations, that any new system, unless it is operating only in the poorest areas of the country will probably have to be compulsory (at least in so far as no alternative would be allowed) during an initial period, for otherwise, whatever its merits (which in any case are likely to take some time to materialise), people will continue to prefer the old system, and thus the new system will never get the resources it would need for effective operation. It is not so much that all students should attend the new system, but that they *should not* be allowed to attend the old system.

Already most developing countries are spending a high proportion of their GDP on education, and an even higher proportion of the total educated labour force are involved in schooling on a full time basis. In the short and medium run significantly greater investment is probably not feasible and thus any transformed system should not absorb a large proportion of manpower and financial resources than is being used by the existing system. Though there is little point in proposing a new system that requires immense expenditures, a new system could, and perhaps should, involve new methods of financing. If a community in which an education institution is situated is not participating in the financing of that institution (and paying to some extent by results) not only will it be difficult to ensure that the institution is really serving the community, but also, if it is entirely financed by government it will tend to teach the community to rely on the government for its future progress.

The need to involve the community in the educational process is very important. Any radically transformed system should firstly not try to compete with other institutions carrying out effective education in a particular field (for example, the village craftsman with his apprentices, and the church and the temple for religious and moral instruction)<sup>(1)</sup>; secondly, to co-ordinate its activities with the activities of other organised educative systems (for example, the mass media) so that a consistent message is provided; and thirdly, to use the available educative environment (markets, farms, etc.), and personnel resources (such as progressive farmers, nurses, traders, etc.) to the greatest possible extent.

Finally, at the higher levels of education only the skills and knowledge that are absolutely essential for the future role a person will

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(1) In Thailand it has been decided to involve monks again (after decades of disestablishing education) in elementary education, mainly for providing moral and religious teaching, but also in remote areas, where there is a teacher shortage, for teaching other subjects. It is also planned to use various village leaders in functional literacy classes, instead of the school teacher who tends to turn such schemes into copies of the formal system.

play in society should be taught, so that the minimum resources are devoted to providing the necessary training for high level manpower, and the maximum possible resources left for helping improve the equality of life of the mass of the population.

As far as objectives are concerned, any transformed educational system should have roughly similar objectives as those in existing systems, though of course any particular objective in a particular situation should only be aimed for where the achievement of the objective will lead to the solution of a specific priority problem facing the country or community.

Thus any reform of education in developing countries should move towards turning education into a tool for solving priority problems: involving students physically as well as mentally, having a curriculum designed so that each month or year provides some permanent learning, and a selection process that influences what is taught as little as possible, and involving the community financially as well as by using all the educational resources available. The revised system should above all be relevant, and interesting so that there is no real need for compulsion. It should not be more expensive either in terms of money or manpower than the existing system. It should cater for adults as well as children, should not necessarily involve full time study, nor should it necessarily involve the teaching of literacy, and finally, other people as well as qualified teachers should be involved in teaching.

## **Conclusions**

Before turning to a discussion of some more positive proposals for the design of a new or transformed rural educational system created to help improve the quality of life and satisfaction of the mass of the population, it will be useful to try to draw from this chapter and the earlier chapters (particularly chapters 4, 5 & 6) some basic criteria for such change, (particularly for change in rural, basic educational systems).

It is perhaps these basic criteria which are the most important conclusions of this book, for the specific proposals in the next three chapters are only made for illustrative purposes—to demonstrate what a transformed educational system might look like. It is not for a moment

recommended that the specific proposals outlined in these later chapters should be implemented in full in Thailand or anywhere else.

On the other hand it is argued that the following list of basic criteria for changing the system does have widespread validity, and from such a list educators and policy makers can begin to identify priority areas for real change within their *real* educational systems.

Before going on to list the most important of these criteria it should be emphasised that education is not schooling—education can take place in the school, through purposive non-formal schemes, and through a host of informal influences (family, friends, cinema, stories, clubs, temples, etc.), and in terms of any individual's total body of knowledge and understanding the last group (informal influences) is certainly the most important. Nevertheless, when one is considering desirable social, cultural and economic *change*, purposive educational action is crucial, and thus I am in the following list, concentrating on criteria for changing existing formal and non-formal educational systems. In conclusion therefore, any rural centred purposive educational action (or educational system) should have at least the following characteristics :—

- i) The curriculum should at least be partly determined by the community itself, and should be designed in such a way that it builds up on the existing body of rural knowledge, rather than attempting to create an entirely new knowledge system from scratch.
- ii) The system should create a sense of community identity and pride, and should promote an understanding of the local environment—physical, natural, social, and cultural.
- iii) Part of the curriculum should be centred around the most pressing problems that are causing suffering and the system should provide some instruction and practice in the basic skills needed to solve these problems. It should certainly also produce a respect for physical labour.
- iv) The system should promote an individual's self-confidence and awareness, and his ability to think for himself.
- v) The system should promote a desire for continuous learning and provide participants with the skills (e.g. literacy skills,



- where relevant printed materials are available) needed to enable such lifelong learning to take place.
- vi) The teachers should be fully integrated within the community and have skills and knowledge useful for helping solve some of the most important problems that are causing suffering in the community.
  - vii) In terms of the relationship of the community to the nation, the system should promote national, political and cultural unity, and should provide some opportunity for some people in the community to move to other parts of the country without creating aspirations and expectations that cannot be met.
  - viii) The system should be flexible in all respects, including the place and time of classes so that these interfere as little as possible with existing work patterns and social activities; and over time, so that the curriculum can be constantly changed in response to changing problems and conditions.
  - ix) The education should involve adults as much as children.
  - x) There should be as little emphasis as possible on examinations and selection for the next level of education, but there should still be at least an appearance of opportunity for the rural children to progress to the next higher level of education.
  - xi) The system should be designed so that it shows people how they can improve their quality of life by *staying* in the rural areas, and also by its very existence it should make rural life somewhat more attractive. In these ways and others it should ensure that at least it does not *add* to the already existent pressures for migration to the towns.
  - xii) The new system cannot be much more expensive than the existing system in terms of scarce resources.
  - xiii) In rural areas there is no real need for a system to carry out peer group socialization, and child-care functions, though these would be necessary as soon as the scheme expanded to urban areas.
  - xiv) Finally, whatever system is accepted, it must remain to some extent a microcosm of the society in which it is situated.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **A SCHEME FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF RURAL LIFE THROUGH COMMUNITY CENTRED EDUCATION**

The criteria outlined in the previous chapter only have some value if an implementable and feasible scheme can be designed around them, for the problems of the poorest are not alleviated merely by ideas that bring joy to the minds of radical intellectuals.

In designing any non-utopian scheme, a compromise between desirability and social and political reality has to be made. As both what is desirable, and what is socially or politically feasible will vary widely from country to country, the system outlined here is not designed to be implemented in any one country. Instead, it is outlined in order to illustrate what the acceptance of the criteria in the previous chapter might involve in practical terms.

Obviously neither theoretically in this book, nor practically in any real situation does the educational innovator or planner ever have all the information he would need to design a "perfect" alternative system. However, given the fantastic shortcomings of the existing system, and the negative impact it is having on rural development, none of the really poor countries can wait until more research has been carried out (which in any case will be subjectively biased). Nevertheless, it is likely that a new system designed around the criteria outlined in the previous chapter could not be worse than the existing system, and will almost certainly be better.

In order, however, to give a radically transformal system a good chance of real success, it is desirable that at least tentative answers are provided (before designing an alternative) to some of the questions which have remained unanswered up to now in the discussion in this book. For example :-

- Assuming limited educational resources, at what age should a person start participating in an organised educational process?
- Which is more effective, a short period of full time participation in an organised educational process or a longer period of part-time participation ?
- Will an organised educational process always reflect society (or lag behind), or can it be used as a leading sector in the mechanics of changing society ?
- Can a process be designed to benefit both those who participate for a long time, and those who participate only for a short time or intermittently ?
- Which educational functions are best carried out by an externally introduced educational process and which through traditional community education ?
- Can literacy be taught outside an organised educational process? (perhaps to be treated as a prerequisite for entry into further education.)
- Can the new system of general education be largely separated from the reward system operating in a particular society ? (based on examination success).
- How can a selection process for further education both be neutral in so far as it affects what is taught in the system, and also seem fair ?
- Assuming that both rural and urban general education systems are designed to be relevant to the communities in which they are situated, what additional inputs are needed to ensure that the rural person has some chance in what will inevitably be a modern-sector orientated system of further education ?
- What role can the new mass media and other audio-visual techniques play in the process of rural transformation ?

Theoretically, it would be desirable to establish a large number of experiments designed to try and answer the above questions, but in practice anyone concerned with existing rural problems cannot wait the

long period needed for such experiments to produce usable results. The educational process is by its very nature a long term one, and thus in most cases what happens in a year or two is of little real relevance. In addition, due to the Hawthorne effect (because of the motivation of experimenters, small scale experiments generally prove what they set out to prove), before any concrete conclusions can be drawn, quite large scale experimentation has to take place. We know that the present system is wrong; we also know definitively many criteria that a new system should have; thus despite the fact that many important questions remain unanswered, the few facts available, and intuition, must be used to provide tentative answers *now*. Obviously research should be incorporated into the design of any new system, but such a design cannot wait the ten, twenty, or even thirty years needed to answer some of these questions, as the problems facing the world's poor are so serious that the best possible attempt at their solution will have to be made *now*. Having said this, a very brief attempt will be made to provide some tentative answers to some of these questions.

As far as the age of entry is concerned, there are two conflicting factors. First, children from culturally deprived homes (in which category most children in rural areas of poor countries fall) lose permanently a considerable amount of their environmental intelligence during the first four years of their lives, but thereafter the losses are small. Secondly, there is some evidence from developing countries that shows that learning is more rapid the older a child is (perhaps due to the greater likelihood of voluntary participation and self-motivation). Most attempts at using education as a tool for rural development (e.g. in Upper Volta, and Tanzania) have tried to increase the age of entry into the education system. This has been for two reasons: first, so that the child, when he completes his education, will be nearer the age when he can make important decisions about his own life; and secondly, because there are fewer children in the older age groups than in the younger. In total, it seems that the age of entry should be delayed as long as is possible, given people's expectations of the school system.

A longer period of part time education, rather than a short period of full time education seems desirable for three main reasons: first, so that the child completes his education at an older age; secondly, because most rural children are involved in domestic and productive activities, and if they are expected to participate on a part time basis only, there is less likelihood of them dropping out; and thirdly, with only part time participation there is less chance of them becoming disassociated from the community.

There are examples where organised educational processes have been used in an attempt to universalise minority values with considerable success (for example, the Cuban literacy campaign). Obviously a considerable degree of motivation is needed on the part of the "teachers" so that they are not absorbed by the existing society. As the Vice-Minister of Education in China said in 1951, "The key to the reform of education is the ideological reform of the teachers".

With particular subjects it is certainly necessary that a student completes a given "quantum", whilst with other subjects or fields of study each idea or piece of knowledge might be valuable in itself. For example, with literacy there is not much point in someone learning the letters A, E, and P, or being able to read only cat, Mr. and house, whilst it might be useful to know how to de-tick a cow even if you don't know the best way of delivering a calf, or making a paddock. Thus in situations where only sporadic attendance is likely, the curriculum should at least be partly designed to take account of this fact and concentrate on subjects with small self-contained quanta.

The first criterion to be examined in deciding whether a particular field of learning should be left to traditional education is whether change is needed or not. For example, with religion, ethics, and various handicrafts there might be no urgency to change existing ideas and skills, and thus these fields can be left to traditional systems. Secondly, there might be certain new ideas which can best be added through traditional institutions rather than through an absolutely new institution. (For example, the best way to introduce a co-operative

might be by working through the village council rather than through a new educational system). Only in those areas where new ideas, skills, attitudes and knowledge are needed, and there is no existing institution that can be easily used, should a new externally initiated educational institution be involved. Such an institution should concentrate the few resources it has at its disposal on those priority aspects that cannot be effectively dealt with by existing traditional organisations (without any sizable input of new resources).

A child learns to speak informally, and many children in literary environments also learn to read and write without instruction. In a non-literary environment it is obviously not possible (or even particularly important) for a person to become literate. Some attempts have been made to carry out literary training using the mass media; two such attempts have had reasonable success, with radio in Colombia and with T.V. (Sesame street) in the U.S.A. Intuitively there would seem no reason to suppose that given a literary environment a considerable proportion of people would not become literate without formal instruction, particularly if the social values were directed towards motivating people to become literate. There are likely to be people in any environment of course, who might not learn to read and write by themselves even assuming that high social value were attached to such accomplishments. But will these people be fewer than those who remain illiterate through the existing system (and if not, surely the need to be able to read and write cannot be all that pressing) ?

It has been emphasised throughout this book that the existing educational system is closely tied up with the reward system operating within society. Without a complete change in values in a society with much smaller rewards (both financial and social) going to those who have further education than is presently the case, few parents (who are aware of how the high paid and high prestige jobs are distributed) are likely to be particularly motivated in encouraging their children to participate in a new educational process if the only benefits claimed by such a process is that participants *perhaps* will be

equipped to lead more productive and fulfilling lives in the rural community. Most people will opt for a 0.1% chance of an elitist position rather than a 50% or even a 100% chance for a substantial increase in their standard of life by remaining in the rural areas. Only in the most backward and remote areas of a country, where the parents have low expectations from the school,<sup>(1)</sup> is any system, which does not provide even an appearance of chance of progress to further education, likely to attract significant numbers of pupils. Thus it seems that until there is a change in social values (which could only result from a change in the current reward system) any new process will have both to be a necessary step for progress to further education, and also will have to provide some chance of such progress.

Thus even in a new system there will have to be some process for selecting those pupils who should proceed up the educational ladder. However, such a process cannot be based on existing examinations, for if this is done (however little emphasis is placed on these examinations), what is actually taught in the schools will still be largely dependent on what is to be included in the examination. (Thus the concentration of the system would still be on literary skills and on subjects that can easily be tested in a written exam). As no selection process is fair (the inequalities of the present system have already been emphasised) any new process does not have to be fair, but only appear to be so. Various possible solutions suggest themselves, from the use of non-learnable aptitude tests, through the selection of a fixed proportion of pupils in each community by a panel composed of the members of the community and visiting inspectors, to a system based on social criteria, participation in manual work, involvement in the community, and academic skills. A great deal of thought, however, still needs to be devoted to devising the most appropriate selection process.

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(1) In Thailand, in some more remote areas, as compulsory education is extended, some parents will even go to all the trouble of moving house so that their children *do not* have to continue in school.

Once selected for further education, the rural pupil will probably be in a disadvantaged position compared with his urban counterpart in terms of his chances for success in modern sector orientated further education. If special compensatory measures are not taken, the rural pupils will be the first to be eliminated from further education. Thus it will be necessary to develop a special cycle of education to prepare the few rural children selected for further education so that at least they will start in further education with the same literary and numerical skills, and hopefully also the same role expectations as their urban brethren. It is absolutely essential that this compensatory cycle be completely separated from any new rural education process, and be designed to work with whatever pupils the new process produces. In other words, the compensatory cycle must act as a buffer between a rural orientated general educational system, and a modern sector orientated, technical and professional educational system.

Many people place very great hopes on the new mass media (radio, T.V. and cinema) and other audio-visual techniques (tape recorders, video-tape recorders, etc.) and the role that they might play in introducing new ideas and attitudes, skills and knowledge into rural communities. Though it is admitted that such media can and do affect expectations, it is also true that they do not by themselves encourage activism, but on the contrary tend to result in a degree of passivity. Thus, though the new media can be used to help change attitudes, and in some cases also to provide new knowledge (which if recorders are not available must be memorised on the spot) and some mechanical skills, these media cannot be used by themselves to make people *work hard* to improve their own well-being, except insofar as they create new wants which can only be satisfied by greater production.<sup>(1)</sup> However, in most poor countries there is already no shortage of unfulfilled wants. The new media also at present tend necessarily to be controlled by

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(1) For a more detailed discussion of this topic, please refer to Nicholas Bennett: *Television: Media for Mis-education?* Chandrakasem Magazine, Bangkok, October, 1972. and "Schooling and Mass Media: Catalysts for Cultural Alienation and Community Destruction" Komol Keemtong Foundation, Bangkok 1977



urban elites, and thus transmit values that are not necessarily conducive to steady and rapid rural transformation. In addition, their very appeal depends on the large audience that can be reached at any one time, but as the central criterion of a new educational process must be its identification with particular community problems, this is not necessarily a great asset. However, in all areas, and particularly those where literacy is not considered of the highest priority, small local radios (perhaps with a 10 km. transmitting radius), tape recorders and tape libraries could have a much more important role to play than more wide-ranging media, providing technical and financial problems could be overcome.

Despite the fact that we now have a list of guidelines, and intuitive answers to many questions, no one detailed educational process automatically suggests itself. However, though many alternatives might be possible, if change in a well established system is required, then one prototype which satisfies as many of our criteria as possible must be designed and proposed. Where several alternatives are put forward, those who are against changing the present system can permanently delay such change by continuously referring those alternatives for further study and comparison. Only where those who desire to change the present education system (with its built-in self-perpetuating inertia against significant change) have a clear cut and well defined programme of action will there be any likelihood of the desired transformation taking place.

Thus the scheme outlined below, though not claiming to be the only possible scheme, is one that not only meets many of the basic criteria, but also is one that could be implemented (with a great deal of difficulty, of course) by a government that is really concerned with problems of rural development.

## **The Scheme**

In most educational systems, the lower levels have to adjust their activities so that their graduates will meet the intake requirements of the higher levels. Thus in virtually all cases the system does not really

benefit the masses who participate for only a few years, but only really benefits the minority who go on to further education. In the scheme outlined below, however, it has been assumed that it should be designed entirely to meet the real needs of the mass of the population that will participate. It is considered that it is the job of the further education system to make the necessary adjustments in their programmes so that they can effectively operate with the few persons continuing beyond mass education. They should no longer expect a product designed to meet their partisan needs. The type of adjustments that the further educational system will have to make will be discussed later.

In its broadest terms, the scheme for mass rural education being suggested involves the establishment of a community centre (actually situated in the centre of a community, both geographically and spiritually) to replace the existing elementary school. The centre will have four basic functions. First, it will be used for certain periods of the day as a school (with a relevant, not an academic, curriculum); secondly, it will be used as a place from which extension advice will be given in for example, agriculture, hygiene, nutrition and family planning, (or on whatever problems are considered most important both by the community and by the government); thirdly, it will be used as a place from which practical adult education courses will be given; and finally, it is hoped that it will really be able to act as the centre of the community, with people going to the centre to meet their friends, read newspapers or books (if they are literate), or to listen to tapes and the radio, plan joint activities, form clubs and so on.

There would be no universality throughout the country of curriculum or even in the fields of study to be covered in any centre, (for children, adults, and for the extension services), but these would be decided on the basis of a detailed in-depth survey of the major problems facing a particular locality (10–15 kms. in radius) in which both local community members, and trained community development workers would participate. It is possible, however, that problems of universal importance might be identified, and thus covered by every centre. For

example, there might be a need to change traditional demographic concepts and introduce family planning ideas in all parts of a country.

Four or five people would be employed in each centre as "teachers" or "agents of change", and the particular skills that these people would have would be determined on the basis of the priority problems identified in the survey. For example, in one locality there might be an agricultural worker, a cooperative organiser, a nutritionist and health adviser, a fisheries worker, and a family planning mobilizer; whilst in another locality there might be a veterinarian, a medical assistant, two literacy workers, and a family planning mobilizer. Even if titles of the personnel are the same in different localities they might have slightly different fields of interest and functions, since as much as possible the training given to these people would be designed to equip them for solving specific priority problems in a particular locality.

As it generally proves very difficult in any country to get products of secondary and higher education to remain in rural areas, and if they do, it is not usually by choice (and thus they are unlikely to be motivated) at least half the staff of each centre should be chosen from existing progressive elements within the community. This is also likely to encourage greater community involvement in the centre than if all the employees were outsiders. These people, once chosen, would be given one or two years practical training in one of the most important problem areas identified for that particular locality.

Each locality (of 10-15 km. radius) would contain about 50 separate communities (in sparsely populated areas a larger radius and a smaller number of communities would have to be aimed for), and at the geographical centre of the locality would be established a group of five or more supervisors (one in each of the specialisms catered for in the community centres) and also a short range radio transmitter which would be used both as a supervision aid and as a tool for interesting the population in the locality, and drawing attention to individual and community successes within the locality, thus giving local residents some idea of what really can be done.

Children would participate in the activities of the centre each morning for four or five hours (say from 7 a. m. to midday). The age that they would start and the number of years they would participate for would obviously vary from country to country, and depend on the resources available and other factors; ideally, however, children should start as late as possible (perhaps not until they are seven or eight years old), and they should continue for at least four or five years. There would only be a small amount of classroom instruction, with the emphasis of the programme being on practical involvement in the activities of the community, experimention, and discussion. In other words, the curriculum would be organised on a project or problem solving basis. For example, the children might work in groups with different farmers, discuss the variety of methods used and the consequent differences in yields, and carry out various experiments to prove specific theoretical concepts (e.g. the effects of using organic fertilizers, new seed varieties, irrigation). The school day would not be divided into periods as is presently the case, but most of one morning (or even most of a week or a month) might be devoted (for any one group of children) to a particular subject.

Literacy classes would not be given unless there was already an adequate supply of simple (with a limited vocabulary) entertaining and informative reading materials available in the locality. Again, only part of the literacy training would take place in a classroom situation with the other part devoted to literalizing the environment (labelling everything in the community, e.g. putting a sign on each tree with the name of the tree, children stitching their names on their shirts, hanging signs on animal's necks, etc.), and explaining and demonstrating the need for literacy. Thus the main efforts in literacy would be devoted, firstly, in making the children (and the adults) aware of written symbols, and secondly, in motivating them to learn the meaning of the symbols. Only when the majority of children in a particular group are motivated and aware would a concentrated attempt be made to teach them the actual skills of reading and writing.

Children would not necessarily be divided into groups according to age (or according to the length of time they had participated in the system), and certainly whatever method is chosen, the children in their final year should not form a separate group, but should be divided for a large portion of their school day amongst the other groups so that they could assist the "teacher" or "agents of change" with the other children. Selection of those who might proceed to further education should certainly at least be partly dependent on a child's success in this activity.

After lunch, the staff of the centre would be available at the centre either to provide extension advice (in the case of agricultural workers) or to carry out particular services (in the case of family planning mobilisers, medical assistants and literacy workers). For example, the agricultural worker might provide advice on what quantities of fertilizers should be used, what seeds should be used, what is the best way to plant a particular crop and so on. The family planning mobilizer might consult with individual women, advise them on particular methods, and fit them with IUD's or give them pills. The medical assistant might use one room in the centre for examining patients, diagnosing, and prescribing medicines. Finally, the literacy worker might read and write letters for illiterates, help people fill in application forms, advise people on what they could read and perhaps also give special courses to children (or adults) who are motivated to read but are still having reading problems.

From time to time in the evenings special courses might be held for adults by the "agents of change" at the community centre. These might be held in conjunction with a radio programme from the locality centre (either based on a particular success story from one community, or as part of a centralised campaign to solve a particular problem), or might be held on the "agent of change's" or the community's own initiative. Such courses would obviously involve discussion and dialogue, (as is done, for example, with the Indian radio clubs) as well as an examination of the experiments being carried out by the children. Literacy

classes for adults might also be undertaken if a sufficient number of adults expressed an interest in such courses. Texts either prepared by the literacy worker, or by the children might be used in such courses so that the relevance of what is being read would automatically be apparent to the adults.

These periodical evening classes for adults would only be likely to be successful if the "school" (or community centre or whatever the institution is called) really does become a centre for the community where people of all ages and both sexes gather to gossip, to discuss, to read, to listen to the local radio and prerecorded tapes (and even to record tapes to send to the local radio for possible transmission) and to drink tea or beer (depending on local customs). Only if the centre is situated in a central and convenient location and provides facilities and activities that attract the local inhabitants is the whole scheme likely to succeed, for unless the centre is *seen* by community members as belonging to them and serving their interests, it will soon become an alien institution and like most alien institutions will be likely to have as many negative as positive aspects.

Before going on to discuss some of the steps that would have to be undertaken if such a community centred educational scheme is to be implemented, it might be useful to summarise the most basic points in the design of the scheme :—

**a) Institutional.** After the result of a careful survey, a community centre should be established in a central and convenient location. This centre would either use the existing school premises or replace the school. It should be open all the year round all day and in the evenings also.

**b) Employees.** Each centre should employ at least four or five "agents of change" or "teachers". Each of these would have skills designed to be useful for solving the most crucial problems facing the community. Wherever possible these "agents of change" should be drawn from the members of the community and given one or two years

specialist training in specific subjects to build on their traditional background and skills in the same subjects.

**c) Participants.** In the morning for four or five hours the "agents of change" would work with children (the children would spend at least four years participating in the activities of the centre on a half time basis). In the afternoon any community member could go to the centre either to receive extension advice, or for particular services (letter writing, I.U.D. fitting, curing certain illnesses). In the evening the centre would be opened as a meeting place for all community members. Reading, radio and tape listening, and drinking facilities might be available, and in addition certain special adult courses might take place.

**d) Curriculum.** The precise problems that would be dealt with in any community would be decided on the basis of a survey to be carried out prior to establishing the centre. Very little emphasis would be placed on ordinary classroom work, but the concentration would be on practical work, experimentation and discussion. If literacy is to be taught very great emphasis would be placed on making the community a literary environment.

**e) Organisation and Supervision.** For each fifty or so community centres there would be one central supervision centre with five or more supervisors who would visit the centres with reasonable frequency. There would also be a short range radio transmitter which would be used for broadcasting certain prerecorded tapes of general interest, for mounting specific campaigns, and suggesting particular action to the centres, and for developing a high level of interest in the locality, and more particularly in the achievements of individuals and communities within the locality.

### **Practical Implementation Steps**

In this section the steps that will have to be undertaken in order to implement a scheme such as the one described above will be outlined. No attempt will be made here to propose solutions to some of the more structural problems involved in implementing an entirely new scheme as these will be dealt with at a later stage.

In designing the implementation steps two conflicting points have to be taken into consideration: firstly, the need to do something urgently to improve the quality of life in rural areas, and secondly, the need to clarify exactly what should be done, so that the mistakes of most existing systems (designed on the basis of what elites think rural people should know) are not repeated. Thus there is both an urgency for immediate change, and also a need to devote some time in ensuring that the change being implemented will at least have some chance of success.

The following are the major steps that would have to be carried out in establishing any system similar to the one outlined above:—

a) Divide the country into homogenous socio-linguistical-agricultural regions, collect all available data, and carry out pilot surveys where necessary to identify basic problems facing the region (from the people in the regions point of view as well as the government's).

*1 Year.*

b) On the basis of the information gathered (in a) above prepare a practically orientated training programme for the supervisors of the new scheme. *1 Year.*

c) Train the supervisors. The new supervisors would have probably to be drawn from existing rural education and extension workers, thus they are likely to have a skill background in a particular subject, but will need re-orientation towards the objectives of the new scheme.

*1–2 Years.*

d) Contemporaneously with b) and c) above and e) below a whole series of training packages should be prepared for training the staff of the centres, each one of whom will be trained in skills needed to solve a particular problem—or problems. In addition, the trainers of the “agents of change” will themselves have to be trained. *3–4 Years.*

e) The supervisors will then go (one at a time) to a particular community and carry out the following activities:—

i) Identify the progressive elements in the community and with them try to discover the priority problems facing that community that are not being solved by traditional educational systems.



- ii) Discuss with other supervisors and then report back to the regional or district training organisation on these problems, so that this information can be used in training-package preparation and in the training of trainers.
- iii) Identify existing individuals in the community, who both have some traditional skills that could be built on, and who have the respect of the community. These might include some primary school teachers, some progressive farmers, some local artisans, some traditional midwives, some herbal doctors and so on. Convince these people of the benefits of working in the proposed centre, and recommend a short list of those who seem motivated to the regional or district training organisation for final selection.
- vi) Identify the existing community centre, whether it be a bar, a tree, or a temple or church. Analyse the reasons why the existing centre (if any) managed to achieve that position. Decide whether the existing elementary school building (if any) could satisfy geographical and other conditions for becoming a community centre. If not, decide (in consultation with the local community) where the new centre should be situated.
- v) Identify and report on the traditional educational environments that might either be able to entirely cope with a particular problem, or be used by the centre in any attempt at solving the priority problem.
- vi) Convince the community of the advantages of having this new type of centre in their midst. These tasks could either be carried out by one supervisor spending *6 months* to *1 year* in the community, or by four or five supervisors spending one or two months each in the community.
- f) Train the “agents of change” for the centre. Each one would be trained in one specific subject relevant to some of the priority problems in his particular locality. All the staff for a given locality would be trained in one institution (no matter what speciality they were being trained for) so that they would learn during their

training to co-operate with each other. The training given would be practical and would involve a considerable amount of field work.  
*1-2 Years.*

g) Contemporaneously with the last part of the training (in fabove) the supervisors would go back to the communities to try to persuade them to start establishing the new centre, (perhaps with some assistance in the form of building materials from the government), to provide land for experimental plots where needed, and generally to participate and help the "agents of change" when they return to the communities.

h) Finally the newly trained "agents of change" would return to the community and start carrying out the activities described earlier, whether an actual centre was already built or not. If a centre was not already built, the agents would have to try to mobilise the community to construct one as soon as possible.

The total process from original conception to the first implementation is likely to take at least five, and perhaps as long as seven or eight years. Obviously a considerably longer period would be needed to make such a scheme anywhere nearly universal in any country.

Nor can this process be considered to be one that only has to be carried out once, for if the new community centres achieve their objectives then within a relatively short period of time (perhaps as short as ten years) the priority problems originally identified will have been solved, and new, perhaps more important problems will have become apparent. If the new educational system is not to become as redundant as the existing system, there will have to be a continuous process of analysing community problems as well as retraining the supervisors and "agents of change" (also, of course, studying the effectiveness of the new system, and proposing changes where it is obviously not meeting its objectives). There should probably be at least two weeks in-service training of the "agents of change" every year, and a complete retraining, lasting six months to one year every ten years. The supervisors, of course, would need even more frequent in-service training and retraining.

The training and retraining programmes for both the supervisors and the "agents of change" would have to be very carefully designed with very little concentration on academic and classroom instruction, and with the same methods being used as are expected to be used by the "agents of change" when working in their communities. Thus the emphasis on these training programmes should always be on demonstrating theory through practical work and experimentation, rather than through textbooks and rote memorisation. The training centres should obviously be situated in rural areas and not in towns.

As the level of training given to the "agents of change" is intentionally quite low (intentionally so that there will not be too wide a gap between the conceptual framework of the agents and the people they are supposed to be helping, so that they do not have to be paid too high a salary, and also so that they cannot use their training as a way into elite positions in the modern sector) effective supervision becomes very important. It is suggested therefore that for every 250 "agents of change" there should be *at least* five supervisors (preferably more), each with a different speciality, and that each supervisor should visit each centre at least three times a year to check that the programmes are being run at least roughly as planned, and also to check that various practical activities and experiments are being carried out. In addition, the local radio (which will be situated at the supervision centre) will be used to provide advice and instructions from the supervisors to the local agents. Finally, it is suggested that the "agents of change" and the supervisors should (at least for part of their salary) be paid by results. A small basic salary would be provided (for the agents this might be partly in kind from the local community and partly from the government) with the possibility of considerable bonuses dependent on the degree of success in solving the problems they have been trained to solve. For example, the literacy worker might get a small bonus for each 1% increase in the literacy rate up to a 90% (or any other figure) level when he would be entitled to the full bonus, or the family planning mobilizer might earn his bonuses on the basis of percentage falls

in the birth rate, or the agricultural worker on the basis of percentage increases in production of certain crops, and so on. Obviously whatever payment by result system is developed there would be considerable opportunities for cheating which would never be able to be completely eliminated, but assuming that some easily administered checks can be developed, even despite some cheating, considerably greater benefit is likely to be achieved from a system of payment by results than from one with fixed salaries.

The implementation of a new educational scheme, such as the one outlined, will involve a detailed analysis of rural communities to discover the *priority* problems, and a mobilization of all existing rural development personnel both to act as trainers of supervisors and "agents of change", and to act as supervisors (both of the agents of change and of the local supervisors themselves). The priority problems have to be identified, the scope of activity of the centres in a given locality decided upon, the site of the centre identified, and the progressive local personnel who will act as agents chosen. All these activities should be carried out jointly by the specially trained supervisor *and the local community*. It is very important that the community is involved as much as is feasible (given the fact that common local programmes must be operated in a 10 or 15 km. radius area) so that they consider that the centre is their centre, not some government imposition. The agents of change then have to be trained (using roughly the same methods as they are expected to use themselves in their communities), and then supervised through the local radio, and reasonably frequent visits to ensure that they are doing *roughly* what they are supposed to be doing. The local agents cannot of course be expected to be puppets on strings pulled by the supervisors, particularly as in many cases they might know more about their communities than the supervisors, but nevertheless they will have to carry out a certain number of predetermined tasks. Finally, as the whole purpose of this scheme is to solve certain specific problems, it is suggested that the local agents and supervisors are at least partly paid by measurable results.

In conclusion to this section, the importance of making the system as flexible as possible should be emphasised. As soon as one priority problem is solved, the "agents of change" should be retrained so that they can work effectively towards solving a new problem. The curriculum and fields of activity should not be fixed but should be continuously changed as circumstances change.

## **Some Major Problems**

A later part of this book will be devoted to discussing general problems of implementing significant educational change. However, there are a considerable number of specific problems directly related to the scheme outlined which should be briefly discussed now. It is not claimed that definitive solutions are available to all these problems, but it is felt that it is necessary to draw attention to all the factors that must be considered in planning for the implementation of a new rural educational system such as the one described.

First, there is a whole cluster of problems relating to the necessity of providing at least an appearance of opportunity of progression to further education for rural children. What changes should take place in urban general education? What selection process could be used? Is there a need for a special compensatory education for rural children to enable them to compete with urban children, and if so, how could it be organised?

Secondly, there are various operational problems relating to the establishment of the community centres. For example, how can communities of different size be catered for (particularly the small communities)? How can the activities of the centres be organised so that they do not interfere too much with the traditional social and economic roles of children?

Finally, there are a host of problems relating to the overall organisation of the scheme. For example, what government organisation should be responsible for the scheme? Should overall control be centralised or localised? How can the scheme be coordinated with

other rural sector inputs? How can career prospects be provided for the "agents of change" and supervisors? And finally how can the system be financed?

#### **a) Rural Urban Continuum**

Though theoretically there would seem to be little reason why a similar type of community centred education could not be established in the urban areas as well (except that perhaps children might have to participate for the full day because of the child-care function of urban schools) there are a large number of practical difficulties that would not be at all easy to overcome without considerable social change. For example, in towns, local areas are not self-contained communities with residential, productive, commercial and service activities taking place within close proximity to each other, as is the case in rural areas. Thus there might be no hospitals, or shops, or factories near a particular school, and in addition the hospitals, factories and shops that there are might have to serve a very large geographical area containing many schools. Cities and towns exist because concentrations of population allow enterprises to specialise and to operate on a very large scale, and thus run their activities more "efficiently". These enterprises would therefore be unwilling to have to involve very large numbers of children in their day to day work, as this would tend to reduce their "efficiency", and in addition it would be very difficult for a school to include in its curriculum study of, and participation in, a significant number of the specialist activities taking place. In addition, urban populations are not nearly so homogenous as rural populations, and thus there are fewer priority problems that are of general relevance to people from all socio-economic groups. Thus, as we are concerned with immediately implementable solutions, not theoretical possibilities, it does not seem that the same community centred education system with a few carefully selected "agents of change" would be a practical solution for urban areas in most existing societies.

Obviously, however, changes are urgently needed in urban schools, but the scope of changes will have to be much more limited, partly for the reasons already mentioned, and perhaps even more importantly,

because the urban schools occupy a central position in the elite's aspirations for self perpetuation. Because of the difficulties of introducing change into urban systems no detailed proposal will be presented, but only guidelines for the direction in which change should take place. It will then be assumed that some form of compensatory education will have to be given to rural children, who, having completed their community education, are selected to go on to further education, and this compensatory cycle will have to prepare children to compete with the products of existing or only slightly modified urban systems.

The following are some guidelines for change in urban schools in poor countries that might be feasible in some circumstances :—

- The method of teaching should be deformed as has been done in many English junior schools, with an open classroom approach, with no teacher-pupil lecturing, but a large number of different activities taking place in the classroom at any one time. If this were done, the children might at least enjoy themselves, and not be nearly as bored as they are at present.
- Simple machines should be available for the pupil to operate, take to pieces and repair. In this way the child will not be nearly so mystified by the products of modern technology, and not be so dependent on specialists when he grows up.
- Games should be developed to teach children how to deal with modern, institutional bureaucracies. In this way the child, when he grows up, might be better able to cope with the complexities of modern organisations.
- All traditional examinations should be abolished, and there should be no grade repetition. A new terminal selection process based on aptitude tests (and other similar games) should be developed.
- Visits should be arranged as frequently as possible to factories, hospitals, T.V. stations, shops, newspaper offices, and further education institutions, and the children encouraged to discuss what they have seen, and to write critical but constructive reports.

- Special efforts should be made to motivate children to want to learn to read and write. There should, however, be no compulsion (as this fails in any case) but assistance and encouragement should be provided as soon as the child is motivated.
- All children should participate in a “summer camp” for one month a year in a rural area during which time they would work with the local farmers, helping them with the harvest and so on.
- The children should be encouraged to carry out certain community services. For example, visiting people in hospital, cleaning the houses of old or sick people, and doing their marketing, baby-sitting, cleaning or building parks and and play-grounds, etc. This community participation could be taken into account in the selection process for further education.
- The school should be opened in the evening for adults to meet, read books and newspapers, listen to the radio and watch T.V., and both give and attend adult education classes.
- Parents should be encouraged to assist the “teachers” whenever they have free time.

None of these changes are essential for the success of the new rural scheme described, which is fortunate, as there seems to be no easy way of implementing the majority of them in the short run in most developing countries that I am familiar with.

Whether these changes take place or not a special cycle of compensatory education will be needed for the rural children selected for further education, for despite the fact that the further education **should** be de-institutionalised and made much less academic (to be discussed in a later session) these changes are not only less likely to take place, but even if they did, the urban child with his greater familiarity with the modern sector and his higher role expectation is likely to achieve much better than his rural counterpart.

The number of children from rural centres who would participate in this compensatory cycle is obviously dependent on the development



strategy being pursued by the particular government (and thus the growth of high level modern sector employment opportunities) and on the degree to which existing urban elites have a grip on these employment opportunities. However, if the new rural system is to provide at least an appearance of mobility, at least one child from each centre (or say at least 5% of the children in their final year) should go on to further education each year. In many situations this figure could be larger, but it should never be smaller.

The length of the compensatory cycle is also likely to vary from situation to situation, in general, however, it should be designed so that the rural child has had one or two years more education than his urban counterparts by the time he has to compete with them. For example, in Thailand the normal elementary course is seven years. Thus if the community center course were five years, the compensatory cycle should last three or four years.

Each of the localities on which the community centre system is based would have to have at least two "schools" for preparing a small number of rural children for further education. These "schools" must have only a very limited intake and would thus enroll only very slightly more children than the number that is expected to go on to further education. If the intake were strictly controlled, then there would be a minimal amount of failure at this level. The schools would in general be copies of the schools that exist in the urban areas except that they should be better equipped and have higher paid staff (perhaps also paid partly on the basis of the success of their pupils) than the average for urban areas. The concentration of the curriculum should be on improving language literacy and numerical skills, familiarising the children with the complexities of the modern sector, and increasing the children's role expectation, and self-confidence.

Ideally such schools should be situated in the urban areas, with associated boarding facilities, so that the effect on those who were not

selected to continue their education could be kept at a minimum,<sup>(1)</sup> but for financial considerations this will not often be possible. At the very least, however, these schools should be completely separated from the community centre, preferably even occupying old elementary school buildings outside the village. The students would have to participate in various community development activities. In addition they might exchange places with urban school children, each living with the others' parents for a month a year: in this way the urban child would get an idea of the hardships of rural life, and the rural child both an idea of complexities of modern life (before he faces them in his further education) and of the expectations of urban parents.

As the precise design of these compensatory schools depends on the design of the urban schools, very little further description can be given. However, it should be emphasised that unlike the community centre, and unlike the changes proposed for urban education, there would be no attempt at making the curriculum relevant to the background of the child, as the function of this part of the educational system is to prepare a rural child for effective competition in the modern sector. Obviously, of course, efforts should be made to prevent the child becoming completely disassociated from his background, and from preventing him feeling too superior, but apart from these provisos the compensatory school will have to concentrate on preparing the child for an environment considerably different from the one from which he has come.

We are still, of course, left with the problem of how the children from the community centres can be selected for this compensatory

(1) Certainly, however, the following piece of Nyerere's philosophy should be emphasised. "Those who receive this privilege, therefore have a duty to repay the sacrifice others have made. They are like the man who has been given all the food available in a starving village in order that he might have strength to bring supplies back from a distant place. If he takes the food and does not bring help to his brothers, he is a traitor. Similarly if any of the young men and women who are given an education by the people of this republic adopt attitudes of superiority, or fail to use their knowledge to help the development of this country, then they are betraying our union."

cycle, for until the new system is well enough established to prove its worth (and probably even then), there will be very great pressures from parents to have their children selected (particularly now that the end of the community education will be the main cut-off point in the system). Because of the pressures that exist, a great deal of thought will still have to be devoted to this problem. However, for illustrative and discussion purposes the following system is suggested.

The staff of the community centre selects twice or three times the number of children who are likely to go on to further education on the basis of the child's participation in community activities, his assistance in helping the "agents of change" with the younger children, his intelligence or brightness (subjectively decided), his performance during the four or five years of his participation in the centre, and, of course, on the child's desire to go on to further education. Each agent of change would grade each child (subjectively)<sup>(1)</sup> on each of these criteria and the top children would be chosen to be sent to the locality centre for final selection. There the children would be given a battery of aptitude tests (which could be completely irrelevant but hopefully would not be<sup>(2)</sup>) and an interview by the local supervisors. In this way the final selection of the children submitted from each centre would be made. It should be emphasised that it is not whether the system is fair that is important, but that it appears to be so.

#### **b) Operational Problems at the Micro-Level**

In the description of the community centred scheme described so far, it has been assumed that all communities occupy a fixed location,

(1) The results, (though not showing which agent graded a particular child highly or lowly) should be publicly announced.

(2) If the children from a particular centre (or centres) did particularly well, or badly (which would suggest that someone had been trying to teach them how to do a particular test) further different types of tests would be administered until a plausible distribution were obtained. There would in any case be little point in an "agent of change" teaching a whole class how to do "well" in aptitude tests as only very infrequently could any centre get more than its quota on to further education.

and also that all communities are large enough to warrant employing four or five "agents of change". To both these assumptions there are a large number of exceptions in virtually all countries. Nomadic people are common, and so are small communities with only a hundred or less inhabitants. For each of these situations (and perhaps for others also) special solutions will have to be developed. These solutions, though being based on the same principles as the central scheme, should obviously incorporate considerable variations.

For example, with nomadic communities education always poses very great difficulties, and the system outlined with the "agent of change" coming from the community itself, and with supervision and overall direction being carried out by local radio is certainly considerably more practical than the present schools. The agent, once trained, can return to his people and travel with them, receiving advice and guidance through the radio. There would, of course, be no fixed community centre, and very great problems involved in trying to literalize the environment and promote literacy, and thus there would have to be much greater emphasis on using audio methods of communication (e.g. cassette recorders). In addition, supervision would be very difficult, and any children selected to go on to further education would almost certainly need longer compensatory education. But even with these problems, the scheme would be likely to have a very great impact merely because a few "agents of change" with relevant and directly useful skills would be travelling around with their academic colleagues.

For the small community various solutions suggest themselves. For example, instead of having four or five "agents of change" with one or two years specialist training in one subject, it might be possible to have two "agents of change" with two or three years specialist training in two related subjects. Or, alternatively, two or three neighbouring communities might have between them the full complement of "agents of change" for that particular locality, with, say, two situated at each community centre. For a couple of days a week these

agents would change positions and spend a whole day in another community centre.

With the largest communities needing more than five "agents of change", there is no real problem, for there could either be more than one centre, or there could be more than five agents in one centre (either with more than one specialist in the most serious problem areas, or with more than five specialities and problems catered for).

The figure of four or five "agents of change" for each centre was chosen for two main reasons. First, because this is slightly higher than the number of teachers normally available in rural elementary schools, and secondly, because it was not felt that more than four or five problems (even if they were related) could be dealt with at any one time effectively. A number slightly higher than the present number of primary school teachers was chosen for two reasons. First, because the existing number of primary school teachers employed provides an indication of the extent of the ability and willingness of the government to support rural education financially. Secondly, though existing primary school teachers would be encouraged to look elsewhere for employment (in the compensatory programmes, for example, after sufficient retraining) and though temporary and unqualified teachers would not necessarily be used, the new scheme would have to absorb, in one way or another, a large proportion of existing teachers. It would probably be very undesirable<sup>(1)</sup> for the success of the scheme if the majority of "agents of change" were drawn from existing teachers. To prevent this happening, a larger number of people than the existing stock of rural elementary teachers would need to be employed. In countries with a very underdeveloped educational system, most existing teachers could be absorbed. It would also be possible to absorb the majority of existing

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(1) Undesirable, because attitudes developed over a lifetime of work in a traditional system cannot be changed in a year or two of training, and thus academic methods might continue to predominate. As well as finding other jobs, it could be expected that many older teachers would prefer to retire early, rather than be retrained.

teachers in a situation where the scheme was being introduced gradually, as teachers being replaced by agents of change could be moved to other areas (urban as well as rural) to replace teachers in ordinary schools who are retiring. (This in itself is a strong argument for gradual implementation of the scheme.)

One other point should be mentioned about the organisation of the programmes in individual community centres. Though it has been suggested that each centre should cater for children in the morning (from 7 a.m. to noon), offer extension advice in the afternoon, and adult programmes in the evening, this time-tabling is only indicative. The actual time-table of any centre should of course be designed so that it interferes as little as possible with the traditional social and economic roles of children and adults. In some communities children might be involved in milking animals and taking them to pasture early in the morning, and thus the time-table would have to be adjusted to take account of this fact. Similarly, if older children have to look after their younger siblings, then the children ought to be able to take these siblings along with them to the community centre (as is done in many schools in China).

The scheme described is not designed to be implemented to the last dot in all parts of all countries, but is designed to illustrate a feasible and more useful alternative to the present rural educational system. If it is to have any chance of being effective, it must be very flexible and in implementation must take account of as many of the myriads of differences that exist between communities within and between different countries, as is possible.

### **c) Overall Organisational Problems**

There will be considerable organisational problems in implementing a scheme such as the one outlined, for the activities to be carried out by the new community centres cut across the responsibilities of many government ministries and organisations (for example, the Ministries of Interior, Education, Health, Community Development, Agriculture, Communications, and Social and Cultural Welfare).

Obviously it would not be possible to organise a scheme with just one centre in each community, one district or regional training institution, and one local radio station if seven or more government organisations were involved in the direct administration. On the other hand, if there were seven centres, seven training institutions and so on, this would not only make universal coverage financially impossible, but would also defeat the whole purpose of the scheme, which is to identify the major problems in specific rural areas, and to concentrate the available resources on solving these problems. Thus inevitably a prior condition for the establishment of such a scheme would be the formation of a new "Super Ministry" for rural development, which, though guided perhaps by a steering committee from other ministries, should have enough power to resist partisan pressures, and administer the scheme as it saw best.

The present departmentalisation of government activities in rural areas often by itself is sufficient to doom to failure many well meaning efforts. Irrigation dams are built without the necessary inputs of seeds and fertilisers being provided; credit is supplied without the necessary extension advice; circulars instructing farmers how to use insecticides are distributed without ensuring that the farmers first know how to read. In addition, very often there is duplication in the efforts of different organisations with the consequent waste of resources. For example, seven government organisations offer short course skill training for people in peri-urban areas in Thailand, and often there are three similar centres giving similar training but run by different ministries in the same town. Thus even if a scheme such as the one proposed were not being introduced, there would still be a strong justification for centralising all rural development activities under one organisation.

Though the new community centres would become the central organised instrument for rural development, other inputs would still be needed if rural areas are to develop rapidly. For example, villages might be electrified and provided with a borehole or a piped water system; fertilisers, new seeds and agricultural credit might be distributed;

large irrigation dams and channels constructed; cattle inoculated, and new breeds introduced. These inputs would probably have to continue being supplied through separate ministries, as it is unlikely that half a dozen ministries could be completely closed down even if a new super-ministry were being established. However, it is clear that whether these inputs are being provided by many existing ministries, or by one super-ministry, they should be channelled through the community centre and should only be offered if one of the "agents of change" at the community centre is qualified to provide the necessary advice to ensure their effective utilization. In other words, these inputs should only be offered if they are likely to help solve one (or more) of the priority problems already identified for the specific community or locality. Finally, in order to avoid the creation of a large number of small and competing extension services, no government ministry should be allowed to operate its own extension service outside the structure of the community centre.

Still on the question of overall organisation and administration, it will have to be decided whether this new system should be administered centrally or locally. Though the final decision will to a large extent be determined by the existing structure of government administration in the particular country, there would be considerable advantages in having a decentralised system. With a centralised system there would be the danger of creating one bureaucratic monster which would probably quite quickly form institutionalised patterns of behaviour and make the new system as inflexible and dogmatic as the old. In addition, with a centralised system of control, the new system would be much more open to effective pressure from modern sector elite groups who in most developing countries are concentrated in the capital and one or two other major cities. It is also probably true that officials in small districts and towns are more aware of the real problems in rural areas, and the difficulties in changing things, than their colleagues in the capital. Thus, wherever possible, administration should be decentralised, with each district or province not only being responsible for the com-



munity centres (which in any case should be encouraged to run their own affairs as much as possible) but also for the institutions training the "agents of change". In most cases, only the institutes responsible for training supervisors and trainers of the "agents of change" need be under central control.

This does not, of course, mean that the financing could be entirely local, particularly as in the majority of counties the central government has considerably greater tax revenues and other resources than local governments. Apart from the high initial cost of this scheme (for providing local transmitters and receivers, building materials for new centres where the present school is unsuitable, constructing "agent of change" training centres where existing teacher training colleges cannot be used, and providing motor bicycles or other means of transport where necessary for the supervisors) for which special financing arrangements will have to be made, the new scheme is likely to be considerably more expensive in total than the existing system. This is for several reasons: first, because considerably more supervisors (and supervisors of supervisors) will be needed than are used in the present system, and these supervisors will have funds for travelling so that they really do frequently visit the centres under their responsibility;<sup>(1)</sup> secondly, because of the need to employ a technician to operate, maintain, and repair local radio transmitters (the cost of the power used in operation would of course be minimal); thirdly, because more "agents of change" will be employed than the number of teachers now employed, and though these agents of change might have a lower basic salary than existing teachers (as many would not be products of the formal elitist educational system) with their "performance bonuses", they would be earning at least as much if not more than teachers presently do; finally, because the new community centre would need more inputs of materials and supplies than

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(1) In Thailand, there are government elementary schools in remote areas that have not been visited by supervisors in fourteen years, due partly to shortages of supervisors, but mainly because the existing supervisors have an insufficient budget for travelling.

existing schools have (existing rural schools also need more). For example, tapes, books, newspapers, replacements for radio and recorders, materials for literalising the environment, seeds and fertilisers and other supplies needed for the childrens' experiments would have to be provided, as well as medicines, IUD's, pills and other inputs needed by the "agents of change" for their service and extension activities.

Even though the existing local and central government budgets currently devoted to rural education, rural health services, agricultural extension, etc., would be used to finance the new scheme and also the savings resulting from the changes to further education (to be described later) these would be unlikely to be sufficient if the scheme became universal. Even if there was a change in government development strategy with an increase in the proportion of total going to rural areas, there might still be a need for some community finance of the centres, and without such a change, community participation in financing would be essential.

In order to reduce the burden on government, the "agents of change" might be partly paid *in kind* by the community members; they might be allowed to charge certain nominal fees for services rendered; farmers might provide some produce for sale in part payment for the assistance provided by both rural and urban children during peak work periods; the children might be responsible for growing some crops to be sold by the centre; and finally donations might be able to be solicited. Many different alternatives will have to be investigated, and though the financial problems will be difficult to solve, if sufficient motivation can be generated it should be possible to raise the necessary finances.<sup>(1)</sup>

## Conclusion

In this discussion one possible scheme for using a community centred educational system for rural development has been described, the process for implementation discussed, and some of the major problems outlined. As many questions have been raised as answers provided,

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(1) It should be noted that in China most rural schools are now largely self-financing.

but this is as it should be, for it would be arrogant to suppose that all the answers to the problems of rural development are now known, and that all that needs to be done is to implement them. One scheme has been outlined only to suggest a direction in which a solution might lie, and also to provide a framework for discussing the problems that would be faced in introducing any radical scheme for rural development that has a chance of success.

In the end, however, this scheme, however rational and desirable its objectives, will only really succeed if the "agents of change" in the community centre can really become agents of change, can gain the respect of their community, and be motivated. This is the hardest problem to solve, for financial rewards, career prospects (which must of course be built into the system)<sup>(1)</sup> and administrative arrangements by themselves will not produce this respect and motivation. Only through a reorientation of the values of society with high priority being given to rural development can the "agents of change" become agents of change. Without such a reorientation, though such a scheme will be considerably more useful than the present system, all its objectives will never be fully achieved.

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(1) One of the reasons why existing rural educational systems are almost universally of poor quality is that any teacher who is at all capable and motivated is rapidly promoted to an urban teaching position and then into an administrative post. Career prospects, with considerable promotion possibilities must therefore be created within the rural development service in rural areas for "agents of change" and supervisors.

## CHAPTER 9

# SECONDARY AND HIGHER EDUCATION: THE NEED FOR GREATER RELEVANCE AT LOWER COSTS

### I. Introduction

In most countries secondary,<sup>(1)</sup> technical, and higher education receive considerably more attention from populations and politicians alike than does the general mass education system. Though only a relatively small number of people are directly participating in further education, usually around 50% (or more) of total educational budgets are devoted to such sub-systems, and despite the fact that meaningful near-universal general education does not exist in most poor countries, the expansion of both enrollments and budgets has in recent years been considerably more rapid for secondary and higher education than it has been for general mass education.

However, despite this greater political interest, and despite the fact that further education is much less homogenous than general mass education (with a large number of significant sub-systems), and thus a large number of possible solutions for separate sub-systems have to be developed, I am only going to devote scant attention to these levels of education. This is for several reasons. First, because further education affects directly only a relatively small number of people, and usually those who are amongst the better-off members of society. Secondly, because I am not convinced of the real need for much of the further education that exists, and feel that a considerable proportion of the resources being used are devoted to satisfying the needs of certain interest groups or to continuing the pretence of creating equality of opportunity, thereby producing large numbers of unemployed and dissatisfied youths. Thirdly, and most importantly, because secondary and further education play such a crucial role in the elites' natural

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(1) In the context of this chapter I mean by secondary education the cycle immediately following the general mass education system.

desire to ensure a similar status for their children, it is extremely difficult to have any significant change accepted. From the viewpoint of existing elites, the need for change in further education is far less apparent than the need at the lower levels, and thus the inevitable resistance is much greater.

In this chapter I will therefore concentrate on a few marginal changes to the further educational system, not because I believe that only marginal changes are needed, but because outside one or two countries the socio-political situation will only allow marginal changes to take place. In addition I will concentrate my attention on two types of change: change in order to make the system more relevant to the existing needs of society; and changes to make it cheaper. However, it should be borne in mind that my previous comments on teaching methods, selection process, etc., apply just as much to further education as they do to general mass education.

## **II. Some Basic Considerations**

Though in most poor countries the further education system is even more a copy of the system that exists in developed countries than is the case with elementary education, such a transfer of institutions is just as unjustified. This is for several reasons:—

— In developed countries the educational system expanded after modernisation of the economy and industrialisation, thus not only was education seen as a way of producing people to fill the elitist positions in society (otherwise expressed as the high level manpower positions in the economy), but also as a consumption service - education for education's sake. In addition, as the expansion followed considerable growth in G.D.P., and the achievement of universal mass general education, large amounts of resources were free to be allocated to this expansion. In the poorer countries, however, further education is expanding rapidly before modernisation and universal general education has been achieved, and before G.D.P. has grown sufficiently to allow there to be consumption education. Thus whereas the development process in rich countries

took place with insufficient numbers of highly "schooled" people to fill all the elitist positions, in poor countries it is taking place with a surplus of such people.

– In the richer countries the further educational system only has to serve the technical and professional needs of the modern sector of the economy, whilst in the poorer countries it has to serve the technical and professional needs both of the modern sector and for the development of the traditional rural sector.

– Even within the modern sector the requirements are likely to be different, for though the modern sector is similar in both poor and rich countries, in the richer countries much of the practical training needed can be carried out on-the-job using the existing pool of workers with considerable industrial and other modern sector experience; in many poorer countries there is no such pool of modern "skill models", and thus if there is a rapid increase in the demand for a particular skill, or if absolutely new skills are needed, then only some types of formal practical instruction can satisfy this demand. I am not, of course, suggesting that viable non-formal training schemes should ever be replaced by formal schemes, but am only saying that in the poor countries the formal system might have to concentrate more on practical training, due to an absolute lack of non-formal training opportunities in certain fields.

– The further educational system in rich and poor countries alike, and its examinations, are used as a way of restricting entry into certain professions in order to ensure continued high earnings for those working in that particular field. Though in developed countries the high "qualifications" insisted upon are not easy to justify, in the poorer countries, where not only is the dualistic structure of the economy and society one of the major problems, but also where insistence on high qualifications ensures that the majority of the population are denied absolutely essential services, such a policy has entirely detrimental effects. For example, most countries train all their doctors to international standards. This is incredibly expensive, and only a very limited number can be so trained. Also, because these doctors are trained to

international standards (however irrelevant these standards might be for curing the simple ailments afflicting the mass of the population), they expect international level salaries which can only be obtained through emigrating (which is easy as there is a synthetically induced doctor shortage in most countries) or through establishing private practices in the towns, neither of which is helping solve the most important medical problems faced by their countrymen.

— Finally, in the richer countries, where large resources are devoted to personal transportation, great specialisation does not cause insurmountable problems for the mass of the population. In the poorer countries, however, where few resources are available for personal transportation, the super-specialization inherent in modern higher education institutions again denies large segments of the population essential services. In traditional societies most of the services the population needs can be found within walking distance, but in modern societies everything is so specialised (paediatricians, haematologists, obstetricians, and dozens of other medical specialisations, with similar subdivisions in most other professions) that few specialists can be found in any particular locality, and thus a large amount of travel is essential. But in the poor countries resources are not available for such travel.

Thus one basic criteria for any change in the further education system is that systems and curricula should not be copied from rich countries, but should be worked out so that they meet more closely the *existing needs* of particular countries. An ivory tower university, operating at the highest international standards, concentrating on academic and specialist professional training and pure research might be a useful *symbol* of development, but its actual impact is likely to be considerably less than one operating from a shed, concentrating on easily applicable research, and a lower level of training, orientated towards problem solving.

Thus a necessary pre-condition is to analyse the qualifications supposedly needed for each profession and taking account of the problems that must be solved in the particular country, to separate the

interest group needs from the real needs. Such a policy, concentrating on teaching less, but teaching more essentials, has been a central part of recent changes in further education in China, and has enabled secondary and further education courses to be greatly reduced in length (by more than 50% in most cases) with a consequent reduction in resources devoted to elite education.

Such a change could so conflict with the interests of the elite that in many countries it might prove necessary to develop a dualistic further educational system; one part receiving no government subsidy and concentrating on training people for export and for satisfying elite needs; and the other, highly subsidised, concentrating on shorter and more relevant training to solve some of the problems faced by the mass of the population. There is certainly no need to internationalize the whole system so that a few professionals are free to emigrate. In fact there would be immediate positive returns (through reduced brain drain) for any country that decided not to have all parts of its further educational system up to "international standards". I am not, of course, suggesting a second class system, but a first class, relevant, and cheap system.

Many of the basic criteria for educational change that were discussed in chapter 7; though directed towards rural general education, are equally applicable to secondary and higher schooling. For example, such schooling should train people so that they can help others in solving particular problems; should be integrated fully with society; should involve students physically as well as mentally; and should incorporate a selection and examination process which influences only slightly what is taught, and which should also give special chances to children from more deprived sections of the population. In addition it should not necessarily involve full time study, but should involve adults as much as possible in part work, part study programmes; nor are buildings or "qualified" teachers essential. Finally, it should be relevant, and as cheap as is consistent with operating an effective programme.



As well as the above logically justifiable criteria, there are others which *subjectively* I feel should be included, but as their acceptance is largely dependent on the values existing in the particular society they could be considered of less universal importance than the criteria already mentioned. For example, I believe that secondary and further education should prepare people to accept the possibility of living and working in rural areas; should give future elites some real experience of other (poorer) people's life, and role in society; should involve the students in administration, financing, teaching, and menial tasks related to their education and finally should not necessarily be a continuum, with one level of education immediately leading to the next, but should be so designed that students can join and leave any particular sub-system at any age, with a wide range of different qualifications and experiences.

As I have already mentioned, because of the heterogeneity of secondary and further educational systems and other reasons, in the remainder of this chapter I will concentrate on a few proposals (that have some chance of implementation) only affecting parts of sub-systems. No attempt will be made to suggest utopian changes of the entire system.

### **III. Relevance**

The changes suggested for elementary (or general) education discussed in previous chapters have been so designed that significant changes in secondary education is not needed. Thus the improvement that I am suggesting in this section can take place whether or not there have been significant changes in mass general education. In fact, the need for these improvements is considerably more pressing if there has been no transformation of general education.

As I have already mentioned the degree of public interest in secondary and further education is so great that virtually all possible improvements have been widely discussed, and many have actually been tried out on a small or large scale. Thus the innovator, in his attempts to introduce some of the proposals suggested below, is in a stronger

position (as long as he does not challenge the elite producing functions of schools) than if he was trying to transform elementary education in a direction similar to the one proposed. This is because he can call upon the results of concrete experiments, as well as various authorities, to support him.

Before going on to put forward a few specific proposals for particular types and levels of education, I will make some suggestions applicable for all types of further education.

In order to prevent the complete separation of future elites from the mass of the population, all full-time students (and preferably teachers also) should be involved for at least a month each year (during vacations) in agricultural work during peak periods. This should apply as much to students originally from rural areas as those originating from urban areas, as the former are as likely to reject rural life because of its "primitiveness" as the latter. The introduction of agricultural work (as has already been done in Cuba and China) as an integral part of the curriculum is likely to serve three main functions. It will help prevent a complete dualistic division of society; it will show the students that those who excel in academic work are not necessarily the same as those who lead and excel in agricultural work; and finally, as the students need only be provided with food, such unpaid work might help provide a slight boost to rural incomes.

Throughout the rest of the year (again as an integral part of the curriculum), all students should involve themselves in some community development activities in their neighbourhood. This could take many forms, from the construction of community amenities to participation in adult education or literacy training. In addition, the majority of administrative and menial tasks in schools (from cleaning classrooms, and washing dishes, to looking after the library, and keeping school records) should be carried out by the students themselves (as is increasingly done in Tanzania, as well as in some T.T. schools in Thailand) and also students should assist in teaching the junior pupils (there is no better way to learn a subject than to teach it).

These proposals taken together would help prevent the isolation of the school from real life, would give students some direct ideas of the position of other less favoured classes, and would *help* motivate the student towards *servng* his less fortunate brethren during his working life.

Just as the student should not be isolated from the surrounding community, nor should the physical plant of the school. Thus all educational buildings should not only be designed so that they can serve other useful purposes when not being used as a school, but also so that the general public can observe and participate to some extent in any formal educational activity taking place (one such open experimental school with an observation-verandah around each classroom, and with chairs which, one way up, fit children, and another way adults, has been constructed in Sri Lanka)

Finally, the selection process for subsequent levels of education should not entirely be based on academic achievements, but should also take account of the students service to the community, and his participation in the running of the school. In addition, an increasing number of places should be reserved for people who have already worked for some time.

#### **a) Secondary Schooling**

I am continuously surprised about the irrelevance of much of what is taught in secondary schools in poor countries. Even ignoring some of the most extreme examples, such as the French history classes in Laos (our forefathers the Gauls, and the history of the British Empire in some African countries) most courses from language to science are entirely academic, and reflect the past situation in developed countries rather than the expected future of the students own country.

The present curriculum neither helps the student cope with the complexities of urban living, nor does it teach him how to learn by himself. Instead, the concentration is so much on preparing students for further education, that many of those who fail are not equipped to play any useful role in society. Admittedly, it does prove to employers that its graduates might be able to put up with a boring and repetitive job

in an enclosed situation, as they have already put up with such a situation for several years in school, but even this dubious advantage is often counteracted by the inflated expectations of secondary school leavers, so much so that employers frequently prefer lesser schooled people. In total, the conventional secondary school graduate in a poor country either is fortunate enough to go on to further education, or waits around unemployed until someone *gives* him a clerical job. He is unlikely to take entrepreneurial initiative (unless he comes from a background with entrepreneurial traditions) because his schooling has led him to believe that someone else always has the answers, and also that after being given schooling he deserves to be given a job.

Some developing countries have experimented with comprehensive secondary schools. Such schools normally downgrade the importance of examinations, and streaming, include a considerable amount of practical work in the curriculum, and allow the student some freedom in selecting the subjects that he will study (though, of course, the student knows that if he concentrates on academic subjects he has a better chance of proceeding to higher education).

These comprehensive schools, though separated from the community, are a definite improvement over the conventional academic school. They are, however, normally far too expensive (at least 50% more costly per student year than an academic school) for widescale introduction. As an alternative I would suggest that a new type of comprehensive or practically orientated secondary school be established which would associate itself with various local industries and service enterprises. Each student, as well as studying a very much reduced academic curriculum, would also choose to become involved in a particular enterprise (a factory or workshop, police station, or hospital, etc.) and would not only work on a part time basis in that enterprise, but would also have much of his remaining learning related to that field of activity. For example, if he was associated with a textile factory, in history he would study the development of the textile industry in his country; in economics, the relationship between raw material and labour costs, and the final price;

in social science, the organisational structure of textile production, from the cotton grown by the peasants to the final use made of the finished products, as well as investigating the lives of the various people involved in different parts of the process; in English, the concentration would be on business English; in science, dyeing, and the methods used in growing good quality long staple cotton; and so on. In this way the student would not only have a relevant core on which to build all his new knowledge (thus it would be less likely to be forgotten) but in addition, if he fails to go on to further education, he would at least be partially equipped for employment (in a textile plant or similar enterprise), and, if this were not possible, he would have some of the background needed for entrepreneurial activity.

Obviously, however, the profitability of businesses might be reduced if they have to organise some form of training for secondary students. This is exactly why this idea was rejected for urban elementary education earlier. However, the number of students enrolled in secondary schools is considerably smaller than the number enrolled in elementary schools, and thus, though this problem exists, its solution does not require a complete change in the philosophy of running enterprises of various sorts. Some of the costs faced by the industries in providing a learning environment of no direct benefit to themselves could be defrayed both from saving in school costs (employing fewer teachers and using fewer permanent buildings) and through the labour of students (which, if available quite regularly, could enable the employer to reduce his wage bill). Though no calculation is available, it is likely that the savings in school costs alone would be more than sufficient to offset the losses to the enterprises, and thus sufficient compensation to businessmen could be made to ensure that the scheme becomes attractive.

In rural areas it would be harder to arrange for the student to have a significant number of possible activities to choose from, but apart from this one constraint, a similar immediate environment-orientated curriculum could be drawn up centering around local agricultural, vocational, and commercial activities.

A school similar to the type described above has been established on an experimental basis in the U.S.A., and the preliminary results were very encouraging. The Parkway High School in Philadelphia is designed "to help the student live learningly within his present life space." The "school" has no classrooms or laboratories, only offices for the teachers. Local institutions such as the zoo, the science museum, the police department, an insurance company, a T.V. station, a newspaper, etc., have agreed to run courses for the students and to involve them in their activities. Other courses are held anywhere (in a cafe, in the park, in a teacher's home, or, for example, Spanish courses are held in the Spanish quarter of the city). Finally, students have to attend a two hour tutorial group three times a week to discuss their programmes of study and any problems they might be facing.

Another alternative suggested by Harold Howe, former U.S. Commissioner for Education, involves bringing the community to the school. Instead of constructing a conventional school, fewer classrooms and laboratories would be built, and in their place, stores workshops, beauty parlours, clinics and so on put up. These facilities would be leased at a particularly low rate (if not free) to local businessmen, on condition that they would not only participate in the teaching, but would also allow students to become actively involved in their enterprises. Obviously this suggestion would only be viable where land was available in a central location, for otherwise only second rate businessmen, artisans, etc., would be attracted by the subsidised premises. Also attention would have to be paid to ensure that the enterprises invited were in fact typical in that particular locality, and thus what was learnt by the student would be some use in helping him find employment after graduation.

In conclusion to this section, it can be said that it is not particularly important which of the two alternatives suggested are accepted, as long as secondary education and the surrounding community are closely integrated. Either the school should expand into the surrounding community, or the community be brought to the school. One of

the two (or some combination) must be introduced if the present irrelevance of secondary education is to be overcome without involving too high expenditures.

### **b) Vocational and Technical Schooling**

Partly because of the difficulty ordinary secondary school graduates have in finding employment, partly in order to reduce social pressures for expansion of elite-producing types of education; and partly in order to produce qualified skilled and technical manpower needed for both modernisation of the economy and industrial development, many of the poorer countries have placed considerable emphasis on the expansion of technical and vocational schools.

In general, most vocational and technical schools have not achieved their original objectives. Far from reducing social pressures for expanding elite forming types of education, they have often generated insurmountable pressures for the creation of new channels of elite formation. In addition, not only do technical and vocational schools usually have to include a large amount of academic instruction in their curriculum so that their students still have a chance to return to the mainstream of the educational system (thus largely defeating one of the original purposes of such schools, for the benefit of only a very small proportion of graduates), but also many countries face irresistible pressures for upgrading technical colleges to degree or postgraduate level institutions, thus opening up an entirely new channel of potential elite formation, and halting or reducing production of the type of manpower (high level technicians) most likely to be able to find employment.

Even without these changes, vocational and technical schools have seldom achieved their objectives, for their organisation and curriculum have rarely been flexible enough to cater for the changing employment needs of industry. Nor have they generally been equipped with the wide variety of machines (both modern and old) available even in homogenous sub-sectors of industry. Thus the graduates of such schools are often not trained in a way which makes them attractive to industries. In addition, they have not usually had any industrial

experience. Nevertheless, these graduates usually expect higher salaries than industries are prepared to pay.

Thus despite the original objectives of such schools, vocational and technical graduates, trained in one particular subject, and often following an outdated curriculum, are usually just as likely to be unemployed as their secondary school cousins. This is particularly serious as the costs of such schooling are usually several times higher than those of ordinary secondary schooling.

In most of the richer countries there is a decreasing emphasis on vocational (except pre-vocational schooling, where the student is supposedly taught a process of acquiring skill rather than a particular skill) and technical schooling, these institutions being replaced with on-the-job training, and apprenticeship schemes supplemented with some part time theoretical classroom instruction. In most poor countries there are also various small non-formal schemes with similar functions.

As the main justification of technical and vocational schooling is that it produces the manpower needed by a rapidly expanding and technically innovative industrial sector, the organisation of such schooling should take account of this objective. It has already been mentioned that the poor countries cannot rely entirely on industry to train all their skilled personnel needs, as very often there are insufficient "skill models" to carry out such informal training. However, if any formal vocational and technical training scheme is to have any chance of success it should be at least based on the following criteria:—

— Skill training is not a once in a lifetime activity, but is likely to have to be repeated as technology or the job mix in the economy changes.

— It is very difficult to simulate industrial experience in a school environment, particularly where the cost of equipment and materials is high. Thus most practical work should take place on-the-job.

— As most students from academic schools usually choose vocational schooling as a last alternative, and as they have almost no work experience, there seems to be little point in giving vocational training



to such students in any specific skill. This is particularly so as there is no certainty that these students will be employed on completing their courses. Thus, as a general rule, only those who are already employed should be given formal vocational training, though this training could be either for their present positions, or for new ones promised by their employers.

– Teachers in such schools should not be selected according to their academic or pedagogic qualification, but according to the degree and relevance of their industrial experience.

– Academic qualifications do not indicate a person's technical or vocational ability, and thus their importance should be downgraded in selecting participants for skill training programmes.

– No new system of vocational or technical training will have much chance of wide scale acceptance whilst existing systems with their elite forming pretensions are still in operation.

If these criteria are accepted, then all existing vocational and technical training schools should change into institutions offering sandwich courses (alternating periods of schooling and work) day release courses, block release courses (one time intensive training of workers lasting from a few weeks to a few months) and evening courses. Only those who are already employed, or who have a definite offer of employment should be allowed to enroll, and the training should be so organised that most of the practical experience actually takes place on the job<sup>(1)</sup> (with or without the participation of the school staff). People of any age, with quite low academic qualifications should be allowed to participate.

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(1) Some forms of on-the-job industrial training should, however, be avoided because they are in conflict with our general educational objectives discussed earlier. For example, one large Japanese company has all its new recruits (150 at a time) banging an anvil in unison for eight hours a day during the first two weeks training. This is supposed to destroy the trainees' sense of individuality, and thus enable them to identify fully with the firm and their work team. Such an activity would hardly be included in most people's concept of education.

The schools should concentrate on providing the necessary theoretical background directly related to the students actual employment (and academic instruction if literacy, language, or calculation skills are also needed) in forming attitudes conducive to effective work with machinery and equipment; on transmitting information about safety and hygiene precautions that should be taken, and on giving prospective foremen and supervisors experience of personnel and workshop management through their participation in simulation games and other activities. The staff of the schools should also be available on request to help supervise practical training in the factory or enterprise, and to mount short full-time pre-employment courses for industries being established.

In other words, the concept of vocational and technical schooling should be changed from that of providing continuing schooling for adolescents who fail to make it to further education, to that of serving industry and carrying out training for it. Pre-vocational training should be provided (as suggested earlier) by ordinary secondary schools in conjunction with various enterprises.

If such a change in the function of vocational and technical schools were accepted, then not only would the cost of producing one person with a particular skill be considerably reduced, but also it would be possible to finance the new scheme by imposing a special levy on the industries benefitting.

There is nothing particularly innovative about the above suggestions. Similar small schemes exist in most poor countries from Colombia to Thailand. It is only the proposal that such training should be restricted to those already employed (or with a definite offer of employment), and the suggestion that *all* vocational and technical schools should either close down, or change their role, that have not been accepted by most countries. Both these innovations, however, are essential if vocational and technical schooling are not to continue wasting large amounts of scarce resources.

### **c) Higher Education**

In this section I will restrict my comments to medical training not because this is the only professional field of training in poor

countries which involves incredible irrationalities (professional training in virtually all fields is *not* designed to meet the needs of the poorer countries), but because the present situation with medical training is even more ridiculous than is the case with most other types of professional formation.

In Thailand, for example, all doctors are trained over six years to international standards at an incredibly high cost. (The total cost is more than 70 times the average per capita income). Most doctors are then given post graduate specialist training. Within five years after graduation, 80% of doctors go overseas for further study and employment, and though most eventually return, a large number stay away for a very long time. Of the doctors actually working in Thailand, more than half are in Bangkok, and the majority of the remainder are working in other towns. (Urban population is about 15% of the total in Thailand). Thus Bangkok has a doctor-patient ratio of less than 1:1,300, whilst some rural areas probably have a ratio of more than 1:1,000,000. In 1976 only 167 doctors were working in rural areas

The situation with nurses is not much better. Though at present hospitals are staffed at less than 50% of their required strength (with obviously fewer shortages in Bangkok, and much greater understaffing in other parts of the country), the emphasis on nurse training is to discontinue the lower levels of training, and to concentrate on producing nurses up to international standards, even though it is known that a considerable proportion of such nurses emigrate, and unlike the doctors, they seem to emigrate permanently.

The position in Thailand, with large sums of money being devoted to training medical personnel either for specialist practice in the towns or export, whilst people in the rural areas continue to suffer from easily curable diseases is by no means unique but exists in the majority of poor countries. It is the result of pressure from both internal and external interest groups.

Many schemes for training barefoot or assistant doctors have been carried out in the past, but most of these have been discontinued (even in countries such as Tanzania, with egalitarian philosophies, and rural

transformation emphasis in their development policies) through the myth of the danger of under-qualified medical practitioners perpetuated by the interest groups of the medical profession.

In the scheme for rural general education already discussed, most community centres would be likely to have at least one health worker qualified to diagnose and cure a few simple ailments, and able to refer other cases to the locality health centre or district hospital. In such a scheme, higher qualified personnel would be needed to staff a locality health centre, supervise the health "agents of change", and to train some of the supervisors and agents.

In countries not envisaging transforming their rural educational systems, the need for producing a middle level of non-brain-drainable medical personnel to work in rural areas, diagnose and cure a limited number of simple diseases is even more pressing.

However, in the majority of countries, pressures from the elite (who are used to specialist attention, and who perhaps want their children to take up high paid positions overseas) are likely to prevent any complete change in medical training to make it more relevant to the priority health needs of the country. I would therefore suggest a dualistic system of medical training. One part would involve a normal six year plus post graduate specialist training, this part being designed primarily for export, and for serving private elite needs; the other part involving say four years practical training in diagnosing and curing simple ailments, and including a period of internship in a village health centre with an experienced health worker.

Government should not subsidise the cost of the first type of institution at all (and might perhaps insist that the fees be paid in foreign exchange) but should support the lower level of training, including further specialist training of a few very able practitioners who have worked for sometime, in order to meet the requirements for specialists in public central hospitals. Neither the training of the new type of doctor, nor the new type of specialist, would attempt to meet international certification requirements (in order to prevent brain drain) though there

is no reason to suppose that this training would in any way be sub-standard.

In other words, it is suggested that governments should concentrate their support on a medical education system that would not only help solve the real health problems in their countries, but would also stop the immense brain drain from taking place. If necessary, a self-financed scheme for training doctors to meet eilte requirements, and for export, would be allowed to operate alongside the main, more relevant system.

Those medical interest groups who would argue that such "sub-standard" doctors might cause more problems than they would solve are on very weak ground for the alternative for the mass of the population to consulting the new type of doctor is not that they will consult a conventional doctor, but that they will either seek advice from traditional health workers (witch doctors, or herbalists) or self-prescription. If a four year trained doctor is more dangerous than the above alternatives, this does not say very much for modern medical education.

This brief discussion on relevance has centered around the need to diminish the separation between study and employment. If the function of secondary, vocational and higher education is largely to provide people with the skills they need for future employment (as it must be in any society where large numbers of people have no formal education at all), then the present division between schooling and production must be reduced, as it does not seem particularly sensible to train people in an environment completely different from the one in which they are likely to work, nor does it seem sensible to try to duplicate factory conditions (with the expensive equipment needed) in the school. Thus an increasing proportion of further education should take place in factories, health centres and other places where the student might eventually work. Not only is such a policy likely to reduce costs<sup>(1)</sup> by decreasing the numbers of buildings and teachers needed,

(1) If an industry has to cater for a large number of students not in its employment, then problems of organising the work might be faced which could reduce profitability. In such cases some of the savings from schools might be given to the enterprises to help them offset their losses.

but also it is likely to lead to a better type of training much more closely related to the needs of the particular country. Thus urban development could be speeded up, whilst at the same time freeing greater resources for rural education and development.

#### **IV. Reducing Costs, Raising New Sources of Revenue, and Re-allocating Expenditures**

It is difficult to devote increasing resources to rural general education because secondary and further schooling are expensive in poor countries, both in terms of G.D.P. per capita (whatever significance this has) and in terms of the present per pupil costs of elementary education.

In Thailand, for example, comparing the per student costs of secondary and further schooling with those of primary, it can be seen that secondary schooling is three times as expensive, vocational six times as expensive, technical ten times as expensive, and higher education averages about 15 times more expensive than elementary schooling. In other words, it costs the same to keep one student in university for one year as it does to keep fifteen children in primary schools. The range of costs is typical of those existing in many of the poorer countries.

As the major effect of further schooling is to increase a person's status and the salary he can command, and as large proportions of further schooled people are employed by governments, we have the strange situation of governments spending large sums of money on schooling a few people so that after graduation governments will have to pay these same people much higher salaries than would have been the case had the people not had such expensive schooling.

Whilst the costs of further schooling are so high, it is difficult to satisfy even the unavoidable demand for higher school places for a small proportion of the total population, without absorbing a large share (usually around 50%) of all the resources available for the education of the entire population. Thus if a significant amount of

money is to be devoted to mass general education then the expenditures (at least those borne from public sources) on further schooling will have to be reduced considerably.

Some of the proposals already outlined in the previous section would result in considerable savings, but even more could be done to ensure that not too high a proportion of resources available for education are devoted to secondary and further schooling for the few.

Thus in the following paragraphs some suggestions will be made on how to reduce the unit expenditures of elitist schooling, without adversely effecting what is being taught. Most of the suggestions that will be made are not new, but have been tried out in some countries, thus the job of the innovator in obtaining acceptance of such schemes will be made that much easier.

#### **a) Multi-Shift Operation**

At present most schools operate for only about six hours a day for two hundred or so days a year, with teachers having an even lighter direct work load. Thus the school plant is only used for about 16% of its theoretical maximum utilization, and the unmotivated teacher (who does not spend much time on lesson preparation, marking and extra curricula activities) has to work only about half the number of hours per year worked by his civil service or privately employed colleagues.

Any enterprise that used its physical plant and personnel to the same low extent as do schools would quickly go bankrupt and close down, but schools even in the poorest countries manage somehow to justify a continued low level of operation. However, there are few valid reasons why all existing schools should not eventually be able to operate on a two shift basis, and in addition, the majority should be able to be opened in the evening, either to provide part-time schooling for people not free in the day, or merely to allow various community groups to use their facilities.

Double shift operation of some schools takes place in many poorer countries, particularly in urban areas. In a typical instance, the school is open for six days a week instead of the normal five. The first group

of students arrive at 7 a.m. and finish at 12.00 noon, at which time the second group enters to finish at 6 p.m. In some cases (though not nearly so often) these schools provide evening instruction from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. as well.

Obviously no country should double or triple shift all schools overnight, for this would entail a doubling or trebling of student numbers with the consequent problems of unemployment and unfulfilled expectations. Also, if this happened, total expenditures on the particular type of education would rise even though unit expenditures fall, and our original objective (freeing greater resources for rural education) would not be achieved. However, if the normal restricted increase in enrollments was to take place by double, and later even triple-shifting schools, enrollments could probably increase for at least a decade or two with virtually no capital expenditures. As usually 35% or more of secondary and higher education budgets are devoted to capital items, this saving would be significant. In addition, due to greater utilization of teachers, and other factors, unit recurrent costs in double shifted schools can be as much as 25% lower than those in ordinary schools.

For higher education institutions the same arguments apply except that there is no need to introduce shifts, but merely to use all available facilities for 15–18 hours a day.

#### **b) Full Year Utilization**

Though multi-shift operation of schools can save considerable amounts of money, there is still a potential for further increases in utilization. Most schools and universities are closed (on holiday) for around three months of the year. It is, however, possible to operate such educational institutions throughout the year, staggering the holidays of both staff and students. Whereas now all students take their vacation at the same time, and thus the schools are closed for three months a year, under one of the many full year utilization schemes available<sup>(1)</sup> one quarter of the students would take their vacation in the autumn, one quarter in

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(1) For a description of many such schemes see my *Cost Evaluation in Uganda*, IIEP Paris, 1972.



winter, etc., and the staff would only have, say, one month's holiday a year instead of the present three months. In this way one third more students could be schooled with no extra capital expenditures, and only a slight increase in recurrent costs.

Such a scheme has various other advantages. For example, where boarding facilities are provided this will also permit greater utilization of these facilities, which would not be the case with double shift operation. More importantly, it would enable the school to provide local enterprises with a supply of labour *throughout the year* (all students perhaps devoting half their vacation to such an activity). In this way part of the high costs of schooling could be defrayed with the product of the students, work.

### c) Voucher System

For countries interested in equalising the distribution of public resources for education amongst the population, the voucher system is an ideal instrument. As at present far fewer public resources per capita are devoted to schooling poor people in rural areas than are spent on schooling children of the elite in urban areas, a scheme whereby all people have equal public resources for education would produce a very great redistribution of public educational effort away from urban areas to the rural areas where they are most needed.

The voucher system in its simplest form involves either dividing the total available educational resources in any one year equally amongst the eligible population (for example, all people in a certain age group), or allocating to each child (say at the age of five) an educational credit to be used throughout his life (or throughout his childhood). In both cases, vouchers of a certain value would be given to those eligible, and these vouchers could then be used to pay for approved educational activities chosen by the parent or the child. The vouchers would, of course, be non-transferable, and all schools and other educational activities would charge a fee sufficient to cover all expenditures. In most societies, parents would be allowed to supplement the vouchers in order to provide more schooling, or a better education for their children.

Though certain modifications to the scheme in its simplest form would have to be made to ensure that secondary and further schooling did not remain the preserve of those who had enough money (obviously on average most poor countries could not afford to provide each person with vouchers equivalent in value to more than five or six years of elementary schooling) this programme would certainly allow there to be a considerable increase in rural educational efforts.

#### **d) Student Loans**

As the main objective of most people who pursue further education is to increase their earning capacity (and social status), there seems to be no reason why students should not pay the full cost of their further schooling (as they are the main beneficiaries). However, if all secondary schools and universities charged an "economic" level of fees, then opportunities for further schooling would be even more restricted to the children of the rich than is presently the case. Thus I would suggest as another alternative that all educational institutions above the mass general education level should charge an "economic" level of fees, but that a loan to cover the cost of the high fees should be given to any student who needed one. This loan would have to be paid back within a certain number of years of the student's final graduation. Though considerable ingenuity would be needed to ensure a good level of repayment,<sup>(1)</sup> this loan scheme would ensure that those who would be likely to benefit from elitist schooling would also be the ones who would eventually pay for it, thus again freeing a large proportion of resources presently devoted to higher schooling, for expanding and improving mass, development-orientated, general education.

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(1) Perhaps certificates would be put to good use at last, with the loan outstanding, and the repayments to date marked on each person's diploma. Employers (who in any case like to see these certificates) would have by law to deduct automatically from a person's salary the necessary repayment. Another possibility would be to have loan contracts involving collective responsibility, all students in a particular class being collectively responsible for each others payments in case of default.

This scheme would also be likely to result in other indirect advantages. For example, as each institution would have to charge fees sufficient to cover all their expenditures, those institutions paying no attention to economy would charge much higher fees than others, and thus in the long run (as the loans for the fees have to be repaid) might find it difficult to attract students, and therefore they would have to reduce their costs. In addition, if the repayment were made legally binding (with guarantors), the present situation in many poor countries with large numbers of educated unemployed, would tend to discourage many people from continuing their schooling. (Thus the majority of people would be aware that schooling does not necessarily lead to a high salary.) This would thus reduce the social pressure for school expansion to more manageable proportions.

#### **e) Self-Financing**

In China, through the large scale involvement of schools in productive activities, and through the use ordinary people as teachers, it is claimed that the majority of schools are self-financing. Though in most countries it will not be possible either to involve students in production or to involve non-teachers in teaching to the extent that is done in China, there is some scope for such activities. For example, in Thailand if a non-teacher is asked to speak to students. the person will consider this to be an honourable and prestigious act, and thus is likely to agree to do this either for nothing or for only a minimal fee. In addition, in some schools the students construct buildings, run canteens, grow crops, organise fairs, film shows, and music and drama performances, all of which raise revenue to be used by the school.

All that I am suggesting here is that activities already being carried out in a few schools be carried out at a higher level, in all schools, so that considerable revenues are earned (or savings made, in the case of using unpaid volunteer part-time teachers), and that some of the resources that in the past have been provided by government can be redirected towards mass general education.

In this section I have shown that if there is a motivation on the part of policy makers to reduce the financial burden on government of elitist secondary and higher schooling, there are many possible alternative schemes which could have a significant impact. Any change obviously involves difficulties, and thus just because most of these proposals do involve problems (which can be solved as has been proved in one country or another), this is no excuse for not attempting to ensure that the limited resources available for education have the greatest possible impact. In addition to the problems likely to be faced in implementing some of these schemes, such implementation is also likely in some cases to produce indirect benefits consistent with many of our educational objectives.

My purpose in outlining these cost reducing, revenue saving, and reallocation proposals is to show that it is possible to devote considerably greater resources to mass general education (particularly to a scheme such as the one outlined in the previous chapters than have been allocated in the past without *any increase in total educational expenditures*. However, there is no way of ensuring that the resources freed will be used for rural education, and in many situations they are just as likely to be used for further expansion of elitist schooling, or for increased defence spending. Thus in cases where there is no commitment to rural development, the decision on whether any of the above alternative proposals are introduced should perhaps depend more on the likely indirect benefits than on their revenue producing and saving potential.

## V). Conclusions

Throughout this discussion on secondary and higher schooling I have felt somewhat uneasy, because there has been an internal conflict between my pragmatic ideas and my philosophical beliefs. Whereas with mass general education I am convinced both philosophically and pragmatically of the possibility of significantly reforming the system in a way similar to the one I have suggested, and am also sure that such a transformation would have a positive impact on the quality of life of large numbers of people, I cannot claim the same for elitist education.

Primarily, my uneasiness is caused by the fact that philosophically I cannot identify with a system whose main function is to allocate uneven rewards in an inegalitarian society (be it China or the U.S.A.). If the purpose of further schooling was solely to provide professional and other skill training, there are more efficient methods (using various forms of on-the-job training and skill models); if the purpose is to encourage a spirit of learning and enquiry in society, Illychian networks and other alternatives would be likely to be more effective; and finally, if the purpose were to produce real development, and solve the most pressing problems of society, then a completely different system would be needed. Though all of the above would be included in any list of objectives for higher schooling, the main emphasis still remains the certification and reward allocating functions. This is what is expected from the system by society, and this is what the system does quite well (as is proved by increasing correlation between earnings and level of school achievement).

Thus in the first part of this chapter I have made suggestions on how to make more relevant, and indirectly more useful, a part of the educational system whose main function philosophically I cannot accept, but which pragmatically I realise cannot be changed. In the second part I have suggested how resources could be diverted from secondary and higher schooling, but again without having any conviction that these resources will be used in the way in which I would hope.

Nevertheless, being reformist rather than a revolutionary, I do not believe that all changes should wait until the new Utopia starts to rise from the ashes of the old society, and thus though the proposals I have made do not solve all the problems and shortcomings of the present school system, they do solve some, and thus are by themselves worth attempting.

Even suggestions such as those that I have made in this chapter are difficult to implement, as is shown by the fact that they have not happened in most countries. This question of lack of implementation is so important that the last chapter of this book will be devoted to a general discussion of the problems of implementation. Before doing this, however, the direction in which teacher education programmes might be altered in a country like Thailand will be discussed.

## CHAPTER 10

### THE SPECIAL CASE OF TEACHER EDUCATION

In Chapter 8 I described one possible transformed rural educational system. Though it is likely that if a scheme similar to the one outlined (though obviously not exactly the same, as any transformed system must be the result of a study of real conditions in a real country or region) were implemented, then meaningful, human-centered rural development would be speeded up. Nevertheless, despite the obvious benefits of such a new system, unfounded myths, vested interests, and a fear of any dramatic change can easily prevent politicians and administrators from adopting such a direction of change.

The educational reformist, concerned that rural education should become more of a tool to help the rural poor improve their quality of life, will therefore usually have to look for less radical, more easily manageable types of change for the immediate future. Since the teacher plays the absolutely central role in existing rural education systems, and since a good teacher can produce good results even with a bad curriculum, bad texts, bad financing and a bad administrative system, whilst a bad teacher can achieve nothing, even if all other elements of the system are perfect, transformation of the teacher education system is a prior condition for any other change.

Throughout the discussions in this chapter the most important thing to bear in mind is that like education in general teacher education is not an end in itself. Obviously it should be an instrument for preparing skilful and resourceful people who are able to play an effective role in assisting and facilitating the development of individuals and communities, and in achieving educational objectives. Thus it is neither possible to criticise the existing teacher education programmes, nor to make positive suggestions for their reform without first clarifying what the priority educational objectives are, and what the role of the teacher in achieving these objectives should be. This has already been outlined in earlier chapters of this book.

However, many countries in their attempts to jump from a rural based traditional agricultural society to an industrial technological society of the 1970's are inevitably creating a dualistic social-cultural-economic system, with a small proportion of the population involved in the operation of the modern sector of the economy, having western work habits, life styles, consumption patterns, and even to some extent thought processes, whilst the majority of the population continue to live much as before (except that the security of their past value systems has been, or is being, destroyed). Any realistic educational strategy (and the teacher education programmes designed to support it) must therefore take account of the widely different environments, life problems, and learning needs in different areas of the country.

Since the vast proportion of people in poor countries live in rural areas, and since the only education the majority receive is primary or adult education, this chapter will again concentrate on discussing teacher education for basic education (elementary and adult) in rural areas. Though some of the criticisms and recommendations made might also apply to urban modern sector oriented teacher education programmes, given the fact that rural incomes are falling, rural problems (educational, cultural, social, and economic) increasing, and thus the quality of life and satisfaction of rural people is certainly falling in general, special programmes must be designed for the rural areas where the majority of the population live and work. The past pattern of having a unified teacher education system, which is inherently more consistent with modern sector and urban needs and conditions, can only help produce an even more rapid disintegration of rural values, and a continuation in the reduction of the quality of rural life.

When one studies the problems presently being faced by rural areas in different parts of any country, two things immediately become apparent. First, though there are some problems common to all areas, most are not universal and differ from region to region. Secondly (and perhaps more serious), the existing training of teachers, and thus what they themselves teach both formally and informally (through their

presence in the community) bears little relationship to any real problems that are causing people suffering (e.g. malnutrition, endemic diseases, low productivity, exploitation, overpopulation, poor hygiene, destruction of traditional value system, migration, etc. etc.) Worse still, in analysing the total government educational effort (defined in its broadest sense) devoted to rural areas, it can be seen that in terms of personnel there are more than ten times as many teachers as all other government developmental personnel combined (health workers, community development workers, agricultural extension officers, co-operative workers, etc. etc.) Thus if the rural teacher is not trained to help the local community solve its problems (but only trained to teach children academic subjects), there is generally speaking no one else stationed in the community who can provide the necessary assistance.

Therefore given the unique position of the teacher in a rural community, whatever his formal functions (depending on the curriculum), if rural development is to be speeded up, he must also be given the skills, attitudes, knowledge and ideas necessary for helping the community in which he is living. Thus the rural teacher must be trained to carry out two functions: firstly, to act as an "agent of change" and improvement, helping to solve the problems being faced by the community in which he is located; and secondly, to act as a teacher in the elementary school. For anyone concerned about rural development and the immediate alleviation of rural suffering, the first function is obviously the most important, for if problems are to be solved now (instead of in twenty years time) some existing ideas, attitudes, skills, and knowledge of adults need also to be changed *now*.

Obviously, of course, the two functions are related, and if the teacher is equipped to help the schoolchild understand and be more able to cope with his environment and to provide him with relevant, skills and knowledge, he will also be equipped to help the adults in the community solve their problems. The difficulty of combining the two functions only arises because of the irrelevance of much of the existing in-school curricula to local conditions and problems, and the authori-



tarian and boring methods of teaching used. Academic knowledge is not likely to be much help to villagers (either adults or children) faced with real physical problems, nor is a teacher-centred learning process likely to appeal to adults who have worked a long and tiring day.

In any country where there is even the stirrings of a climate of reform, it is thus absolutely essential to completely transform existing patterns of teacher education, so that the teacher education system becomes a positive force for rural development and educational innovation. In order to design such a new system it is necessary at the outset to forget past theoretical assumptions and to develop a new philosophy from first principles. First, the outline of a new rural education system needs to be worked out. Second, the characteristics of the teachers to operate such a system clarified. Third, the aspects of existing teacher education programmes that prevent the creation of these characteristics identified, and finally, the direction of the process of transformation of the teacher system outlined.

Since this book has already dealt in length on outlining the direction and criteria of transformed rural educational systems (see particularly chapter 7), I can move straight to the characteristics of the teachers required. However, it should be noted that in any real situation, before reforming a teacher education system, the direction of change in rural education desired should first be worked out.

## **II. Characteristics of Teachers Needed to Support a Rural Development Oriented Educational System.**

At the outset I would like to emphasise that no significant reform of the formal educational system is possible without a supporting reform of the teacher education system. However, even without any legal reform of the school system, a new teacher education programme can effect significantly what the teacher does in the classroom and the community. Thus I would argue that whether a new rural education system is implemented formally or not, if a teacher education system could produce teachers with improved and more relevant skills and attitudes,

it would by itself be playing a significant role in educational innovation and rural development.

Given the isolation of many villages, a teacher should obviously be a skilful and resourceful person able to operate very much on his own, not just keeping to the "rule book" but responding to particular needs and problems as they arise. Again, because of his isolation, he should be highly motivated to help serve the people in the community in which he is working, since there is no way to force him to work hard. It is thus also important that he has a developed social conscience and considers the teaching profession far more as an opportunity for helping his fellow citizens than merely as a secure position and a possible way for personal social and material advancement.

He must understand the community in which he is working, be aware of and appreciate its culture and social organisation, speak the same language or dialect, and realise the way in which important decisions are taken. If the teacher is an outsider and not fully integrated into the community, he can never have a significant impact, and of modern sector values and is unable to appreciate the importance of community evolve if he is full many traditional values (and thus unable to help the but only able to promote the creation of new alien ideas), his impact is likely to be more negative than positive.

He should be able to help the villagers identify the real problems that are causing them suffering. Very often (particularly in villages faced by abject poverty) this is extremely difficult, and will involve a long and gradual process of involving villagers in a rational discussion of the conditions of their lives. Having identified the problems, the teacher should be skilled (often without any outside assistance) in designing, constructing, evaluating, and revising learning arrangements around these problems in order to provide villagers and children with the insights, skills and knowledge for them to effectively tackle the problems.

The teacher should also have one particular skill or area of knowledge which would be directly useful to the community in

solving its problems. Some teachers might have specialist agricultural knowledge, others knowledge of nutrition and hygiene, others of health and family planning, yet others might be skilled in marketing and co-operative development. In this way each village with four or five teachers would also have four or five development agents (each skilled in a different area) actually living in the village, and able to provide essential advice either formally or informally.

It is also necessary for the teacher to have various social skills. He should be able to encourage villagers to participate in lifelong education and community development activities, know how to form and organise groups and learning situations so that real dialogue, both between members of the group and between the group and the teacher takes place, and know how to build up the individual child's or villager's self-confidence.

Finally, in terms of the education of children, he must be aware of the widely different backgrounds of children from different socio-economic environments, understand their aspirations and expectations and future life problems, and be skilled in developing curricula and learning situations to meet the unique needs of children from a specific homogenous socio-economic situation.

Thus to summarise, any teacher education system designed to support rural education and development should aim at producing teachers with at least the following attributes and characteristics:

- Be motivated to help others, and have a social conscience and consciousness.
- Have socio-economic-cultural knowledge about the community in which he is working.
- Be able to speak the same language or dialect as the villagers in the community to which he is posted.
- Be able to create situations that will enable children and adults to identify the problems that are facing them in their lives.
- Be able to create learning situations which will help the people find solutions to their own problems.

- Have at least one relevant skill which is directly useful to the villagers.
- Be skilled in mobilising participation and creating dialogic situations.
- Be aware of the different backgrounds of different children, be able to develop relevant but diverse curricula for these children, and be able to develop learning situations (using the whole environment) so that curriculum objectives are met.

This list, of course, does not claim to be exhaustive, but does include the most important characteristics a rural teacher should have *whether there is a significant reform* of the educational system or not. The two most important pre-requisites are that the teacher is motivated and that he understands and does not look down upon the socio-cultural conditions in the village in which he is working. If teachers even with only these two characteristics could be produced, the teacher education system would have made a giant step in helping (through education) in improving the quality of life of large numbers of people.

### **III. Main Shortcomings of Existing Teacher Education Programmes.**

In general, present teacher education systems throughout the world neither seem to produce good teachers nor motivate their students to be active in the field of community development. There is, for example, little (if any) correlation between the achievement of children in school and the qualification of the teacher, nor are there many cases (there are some) where the teacher is integrated in the community and becomes an active agent for social change within the community.

The root cause of this overall failing of teacher education systems is two-fold. First, teacher training institutions are seen (by faculty and students alike) as an alternative way of getting academic qualifications. Second, because western ideas of efficiency (involving the establishment of very large factory-like institutions for producing people with certificates), and western theories of teacher education have

spread throughout the system even though they are usually irrelevant to rural conditions, and the role the teacher must play in the rural situation.

In the following paragraphs I will analyse systematically the various components of existing programmes (selection process, curriculum content, teaching methods, organisation, staffing, and examination) to see to what extent they are helping or preventing the creation of teachers with the desired characteristics. Though this analysis is based on the Thai situation, because of homogeneity in teacher education system, it has a wider validity.

### **i) Selection Process**

The current selection process for entry into teacher training colleges is entirely based on academic achievement. Thus those who fail to get into academic secondary schools go to teachers' colleges. Prospective students do not have to demonstrate an aptitude for teaching, or even a desire to become teachers (at least 50% of boys in teacher's colleges do not really want to be teachers), let alone a social conscience or a willingness to serve disadvantaged rural areas. This selection process thus ensures that second class academic achievers are admitted, and because the criteria for admittance is academic, also ensures that the majority of the students neither come from the type of village in which they will have to serve, nor from the type of family they will have to communicate with, but are normally drawn from small town business or official families. This academic bias, combined with the wrong social origin and the lack of any real desire to become teachers amongst most teacher trainees, makes it very difficult to design any really meaningful programme.

### **ii) Curriculum Content**

Because most students entering teacher training institutions do so in order to get academic qualifications, the largest proportion of the curriculum is devoted to academic subjects, so that at the end of any particular cycle of teacher training the student has roughly the same academic knowledge he would have obtained if he had been to an

ordinary formal school at the same level. Thus he is supposedly equipped (for example) to take the university entrance examination. It seems, strange however, that in order that a few hundred teacher training students can get into university per year, ten thousand or more have to spend most of their time in studying academic subjects. No time is spent on teaching sociology or anthropology, none on community development, none on methods of problem identification, solution and group dynamics. In addition, most teachers are not provided with skills that would be useful to villagers. The academic subjects (including majors and minors) combined with academically oriented education and methods courses take up so much time that there is little time left for the trainee to learn very much that would be directly useful for him in his job.

### **iii) Teaching Methods**

It is a well known fact that people learn far more through real examples than through words. However, because of the factory nature of most teachers' colleges much of the instruction is carried out in the traditional teacher-centred, academic, fact-oriented way. I have even seen "new methods of teaching" courses take place with the teacher lecturing to the class who are busy taking notes. The teacher education system therefore continues to carry the hidden message that education is a process whereby the teacher provides basically useless facts, and the student's role is to memorise these facts.

It is only really during teaching practice where some attempt is made actually to *train* teachers, but even this practice is not as successful as it could be for three main reasons. Firstly, because the full time teachers in the practice schools have not always themselves been retrained in the new methods, and thus as they are the ones who have permanent contact with the student teachers (not the supervisors from the colleges) old teaching practices tend to be put across. Secondly, because, before going to their practice school, student teachers are not provided with information that will enable them to understand the social, economic, cultural and educational problems being faced by the community, and

thus they generally remain outside the community. Finally, though the college curriculum does include a discussion of methods of teaching, and though there is some supervision and assistance from college staff during teaching practice, they are given no knowledge and skills, and no assistance from special supervisors, in community development.

#### **iv) Organization**

It has already been mentioned that the colleges are too academically oriented, and too large to be able to treat individual students as individuals. This academic orientation, the size of the colleges, and the types of physical facilities provided also tend to help disassociate the teacher trainees from rural communities. The trainee studies subjects of little relevance to rural areas in a town, lives in comfortable concrete buildings with facilities (electricity, water and varied diet) that they are unlikely to find in the villages, and study in comfort and with facilities (equipment, books, CCTV, etc.) that they will never find in a rural school. Thus the overall organisation of the teachers' colleges helps to create values and expectations in the trainees which will ensure that they will be even further (i.e. because of their social origins, and past academic schooling) disassociated from rural areas.

Some mention under this head must be made of the evening training of teachers in Thailand—the “bete noire” of the whole system. Most colleges have considerably more evening students than full-time students, and though the programme does allow college staff to more than double their incomes, and though it does provide further academic educational opportunities for people who otherwise would have none, it cannot produce “teachers”. Cannot, because tired trainers, lecturing to tired students (most of whom are not teachers in the first place), on academic subjects cannot train anyone to teach. The whole programme has certainly had a negative effect on not only the quality of teacher training (the colleges becoming almost certification factories. with some lecturers working from 6 or 7 o’ clock in the morning to 9 o’ clock at night) but also on the whole fabric of primary schooling in surrounding

rural areas—teachers evidently leaving school at 1-2 p.m., travelling to the college, taking the academically biased evening course, not returning to their homes until midnight, and spending most of their little time in class preparing their college assignments. Since an upgrading of qualifications does not seem to have a significant effect on teaching ability, but only on the salaries of those who are so upgraded, and since the majority of non-teacher participants in twilight programmes (luckily) will not be able to find teaching jobs, the twilight programmes seem to have a decidedly negative social and educational impact.

#### **v) Staffing**

The main problem with the staff at teacher training institutions is that they are on the whole “in-bred”—they have never been out of school, having passed from secondary school, through teachers’ colleges and the college of education, and then back into the teachers’ colleges as teachers. Few (if any) people are employed who do not have teaching qualifications, and few (if any) people are employed who have spent a significant period of their life working outside a school. It is thus extremely difficult for the lecturers to train teachers for community involvement and for educational innovation, for they have rarely (if ever) been fully involved in any activity other than the school, and in turn have been trained by people with old educational ideas, and no real notion of the changed role needed of teachers today. In any case, it is a well known genetic principle that inbreeding increases the chance of concentrating defects, with new blood being needed to produce strong and resilient organisms. In the field of teacher education, inbreeding allows the old assumptions and theories to remain virtually unchallenged, and thus makes any healthy change extremely difficult to start. In my view it is absolutely essential that outsiders—from industry and business, from agriculture, from community development and health organisations, —are employed without prior teacher education, both to ensure that teacher education programmes are directed to real situations, and also to act as catalysts for change, challenging old assumptions and myths.



#### **vi) Student Evaluation**

It has always surprised me that though the function of teacher education institutions is to prepare people to become teachers, the student evaluation process is such that trainees can gain their qualifications without having really demonstrated an ability to teach, but mainly having shown they are able to write down the right answers to academic questions.

If teachers are to be certificated or licensed, there should be at least be two completely separate evaluations, one to test the trainees knowledge of the subject matter he is going to teach, and one to test his actual ability and skills in teaching and other community development activities. If he cannot show considerable ability in this second area, he should not be given a teaching certificate (though he could perhaps be given a certificate showing academic achievement equivalent to a given formal academic level.)

In this brief analysis of existing problems it has been shown that in each of the main elements of existing teacher education programmes there are serious shortcomings which prevent the formation of the type of teachers needed for rural areas. It is not, of course, being claimed that no important efforts have been made to improve the pattern of teacher education during recent years (there has been, particularly through teaching practice, associated schools, and some diversification of the curriculum), all that is being claimed is that generally the orientation of colleges is too academic, too theoretical, and too modern sector biased. With such an orientation it is not possible to produce people who have a chance of being good teachers and effective agents of community change.

#### **IV. Some Suggestions for Transformation of Teacher Education Systems**

It should be noted that I am not trying to push any particular alternative, and thus the proposals that will be made in this chapter should only be treated as indicative—indicating some possible and

desirable directions for change. Obviously any proposal for implementation should be based on a far more detailed study of the failings of the existing system and of the available alternatives for change. However, I would like to emphasise that any proposed reformed system must be designed in such a way that each element of the system (from student selection to examinations) helps to create a teacher who has the desired characteristics (which should be determined prior to work starting on the re-design of the system).

In the following paragraphs I will outline some possible changes in each element (the six elements discussed in the previous section) of the existing teacher education system, so that the type of teacher needed to promote rural education and development will in fact be produced. The changes proposed again result from an analysis of the Thai situations, but should have wider validity.

#### **i) Selection Process**

Academic criteria should not be given paramount importance in the selection of students for participation in teacher education programmes, but instead, aptitude, motivation, and a commitment to work in rural areas should be the main criteria for selection. Every student admitted to T.T. programmes should sign a commitment to work in a rural area as a teacher after completing their studies for the same length of time as their studies. This condition will immediately weed out the large numbers of students presently in colleges who have no desire to become teachers. Secondly, anyone with the required minimum academic qualifications (e.g. a pass at grade 10) who would like to enter a teacher training college should have to take various aptitude and attitudinal tests to ensure both that they are likely to be able to teach, and are motivated to teach. Where an insufficient number of candidates with the minimum academic qualifications are available from certain minorities, these minimum qualifications should be waived, and progressive or outstanding members of the respective communities should be admitted. In the longer run, the possibility of designing special programmes for ordinary villagers who could act as teaching

assistants for specific subjects should also be considered.

It is essential that the selection process is changed so that only those who are willing and able to become teachers are admitted. At present, not only is a great deal of money wasted on providing expensive teacher education for people who have no desire to teach, but also the colleges are over-crowded with such people.

### **ii) Curriculum Content**

Since teacher education is very much more expensive than equivalent formal general education, it seems extremely wasteful and inefficient for the colleges to teach academic subjects, knowledge of which could be obtained from normal formal schools. Thus the teacher's colleges should no longer teach academic subjects at all, but for any particular programme should insist on minimum academic entry requirements that will ensure that the teachers trained have a sufficient background in their subject matter. Academic subject matter that is required prior to upgrading of a teacher from one level of education to another (i.e. elementary to secondary) could be done through correspondence. Teacher education institutions should only deal with academic subjects insofar as it is necessary in methods of teaching courses relating to the specific subjects

The 50% of the curriculum time freed in this way could be used for teaching sociology, minority languages or dialects, community development, and group dynamics, and most importantly in providing each student with at least one skill which could be useful to the community in which he is working.

It might also be possible to reduce the time allocated to pedagogical theory and to increase that spent on practice teaching, demonstration or micro-teaching.

### **iii) Teaching Methods**

Except for micro-teaching, throughout any teacher training programme the same methods should be used as it is hoped the teacher would use in the classroom and the community. There should thus be no

lecturing of facts to students, but instead classes should involve dialogue, discussion, enquiry, and practical activities. Many periods should not even take place in the classroom, but instead trainers should go with the students into surrounding communities and work with them on identifying local education and other developmental problems (it should be noted that some countries, e.g. Nepal—are experimenting with a teacher education system where there is no training college, but instead the training takes place through the professors travelling around and helping the student teachers on the job in the villages). Trainees should also have practice in preparing simple teaching aids from widely available materials (e.g. old cans, bottle tops, coconuts, etc.), and should also be assisted in designing experiments (again using locally available materials) to support their learning. There could also be some use of simulation games, through taking a list of educational and other problems, and having the trainees construct curriculum and learning situations around these problems.

The teaching practice should be considered as the central part of the whole training programme. In order that this practice provide effective training in teaching, all full time permanent teachers in the practice schools should receive annual intensive in-service training, and should be used as the main supervisors of the practice teaching, though, of course, there should be frequent visits from training college staff (who should generally have had some experience as rural elementary teachers, not just theoretical knowledge). In order that the teaching practice helps trainees develop their community development capabilities, four major innovations are proposed :—

- Each group of student teachers in a given school should be made up of students who have specialised in different rural development subjects (e.g. one in health and nutrition, etc.)
- Before a group of trainees goes to a particular village, they should be given as detailed a briefing on conditions in that village as is possible.

- The training college should employ community development supervisors (e.g. old community development workers), who will travel round the practice schools, visiting each frequently, and providing needed advice and assistance in situ.
- Each group of student teachers would have to produce a report on their village, its social-cultural situation, the major problems or action taken. This report would not only occupy an important place in the pupil evaluation system, but would also be handed to the next group of student teachers going to that village to use as background. A similar report could be prepared on the school, its problems and possible solutions, also to be used for pupil evaluation.

In total, therefore, I am assuming that teaching either adults or children is a practical activity, and that practical activities cannot really be learnt by listening, but only by practicing and doing. This is why it is suggested that all the teaching in teacher education programmes should use practical, experimental, problem solving, dialogic teaching methods, so prospective teachers not only practice what they will be doing, but also have a good example of how teaching should really be carried out.

#### iv) Organisation

Generally, elementary teacher's colleges should be relatively small and situated in rural areas. Buildings should be as simple as possible, and normally students should be responsible for constructing (on serviced plots with some skilled manpower assistance) their own sleeping quarters. The students should also be responsible (again with some assistance) for catering, cooking meals, and cleaning and maintaining physical facilities and the compound (as is already done). They should also be given the duty of raising a small proportion of the revenues needed for running the college (so that they have practice in fund raising before going to their village school). Except for CCTV or VTR equipment used for microteaching, all equipment used at the colleges should be as simple (or complex) as that likely to be found in villages, and the students should have practice in maintaining and repairing such equipment.

Finally under this head, evening course training should be immediately stopped, and instead the college staff should be much more active in weekends and during vacations in providing continuous in-service training (often in situ rather than in the colleges).

#### **v) Staffing**

I only have two proposals to make under this head. First, significant numbers of staff who have not passed through teacher education systems—from industry, agriculture, business, community development, health, etc.—should be employed on a full time basis to provide training in rural development skills, to help supervise practice teaching (in community development), to prevent too much inbreeding and to act as catalysts for change. Some of these could be employed on a full time basis and others part time. Secondly, all professors (most of whom at present have not taught in rural elementary schools) should periodically (say once every two or three years) take a sabbatical term off to teach in a rural school, sometimes exchanging places with a progressive elementary teacher. In this way they will continuously be made aware of the reality of the rural situation, which will help prevent their teaching from going too far off into esoteric and relatively useless theory. It will also provide a built-in feedback and evaluation system with the professors seeing the effectiveness of the training they give in situ, and progressive elementary teachers being able to participate in the design of courses drawing from their experience of the effectiveness of existing programmes.

#### **vi) Student Evaluation**

Student evaluation should be divided into three parts: firstly, on subject matter and rural development knowledge and skills; secondly, on community development abilities, and understanding of local conditions (partly determined on the basis of the report students produce during teaching practice); and thirdly, on teaching ability. In order to qualify as a rural teacher students will need to pass in all three areas.

In addition, it is suggested that a teacher should not become fully qualified until after he has spent two years teaching in a rural school, during which time he will still receive periodic supervisory advice from college staff, as well as attend at least two intensive

problem solving in-service training courses. Such an "internship" will not only prevent students going from one level of teacher education to the next without ever actually working as a teacher, but will also carry certain important hidden messages, e.g. that teaching can only really be learnt on the job, that continuous in-service training is necessary, and that education and learning is a lifelong process.

## **V. Conclusions**

The message in this chapter is that teacher education as it is at the moment is most certainly acting as a brake on both rural educational development and overall national development. Given the absolutely unique position of the teacher in the rural community (usually he is the only full time government employee), it does, however, have a tremendous potential for transforming the entire rural educational system and the overall development of the country, if only it can forget its academic and theoretical pretensions, and concentrate on producing teachers with the characteristics they would need if they are to act effectively as "teachers" and "agents of change".

It is argued that the whole teacher education system should be adjusted so that it is consistent in trying to create desirable attitudes, skills and knowledge in future teachers. Various indicative recommendations have been made, none very complex, in order to demonstrate the type of transformation that will need to take place if teacher education institutions are to play a progressive and not a stagnatory role in educational and national development.

Obviously there will be resistance to the type of changes proposed, but then all change involves struggling against opposition from conservative elements. It is, however, clear that any educator who is sincerely concerned with the future of his educational system and his country will be willing to struggle to change teacher education institutions from academic certificate producing factories, turning out people untrained as teachers, (who will clog up the school system for decades to come and make reform difficult), to a system in the forefront of educational innovation and national development. The problems outlined in this chapter have been known for a long time; it is solutions that now need to be implemented, in Thailand as much as in most other poor countries.

The final chapter of this book will therefore concentrate on the most crucial aspect of all—problems and strategies of implementation.

## CHAPTER 11

### PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES OF IMPLEMENTATION

It is one thing to develop attractive ideas for educational transformation on paper, it is quite another thing to try to implement these ideas. In fact, in Thailand, in common with most other countries in the world, there is no shortage of new ideas in education. What is lacking, however, is any detailed study of the factors that effect implementation—any analyses of why many of the excellent reforms proposed over the last decade have never actually taken place in practice. I believe, therefore, that a necessary condition for the implementation of any radical educational change is a thorough analysis of the problems that have prevented similar reforms from occurring in the past.

This is particularly important since throughout this book one point has continuously cropped up, and that is that neither entire educational systems, nor small projects usually manage to achieve their original objectives. Though some people might argue that this failure to achieve what was originally intended is the result of conscious Machiavellian manoeuvring on the part of elite groups, in order to maintain their positions of privilege, in the majority of countries that I am familiar with the situation is a great deal more complex than is suggested by such a simplistic explanation. The fact is that the majority of politicians and high level policy makers in most poor countries are honestly convinced that the present educational system (though by no means perfect, and in need of considerable expansion and a large number of marginal changes), is doing a reasonable job, given the shortages of financial and other resources. They tend to equate schooling with education, and thus as they believe that education is an end in itself, there cannot be too much schooling.

Increasingly, however, people are becoming aware of the fact that educational systems are not benefitting the majority of the population of either developed or developing countries as much as might be ex-



pected. This lack of effectiveness is particularly great just in those areas where development is most urgently needed—in the rural parts of poorer countries. It is in these regions where children are having their potential for an active and fulfilling life permanently stunted through maternal and infant malnutrition, where people live in unnecessarily unsanitary conditions, and are working long hours and producing hardly enough to keep themselves and their families alive. It is also in these places where people are wracked by frequent but easily curable endemic diseases, and where the woman's life is continuously at risk through frequent childbirth. In addition, it is in these poor rural areas where the population is trapped by their environment, have few avenues either for individual or community progress, and are often exploited and oppressed. Many are aware of these problems and have ideas of how the situation could be improved, but few have yet worked out how these ideas could be put into practice. Fewer still believe that it is either possible or desirable for school systems to take on the burdens of development.

Most people see education (forgetting that by this they mean schooling) as an end in itself, and economic development as a separate objective, with only very tenuous links between the two (for example, they might accept that high level manpower produced by the educational system is necessary for economic development). In addition, as the majority of those who are in high administrative and political positions, are not only *successful* products of the school system, but also live and work in the modern sector, they are often unaware either of the pain that unfulfilled aspirations produce, or of the complete irrelevance of what is taught in schools for the vast mass of the population. Every one subjectivises situations, and politicians and policy makers are no exception to this general rule.

Thus, as high level active support is essential for the widescale implementation of any significant educational change, a *prior condition* for such implementation is that politicians and policy makers are made aware not only of the shortcomings of the present educational system, but also of the potential that the system could have (if radically trans-

formed) in solving the social and economic problems that they would like to see solved, but at present believe cannot be tackled through educational action. Thus, the innovator has to start the process of change off, by *destroying old myths* (without antagonising those high level administrators too much) and at the same time convince their leaders that the educational system can do considerably more than just educate, and that by changing people's minds their lives can also be changed.

Of course once people are convinced of the need for educational change in a certain direction, there are still a large number of other problems that need to be solved before new systems can be implemented. It is, of course, very difficult to talk about implementation problems in general, as these differ widely from country to country, and even between particular schemes within one country. Ultimately, therefore, implementation strategies must be worked out from a detailed analysis of a real situation. However, as I am not proposing solution for any particular country, I cannot discuss specific problems of implementation, but can only point out some of the factors that must be considered by people trying to put a particular educational innovation into practice.

#### **a) Relationship Between the Educational System and the Larger Society**

Perhaps the most important point of all that must be considered is that the present educational system is a product of the social and political system, and a result of the development pattern being followed by the particular country. Thus any significant change will involve a prior change in the social system, and will certainly result in further changes, and probably also in a different pattern of development. In other words, radical educational change cannot take place without changes in society. Thus in designing any new scheme, the innovator must study carefully his proposal to see what changes in society will be necessary before the proposed new programme can be successfully implemented. If the required changes in society are more than could possibly be considered feasible, then there is little point in him trying to carry through his proposal as it would be doomed to failure. In other words, the innovator must be sure that any scheme that he suggests is at least

possible. If someone wants to change an educational system, it is far better to be realistic (obviously not considering all and every constraint) than utopian.

#### **b) Pressure From Interest Groups**

Very often pressure from interest groups, both from elite parents trying to ensure similar status for their children, and from professions restricting entry through insisting on unnecessarily high qualifications, can stop effective reform. Thus any educational change needs to have a considerable momentum if it is to overcome the resistance of these interest groups. Thus if someone is planning a change in one subject in higher education, it is necessary for him first to examine very carefully which skills are a part of the myth of that particular interest group. The greatest resistance to change will, of course, come from existing teachers, for they have been indoctrinated into the old system not only through their original training, but through years of work. It will be very difficult to convince teachers (or any other profession) that they have been doing the wrong thing throughout their working lives. It will be even more difficult to convince them to allow increasing numbers of non-teachers into the system. Any new system has to take account of the fact that it must absorb all existing teachers and other personnel involved in the school system. However bad these teachers might be, however "wrong" their attitudes and practices, no reform would have any chance of being accepted if it involved forcing into unemployment large numbers of teachers.

#### **c) The Aspirations and Expectations of Parents for Their Children**

Even in the most dictatorial situation, an educational reform could not be implemented if it were inconsistent with the aspirations and expectations of parents. This is even more true in a democratic situation such as the one that is developing in Thailand. At present, parents sending their children to school expect that the school will give their children a slight chance to proceed to further education and elitist position; these hopes may not be based on statistical reality but they still exist. Thus in order to introduce effective change, the parents would

either have to be tricked into believing that the new system is consistent with their expectations, or have their expectations changed, or the proposed reform would have to be at least partially consistent with existing attitudes. In addition, the proposed change should obviously take account of the community's needs which involve first finding out what these needs are. Thus it is necessary to survey the potential participants in a new educational process to see whether their attitudes and expectations are consistent with the process and if not, to discover either how these expectations can be changed or how the proposal can be re-packaged to meet these expectations.

#### **d) Administration and Bureaucratic Inertia**

Any educational system occupies on a full time basis a very large proportion of any population, and has schools in all parts of the country. The huge number of teachers, schools, and pupils involved poses by itself a very difficult problem. There are problems in retraining the teachers and in finding enough people to train the teacher re-trainers; there are problems of communicating the ideas to all parts of the country and of supervising their implementation; there are problems of re-locating or changing the school facilities in tens, or hundreds of schools, and of finding the land for practical activities; and there are also the problems of changing the attitudes and involving actively the millions of children already in school. Thus an efficient administrative and planning system is an essential prerequisite for the implementation of any change. In addition, efficient channels of communication are needed. Any transformed system should not be designed for wider coverage than the effective range of the organisation responsible for implementation.

#### **e) Examinations**

Examinations (as has been emphasised over and over again) not only are one of the major determinants of what actually takes place in any educational institution, but also are the main reasons why educational systems do not usually achieve their egalitarian goals. It is difficult, however, to abolish examinations, as increasingly societies distribute available jobs on the basis of examination results. New selection

must therefore be developed as a part of any educational transformation, and such selection processes must be more egalitarian and influence less what happens in the schools than existing exams. For example, the possibility of developing non-learnable aptitude tests should be investigated, as should community selection of people for higher education.

#### **f) The Reward System of Society**

If the examination system is altered so that it no longer tests what is learnt in school, and if alternative reward systems could be developed so that education and rewards could again be separated<sup>(1)</sup>, then the present incentive that persuades most people to participate in organised educational processes will disappear. Thus new motivations will have to be created, unless, of course, man has an inherent desire to learn, and to know more, which could possibly be the case.

#### **g) Government Departmentalisation**

In any government with a departmentalised structure, administrators and politicians are usually especially concerned with furthering the interests of their particular department. In general, there is a greater concern for the expansion of a particular ministry's or department's activities per-se, than the solution of particular problems, with the success or otherwise of an organisation being more dependent on the rate of increase in its budgets or personnel rather than on the effectiveness of its programmes. However, for rural development, a co-ordination of all educative influences is needed if duplication and conflict are to be avoided and if the maximum impact is to be achieved with the limited resources available. Thus any new rural educational system is likely to involve the development of new methods of administration. Various possible solutions suggest themselves, ranging from the creation of a new super-ministry responsible for all rural development activities, through

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(1) India seems to me to be in a very strange situation at the moment, moving from one reward system based on ancestry (caste) to another reward system (qualifications) which, as soon as the situation stabilizes, will again (at least for the major castes) be based on ancestry.

to a complete decentralization, with all personnel working in local areas and only answerable to the communities or localities in which they are working. In planning for this co-ordination, various non-formal educative influences, such as the mass media, also must not be ignored.

#### **h) Finance as a Resource and as an Educational Tool**

Any new scheme cannot consume much larger inputs of government finance than is used by the present system, for countries are already spending very large proportions of their available revenues on education. In addition, the educative effect of the financing system<sup>(1)</sup> cannot be ignored, nor can the egalitarian effects. Thus the financing system itself (involving ideally increasing community and student participation) can be used as a tool for reinforcing any change that might take place. (For example, "teachers" or "agents of change" might be at least partially paid according to the success they have in improving their communities). Though the educational system in total must not consume more resources after transformation than it presently does, expenditures on secondary and further schooling can and should be reduced (as at present they waste considerable amounts of money), and resources transferred to mass general education. Thus if savings are made, expenditures on any new programme for rural development oriented education could be higher than is presently the case.

#### **i) The Coverage and Rate of Implementation**

There is also the problem of how and where to introduce a transformed system. Should it be introduced gradually all over the country over a long time, or entirely throughout the country in a very short time? Each of these alternatives has its own problems. For example, a sudden introduction will pose very difficult problems of retraining, whilst a gradual introduction (with the benefits accruing only slowly) might allow various interest groups to mount effective opposition. On the other hand, if the reform is introduced totally only in

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(1) For example, if primary education is free for all children, this has no effect on population growth rates, but if it were made increasingly expensive for the third, fourth and subsequent children in a family, this might have significant input on changing the norms of desirable family size.

certain parts of a country, the scheme might be attacked as a method of providing second class education for certain sectors of the population, or might eventually be starved of resources. Though no definite answer can be given to these problems, it does seem that a new system could most easily be introduced in the poorest and most backward parts of a country (e.g. in the N.E. of Thailand) as it is in these areas where transformation is most urgently needed, and it is also in these areas where the present educational system produces the fewest benefits, and thus where parents expect very little for their children from the school in terms of upward mobility. It is in addition probably true that these areas are furthest from the hearts of the existing elite groups, and thus elite opposition will be least.

**j) Flexibility and Inflexibility**

The success of any development oriented rural education programme depends on its flexibility. Not only must different problems be tackled in different ways in different homogenous sub-sectors of society, but also the scheme must be flexible, over time, so that once a problem is partially solved, new problems can be tackled. However, it is very difficult to implement any programme on a *widescale* without it becoming institutionalised and as inflexible as the present school system. The two basic causes of potential inflexibility are, first, administrative inertia, and second, the difficulty of continuously changing the attitudes, skills and knowledge of the teachers. In order to counteract the first there will probably have to be considerable scope for local initiative, and in order to reduce the effects of the latter not only will there have to be frequent retraining of the teachers, but also part-time teachers (or time "agents of change") should be employed on a temporary basis to time from to inject new blood into the system.

**k) Packaging and Selling the Reform**

Finally, before any system can be implemented, it has to be sold to the relevant politicians and policy makers. Thus the people whose active support is needed must be identified, and the new scheme packaged in such a way that it seems consistent with the self interest, or strongly held beliefs of these crucial individuals or groups.

## Conclusions

The above are some of the main problems that are likely to be faced in introducing significant educational reform in rural educational systems. However, it must be emphasised that it is not really possible to talk about problems of implementation in theory. Though the above points are the types of problems that will have to be considered in most cases, in a specific situation much more detailed analyses will have to take place, and precise solutions developed. Once these general problems (and others) have been overcome, then the implementor will have to work out full operational details (organisation, phasing, personnel, training requirements, construction, material requirements, communications, evaluation, etc. etc.) so that he knows exactly what will have to be done at a particular time. He will also have to create his own pressure group for change, for it is inevitable when trying to transform an inert bureaucratic system some type of pressure or force will be needed.

The problem, of implementing a radical educational transformation are extremely great, but just because there are severe problems, the absolute need for change, for motivating and mobilizing the mass of the population to work hard to improve their quality of life, cannot be ignored. There are many good ideas and plans, but these are hardly worth the paper they are written on unless they are implemented.

Developing countries are trapped in a number of vicious circles: with poverty breeding poverty; development producing urban unemployment; urban unemployment breeding crime, political unrest, and slowing down development; and with elites entrenching their positions at the expense of the masses. Solutions to these problems must be rapidly found, and implemented, if civilizations are not to be swept away by the pressures of overpopulation and discontent. As these problems have human causes, their solutions must lie in changing the attitudes and ideas of people and thus any solution depends largely on what education can do.





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