

OUTLINE

of a

NEW EDUCATION ORDER

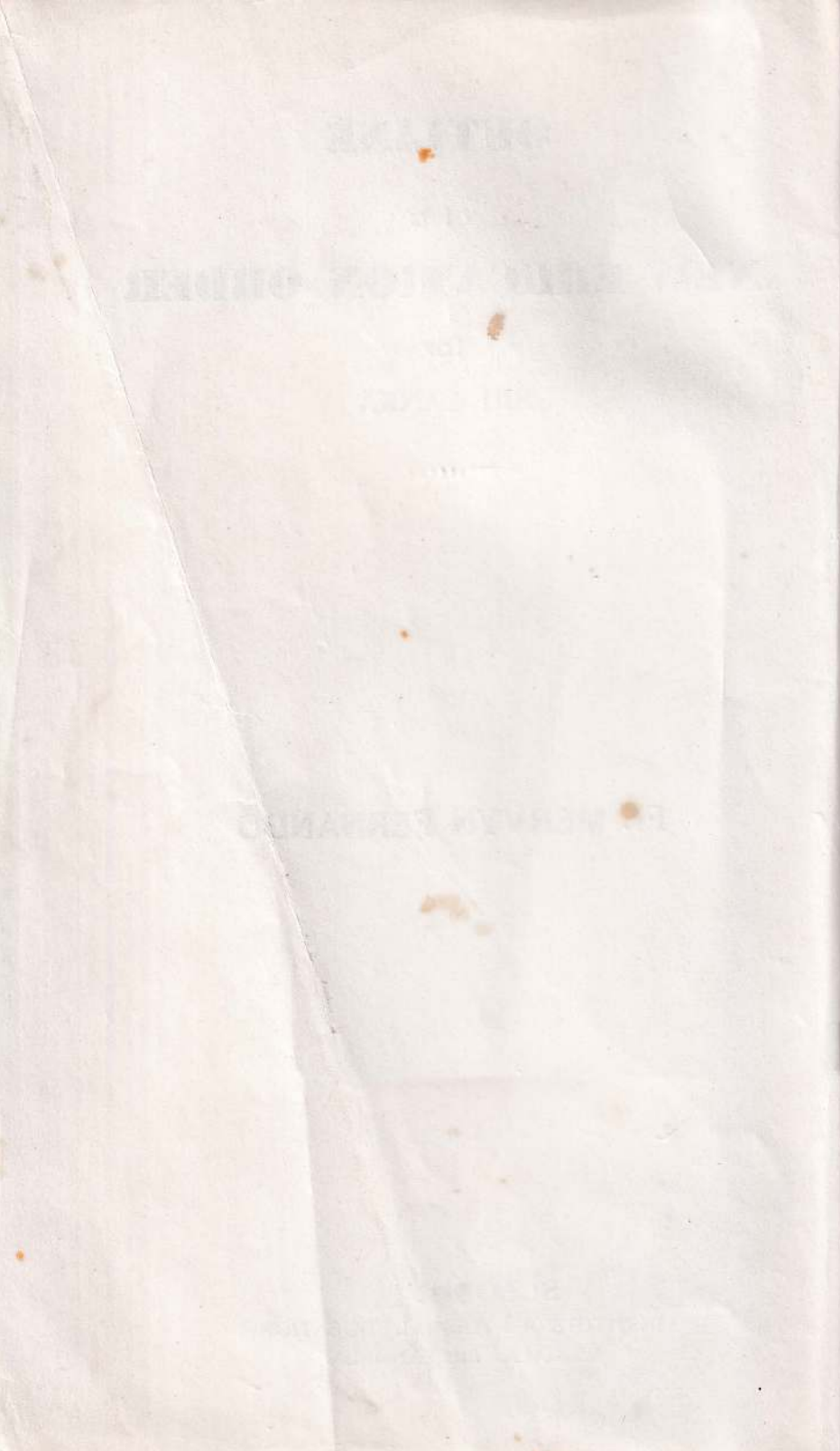
for

SRI LANKA

FR. MERVYN FERNANDO

SUBODHI

INSTITUTE OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION
WEWALA, PILIYANDALA.



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A Contribution toward Educational Reform

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INTRODUCTION

There has been no dearth of educational reforms in Sri Lanka during the past few decades. Practically every Government and every Minister of Education thought it necessary to reform the existing system with the intention, no doubt, of improving it. But whether that intention was realised is another question. Many feel strongly that in Education matters have gone from bad to worse. No less an authority on Education than the late and respected Dr. L.G. Hewage wrote shortly before his death, "to say the least it (Education in Sri Lanka) is socially irrelevant, culturally alienating, psychologically unjustifiable, philosophically irrational and nationally suicidal" (1). The Report of the Presidential Commission on Youth thought that "the structure of Education must be reformed as a matter of utmost urgency"(2).

There is hardly any dispute today about the need for substantial changes in the educational system. But a very important preliminary question is : on what basis should such reforms be undertaken? Reforms attempted earlier were in response to practical needs or to perceived deficiencies of the existing system. The basic underpinnings of the system itself were not questioned. The vision and philosophy of Education which lay behind the system were either ignored or implicitly accepted as true and valid. But our contention is that this is precisely what needs to be clarified and spelt out in the first place. As the UNESCO Report, "Learning To Be" puts it, "Today it is no longer desirable to undertake educational reforms in piecemeal fashion, without a concept of the totality of goals and modes of the educational process. To find out how to reshape its component parts, one must have a vision of the whole"(3).

Another less obvious but no less urgent reason for educational reform is the radically new conditions of personal and social life, a new consciousness of person and society that has emerged in the past few decades. Much of this has been due to the impact of Science & Technology and of the mass media. The accelerating pace of socio-cultural evolution has dismantled old familiar structures with nothing tangible taking their place. Many things are in the melting pot ; questions are many but the answers are few. Life has become more complex and problematic. Then, as developing countries we are beset with a whole host of socio-economic problems which impinge specially on youth.

The education of the present generation for the future must come to grips with these socio-cultural, economic, developmental conditions of our time. The present system, rooted in a by-gone era, is incapable of serving the purpose. But changes and reforms of that nature must be done **after much thought and with great care**, because the task is difficult and complex, and moreover, so much is at stake - the future of the school-going generation of today and therefore the future of the country. From recent history we know how attempts at educational reform, some of them very laudable, failed by and large, because they were not given sufficient thought, were not adequately prepared for, and followed through systematically in the implementation. The Government, in consultation with the people, should embark on a project of formulating a comprehensive new Education Order for the country. Such a project we believe :

- (a) Should involve the active participation of Educationists and representatives of the teaching profession in both Government and non-Government sectors.
- (b) Should be done in close consultation with the Ministries responsible for Economic Planning, Plan Implementation, Man Power and Youth Affairs ; that is, education must be of a piece with general national development.
- (c) Should not be finalised without a feedback from the general public, specially parents and older students, within a specified time period; it will find acceptance by the people more readily if they play some part in its creation.

Provision however should be made that the accepted system cannot be tampered with by the Party/Minister in power ; any changes, if necessary, could be made only on the recommendations of a knowledgeable and responsible body such as a National Commission on Education.

Though the educational reforms we propose are based on a different vision and philosophy, their implementation has to start from where we are at now, namely, the existing system. It is impractical to suggest that we start from scratch to build up an entirely new structure embodying the new vision. The challenge was to propose reforms and changes which will really embody the new in a feasible and practical way. We are hopeful that this challenge has been met successfully.

Then we want to make it clear that what we have proposed here is an **OUTLINE** and not a complete and detailed blueprint of a new educational system. Attention has been focussed specially on

the need to have a total vision about the goals of Education. We have also indicated in broad outline how such a goal could be achieved in the different areas and components of the educational system from pre-school to tertiary education. As such this paper should be adequate to serve as a basis for discussion and planning of a new Education Order for Sri Lanka.

Though SUBODHI takes full responsibility for this document it gratefully acknowledges the contributions of all those who were consulted - Educationists, Principals of Schools, Teachers, Parents, Clergy, Religious and Students. It is impossible to mention all of them by name. A number of ideas have also been taken from recent thinking on Education, here and abroad. Hence the document represents, in its own small way, the application of some of the best contemporary theory and research on education to the Sri Lankan situation. We have tried to steer a middle path between the ideal and the possible between the theoretical and the practical towards a realistic proposal for reform.

THE VISION BEHIND THE REFORMS..... AND THE REFORMERS

1

"All educational practice implies a theoretical stance on the educator's part. This stance in turn implies - sometimes more, sometimes less explicitly - an interpretation of man and the world" (Paulo Freire) (4). It is therefore not only useful but very necessary that we spell out the understanding of man and world that lies behind the educational order presented in this paper.

Man is man, as distinct from animals, by virtue of his level of consciousness or awareness, which is reflex awareness, of his capacity for free decision-making and action, and his "connectedness" to other human beings in a variety of personal and social relationships. At birth man is only potentially so, a seed which has to grow into a tree. This is the process of humanisation. A human nature which comes into this world at birth needs to be **humanised**, be made to grow into man's estate. This is basically a socio-cultural process, a process tied up in an intricate network of relationships, interactions and institutions in the experiential world of the child. Hence the ultimate goal of education is to awaken the child to the full reality of himself and his world in a reflexively conscious way, to liberate him from inner enslavements and external domination, to actualise his potential and talents for constructive, creative work and to enable him to enter into a network of freely chosen relationships which will constitute his world. (5).

Much recent writing has pointed out how the kind of schools we have today inhibit, by and large, the growth of the child in all these aspects (see, for example, Ivan Illich, Paulo Freire, William Pinar, Merleau Ponty, Maxine Greene & others). The syllabi, curricula and examinations - the bread and butter of the educational system - encourage and even impose un-reflective acceptance of ready-made judgements and answers, restrict free inquiry and decision-making, discourage initiative and creativity, and channel relationships in narrow grooves of traditional roles and social structures. Our school system is tailor-made for packaged knowledge, uncritical conformity, enforced discipline, mechanical and memory learning, and patterned behaviour. As Greene says, "schools create the kind of reality that absorbs those within it and thereby serves to submerge consciousness. This, fundamentally, is the nature of the oppression they impose. This is what makes it so difficult for people to learn how to learn"(6)

Some of the implicit assumptions of such a system are :

- (a) students who are ignorant should listen to, and learn from, teachers who are knowledgeable.
- (b) knowledge is mostly a matter of facts and information which can be given effectively by direct teaching and tested by examinations.
- (c) intellectual knowledge is the most important component of formal education, and the excellence of a school must be judged by its academic record.
- (d) academic education automatically prepares a child/youth for life and work.
- (e) different aspects of the child's life can be catered to by different activities in the school--studies for intellectual growth, sports & games for physical growth etc.

Should we not rather say that education is for each child a reality-making and reality-transforming project, which is at the same time uniquely personal and thoroughly comunitarian. The educational milieu must enable the learner to explore and articulate the richness of his biographical existence, for reflexively conscious, purposeful action of a creative nature. The educational program puts the student on course to direct the trajectory of his life with an increasing degree of self- possession and vision. He is able to refuse a given reality "in the name of a reality to be produced" (Sartre), in varying degrees.

But what is the kind world in which man has to work out his humanising project. There is no such thing as a world-view *per se*; a world-view is a **world-viewed**. Behind the existing educational system stands what has been called the mechanistic, fragmented and static view of reality - a view which has been **Solidated**, by Science. Classical western Science with its highly successful analytical method cut up reality into disparate blocks and elements which could be described precisely and measured exactly. The world out there was a collection of jigsaw puzzle pieces which had to be put together for the picture. It is only natural that such a world-view would give rise to a mentality characterised by rationality, detached objectivity, duality (of subject and object, mind and matter etc.), individualism, exploitation and conflict.

There is, however, a growing dis-ease with that world view. The truth seems to be quite different. Far from being a collection of disparate elements, reality is a seamless robe of diverse colours:

underneath the apparent diversity there is a rich and strong unity. Paradoxically it is the hard sciences which are leading the way in discovering the "softness" of the Universe and its harmony and wholeness (see, for example, *Science, Order and Creativity* by Bohm and Peat, *A New Vision of Reality* by Griffiths, *A New Science of Life* by Sheldrake, *The Anthropic Cosmological Principle* by Barrow and Tipler). Wordsworth's poetry which saw "the Universe in a grain of sand" is modern Cosmology.

This view of reality which has been termed holistic, integral, ecological, is no stranger to the East. All the ancient religions of India and the Far East - Buddhism, Hinduism, Confucianism, Taoism - taught an integral and holistic world-view. The heavens and the earth, mind and matter, body and soul, Man and Nature, were all connected and inter-connected. Even persons were "part" of each other and of a whole, the whole greater than the sum of its parts.

Such a view of the world will naturally generate a socio-cultural mentality which will emphasise unity over separation/fragmentation, cooperation over competition, mysticism over rationality, the community over the individual, the whole over the part. This has been, by and large, the way of the East.

Our standpoint is that the reforms we contemplate in Education at this point of time must be based on, and undergirded by, this new consciousness of wholeness, unity and harmony. How could it be otherwise if our educational system is to be forward-looking and geared to the future. It is not a matter of adjusting and refurbishing the present system, but of changing perspective, vision and mentality.

Reading the signs of the times we can see the future taking shape in :

- (a) the ascendancy of the personal over the institutional ; personal and community relationships taking precedence over social roles and institutional structures.
- (b) the expansion of the sphere of freedom and personal choice, implying a devaluation of authority and hierarchical relationships.
- (c) a greater and more deliberate vindication of human rights, of individuals, of groups, of minorities.
- (d) a greater recognition of the equality of the sexes and of their complementarity in all walks of life.

- (e) the ascendancy of cooperation over competition at all levels, within nations and among nations.
- (f) a scaling down in size from the macro to the micro, specially in relation to human organisations & enterprises; small is beautiful.
- (g) re-valuation and appreciation of the spiritual dimension in a personalistic and communitarian context as against institutional, ritualistic and "churchy" religion.
- (h) a growing disenchantment with progress and development measured only in terms of economic growth, GNP and per capita income, and a corresponding trend to assess development in broader, holistic and ecological terms - from the physical quality of life to the human quality of life.
- (i) accelerating expansion of knowledge to which the common man will have increasing access through the electronic media (audio & video) and the computer; a weakening of possibilities for censorship and information control
- (j) proliferation of small scale technology (gadgets) in home, office, workshop, school, farm etc.
- (k) development of more sophisticated technology putting greater control of natural processes sub-atomic, biological, genetic into man's hands, raising new and complex ethical and legal questions.
- (l) population expansion and increasing travel, communication and exchange across national and cultural frontiers raising the "temperature" and complexity of global interaction, and the level of global consciousness.
- (m) the devolution of social and political authority to smaller units, implying a recognition of specificity and diversity (social, cultural, religious,) a trend towards unity in diversity rather than in uniformity.
- (n) increasing convergence of hitherto disparately regarded elements, areas and aspects of life such as mind and body, spirit and matter, the animate and the inanimate, the micro and the macro, Man and Nature.

The immediate major difficulty of educational reforms of this kind will be the clash between the vision proposed here and that prevailing in the larger world outside school. The school, after all, is the child of society. Three considerations could meet this difficulty : one, this new consciousness and world - view is

emerging in the larger society too though still weak and incipient; two, it is the children and youth who will be more easily "infected" by this new mentality and that is evident in the impatience of youth with the old order in general; three, if a start has to be made to support the thrust of evolution towards a new era, there is no better place for it than school and youth. That the change is perhaps overdue could be a valid interpretation of the widespread youth unrest - their intolerance of traditional social structures, their strident demands for greater personal freedom, for authenticity in social/public life, for equality and social justice, and their openness to change. Could we not discern in the revolt of youth, at least in its basic thrust if not in all its practical expressions, the birth trauma of a new order? If so, a critical problem of any social or educational reform will be, who are the reformers? Are they of the old order, or of the a-borning new? Are they part of the problem or part of the solution?

Those of us who are attempting the task of educational reform have to be honestly self-critical. To what extent will our own educational "shape", personality structure, socio-economic background and political ideology colour our reforming endeavours? We cannot, of course, get away from ourselves; but we have to be very alert to these pitfalls. Are we able to recognise in the signs of the times an evolutionary movement from the old to the still undefinable new? Are we prepared to abandon some entrenched traditional positions to venture into new and unfamiliar ground, to take calculated risks in reaching out to the future?

THE PAST AND THE CHALLENGE OF THE FUTURE

2

The shortcomings of the present system should not blind us to the fact that Sri Lanka has succeeded, by and large, in setting up an extensive and effective educational system the country can be proud of – a system which has given Sri Lanka one of the highest literacy rates in Asia, an early adoption of universal franchise with a democratic political order. Education has been given high priority by every Government since Independence. Starting off from the colonial system which entrenched privilege in the English-educated urban elite, successive Governments democratised education in Sri Lanka through a number of reforms starting from the introduction of free education and a change in the medium of instruction in the 1940s through changes in curricula, structure management in the 60s and 70s, the White Paper of 1981 up to recent reforms in tertiary education.

The present Constitution of Sri Lanka enshrines the right of every citizen to education in Chapter V: "The complete eradication of illiteracy and the assurance to all persons of the right to universal and equal access to education at all levels" (Art. 27/2/h). Our education has also offered equality of opportunity of education to both sexes; as a result women are adequately represented in almost all the professions and in every sector of socio-political life, almost on par with many countries in the First World. The progress of education in Sri Lanka from Independence up to now has been well summarised in a paper presented at the South East Asia Regional Conference on Education for All, 9-11 December 1989, by the Sri Lanka delegation, in Dhaka, Bangladesh:

"Through the years which followed further initiatives were taken to improve the quality and national scope of education. Free education was first introduced in 1945 and extended from kindergarten to the university level. Between 1940 and 1947, fifty-four Central Schools were established with the intention of providing a broader distribution of secondary education facilities beyond the urban centres. A system of scholarship trusts, providing free board and lodging at the central schools, offered an opportunity for bright students from village primary schools to proceed to secondary and higher education. The provision of a free mid-day meal for lower income students helped to relieve the debilitating effects of malnutrition amongst the lower income groups. In the 1950s Sinhala and Tamil were introduced as the languages of instruction

in the secondary schools. By the 1960s almost all schools in Sri Lanka came under the direct jurisdiction of the State, and the denominational system established during the period of British colonial occupation was almost entirely dismantled.

"The expansion of the education system resulted in a significant increase in the student population of Sri Lanka. Such increase in turn, contributed to the decline in the existing urban-rural and gender disparities. While the expansion of the education system was not always accompanied by parallel improvements in the overall quality of education, the new education policies had a broad impact upon the population of Sri Lanka, and exceeded pace and scope of education developments in other Asian nations.

"During the 1930s more than one-half of the school-age population of Sri Lanka did not participate in the education system. By 1984 this figure had been reduced to fifteen per cent. Substantial increases in school attendance were recorded at all levels of the education system. Enrolment in grades 9 and 10 increased from 69,233 in 1952 to 151,265 in 1957 and had reached 294,253 by 1965. Similarly enrolment in grades 11 and 12 increased from approximately 5,000 in 1952 to 34,679 in 1963 (S. Jayaweera, 1989). Similar trends were recorded in the sphere of University education through the 1960s, spurred by the introduction of State-funded education, as well as the changes in the language of instruction in secondary school and the Arts faculties. The first University in Sri Lanka was established 1942, in response to a strong public demand. Between 1959 and 1964, the student population of the Universities increased from 4,039 to 15,219. In 1950, the majority of university students were from the english-educated, professional urban sector. It has been estimated that by 1967, village and town council areas accounted for 73 per cent of the university population, with the middle class comprising only 34 per cent (S. Jayaweera, 1989). Studies conducted in 1951 and 1974 highlighted the transition in the social composition of the university population: previously dominated by a middle-class elite, the university included a complete spectrum of the nation's socio-economic composition (M. Strauss, 1951; U. Aratchi, 1974).

"Between 1946 and 1989, the number of schools increased from slightly less than 6000 to more than 10,000, while the student population increased from 500,000 to almost 3.8 million. During the same period, the teacher population increased from approximately 14,000 to more than 150,000. At present, the female student population level exceeds that of the male population at

both the primary level (51.3 per cent) and the tertiary level (59 per cent).

"The Sri Lankan education system has achieved a commendable national literacy rate. Male literacy rates reported in census data increased from 76.5 per cent in 1946 to 85.6 per cent in 1963, while corresponding female literacy increased from 46.2 per cent to 67.1 per cent. While the 1981 census reported a literacy rate of 86.1 per cent among the population aged fifteen years and older, a 1985 literacy study conducted by the National Association for Total Education, upon the basis of a reading and writing exercise administered in eight districts, reported a literacy rate of 82.4 per cent. (S. Jayaweera, 1989).

"It may be noted that the expansion of the education system following Independence was effected in the absence of operative compulsory education legislation. While legislation establishing a framework for the introduction of compulsory education existed, the regulations necessary to give effect to such legislation were never enacted. The expansion of the education system was achieved in response to keen social demands and the impact of far-sighted policy objectives, as opposed to a legislative mandate".

But we cannot rest on our laurels; there is much to be learnt from the mistakes of the past. Another crucial consideration, already mentioned above, is the new situation in Sri Lanka and in the world. We have to adapt to, and prepare for, a host of new circumstances and needs, economic, social and cultural. And then we cannot forget the problem of numbers; the population of Sri Lanka has almost trebled since Independence. How do we maintain quality in the face of heavy quantitative demands on the school system? Does quality have to be compromised, or can we have both with the constraints of limited financial resources (7). Answers to these questions can come only from educational expertise coupled to creative thinking backed by a strong political will.

The chief shortcomings and deficiencies of the present system may be enumerated as follows:

- (a) Lack of a clear-cut vision and philosophy of Education, without which a system cannot operate coherently. Our present system seems to be a collection of many elements loosely put together and operated through directives and circulars of the Department and the Ministry on an "ad hoc" basis.
- (b) The wide disparity of the quality of education and of educational facilities among schools, for example, among urban and rural schools. Even within the same area some schools are more favoured, by way of finance allocations, teachers etc., than others. Hence no equality of opportunity for a standard education for all children throughout the Island.
- (c) The question of language streams and the disparities in the opportunity to study English. These have led to a divisive ethnic consciousness and engendered class divisions.
- (d) The strong orientation of the system towards examinations and success in obtaining marks/grades squeezes out the intellectually weaker children and those have less educational resources (poor children, poor schools). Hence a high dropout rate; according to the figures of the Ministry of Education (1989) 9% of five-year olds never entered school, 22% dropped out at year 6, and 45% at year 10.
- (e) The rigid uniformity of the system with the same type of school, same texts, subjects, schedules etc. all over the country, is not congruent with the wide diversity of geographical and socio-cultural milieux.
- (f) The lack of appreciation of the impact of attitudes, values etc. of the ambient society on the educational system, and therefore of the need for critical reflection on educational goals vis a vis socio-economic realities, cultural patterns and value systems.
- (g) The system is also heavily teacher-oriented; teachers are expected to impart knowledge and the students to imbibe it mostly passively and uncritically.

- (h) It is also heavily weighted on the side of intellectual, academic study and memory work. There is very little room for the development of initiative, creativity, independent judgement etc. Besides, the system erroneously identifies educational levels with examination results.
- (i) The Cinderella treatment given to parents. Though parents are the most directly touched by the educational system they have no voice in it. Education has been too much in the hands of politicians and bureaucrats; even professional Educationists have not been very much in the picture.
- (j) The system leaves out, by and large, other vital spheres of a growth such as the emotional/psychic, the moral, the aesthetic and the spiritual. These have a great bearing on the genesis of a fine well-developed human being, as much as, or even more, than the intellectual aspect.
- (k) Other educative and formative influences on a child's life such as the media and the social milieu are not taken into account. The system assumes, incorrectly, that all education, or most of it, takes place in the school, in formal education.
- (l) The ambiguous role of Religion in the system has resulted in confusion in the school and strained relations between religious authorities and the Ministry of Education.
- (m) Insufficient number of schools in relation to the student population. As a result, there is over-crowding in the classroom, hassle of parents to get a child admitted to a school, difficulty of maintaining discipline and a general drop in the quality of teaching.
- (n) Teachers are often not only overworked but also poorly remunerated; many of them have to supplement their income through other activities. The temptation to do so by giving private tuition is very great. All this militates against the quality of teaching in the classroom.
- (o) The use of the teaching profession by the Government as an avenue of employment for unemployed persons; this has naturally resulted in the presence of large numbers of untrained, unqualified teachers in the classroom, whose motivation is largely monetary.

BASIC POSTULATES

4

In the light of the above, the following should be considered basic postulates of a comprehensive, national system of INTEGRAL EDUCATION:

- (a) it provides for the full, integral development of the child as a unique individual, in all aspects of his life.
- (b) it ensures that school education keeps in step with the cognitive and psycho-social growth process of the child in its progressive unfolding.
- (c) it is based on the premise that education is a process of discovery of self and world by each child in his own way with the teacher and the school environment playing a facilitating and supportive role.
- (d) it enables the child to relate to his physical environment of the natural world, the social environment of family, community and country in a discerning and constructive way.
- (e) it provides for orientation and training for job/profession and gainful employment according to aptitudes, abilities and choice.
- (f) it provides equitable opportunities of education to all children in the country without distinction of geographic area, ethnic group, gender, or socio-economic class.
- (g) it is so structured as to balance, as far as possible, the needs of personal growth with those of national development.
- (h) it takes into account that much learning takes place outside the classroom - in the home, in the social environment, through the media etc.
- (i) it provides for the flourishing of a learning society in which any of its members, at any age, has opportunities and facilities for self-education.
- (j) it incorporates a degree of flexibility which can accommodate differences of geographic area & cultural milieux without prejudice to a core curriculum, and innovations of methodology as and when needed.
- (k) It is fully alive to the demands of a fast-changing society which continuously throws up new questions, problems, needs and challenges.

Explicitly or implicitly every society gives that shape and form to its educational system which will "produce" the kind of citizen it needs for its survival and consolidation. It cannot be otherwise, because the 'raison d'être' of any educational system is to "fit" the child into the existing social order or a new one envisaged for the future. A change in the world-view or ideology of a society will automatically be reflected in changes in its educational system. When the British became the rulers of our country they replaced our traditional educational system with one which served in the main their purposes, namely, generating a class of English-educated personnel to man the machinery of public administration. The root-malaise of our educational system is that it carries too much dead weight from the past and is badly out of tune with present social realities and the development demands of the a-borning society of Sri Lanka.

It is obvious, therefore, that in setting up a new Education order we need to have some idea of the desired social configuration of our country. The difficulties in this regard are serious. It will depend on what is considered desirable with regard to the economic system, the socio-political order, legal and cultural institutions, industrialisation (level of Science & Technology) etc. Though there could be great diversity of standpoints on these matters we can expect a consensus at a practical level on what features have to be eliminated from the social body and what promoted to see Sri Lanka the way we want it to be in the near future. They could be identified thus:

- (a) the elimination of poverty at least to the extent of a minimum decent standard of living for all
- (b) achieving full employment
- (c) equitable distribution of the wealth of the country to minimise the gap between the rich and the poor
- (d) acceptance of, and respect for, racial, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity as a positive, enriching feature
- (e) respect for human life (for all life) and dignity of the human person, and consequently the guarantee of fundamental human rights for all citizens
- (f) a caring society—caring for the sick, the aged and the physically and mentally handicapped

- (g) commitment to authentic human values—of justice, honesty, simplicity of life, sharing, hospitality, selflessness, spirit of service, compassion, love—preached by all religions
- (h) fostering attitudes of cooperation and non-violence in all sectors
- (i) openness to socio-cultural evolution (with discernment) in the process of modernisation

For a developing country such as Sri Lanka its educational system must have a direct orientation towards the genesis of a society with the above-mentioned characteristics—a pluralistic society which can offer all its citizens, irrespective race and creed, possibilities of the good life in the widest meaning. This will have much to do with the large majority of the economically and socially deprived people of the country. They have a right to priority in the benefits of Education, as in other spheres of socio-economic development. But, paradoxically, opportunities and facilities for education are weakest among the poorer segments of the population. The most poorly equipped schools, the largest concentration of school drop-outs and the non-schooled are found in remote villages, in the plantation sector, among fisherfolk and in urban shanties. And the lion's share of budgetary allocations has consistently gone to the larger, better-off, urban schools. They have also been favoured by way of quality of teachers (graduates, trained) and educational facilities. The marginalisation of the poor in the educational system is, moreover, a drag on development; the human potential of a large number of our children lie untapped and under-utilised. The most urgent imperative of educational reform is the **effective incorporation of the poor into a relevant and productive school system**. The political will to do so will be the acid test of the Government's sincerity about educational reforms.

As a practical guideline for a setting up an educational program we could say that it should have a three-fold objective:

- (a) develop the personality of the student in all its dimensions and components in his socio-cultural environment
- (b) train him for work (job/profession, gainful employment)
- (c) make him a conscious socially-concerned, responsible and "productive" citizen

Every human being comes into the world with a hereditary package of abilities and capacities which will unfold in the course of time according to the conditions, favourable or unfavourable, of the socio-cultural environment. The God-given destiny of every child is to reach the fulness of what he is capable of. Education is nothing other than providing a structured environment conducive to that unfolding in a particular socio-cultural setting. As the Indian sage Sri Aurobindo said: "That alone will be a true and living education which helps to bring out to full advantage, makes ready for the full purpose and scope of human life, all that is in the individual man, and which at the same time helps him to enter into his right relation with the life, mind and soul of humanity of which he himself is a unit and his people or nation, a living, separate and yet inseparable member".

To spell out briefly the three objectives:

1. Personality development: in the process of education should take into account all its aspects:

- (a) the physical: pertaining to the body and physical growth (health, nutrition exercise, sports)
- (b) the intellectual: pertaining to the unfolding of intelligence and growth in knowledge through study, research, training etc.
- (c) the emotional: pertaining to feelings, their understanding and control through discipline and will (emotional maturity)
- (d) the aesthetic : pertaining to the growth and refinement of sensibilities regarding the beautiful through the appreciation and practice of the fine arts
- (e) the moral/spiritual : pertaining to a vision of life and a way of life based on certain fundamental truths & connected principles and values as taught by the different religions

2. Training for Work (Job/profession) will consist of acquisition of knowledge and/or training in skills in a specific field. In days gone by this happened "naturally" and automatically in the context of the family & the village community, with the son learning and taking to the job/trade of the father. With the complexification of society in recent times the world of work has expanded and diversified into a very wide variety of professions, trades, jobs, services.

Most of them call for special skills, training and study at different levels. Work is also psychologically important to give the person a sense of achievement and meaningfulness of life.

3. Citizenship: No man is an island; he has to live and work with fellow human beings in a social context. Person and society are in constant interaction, one impinging on the other. In the early years of a person's life, the social environment (family, neighbourhood) predominates in the growth process, though the child is not entirely passive wax pressed upon by the environment. But with increase of age and expansion of awareness, knowledge and skills, the individual becomes more capable of exerting influence on his society, for better or for worse. A good education is by definition, one which enables the individual to grow in civic consciousness and promote the well-being of his society in a constructive way.

In the face of the present socio-political crisis in the country it seems highly desirable that the new educational system try to inculcate more consciously the following attitudes and values in all its citizens:

- (a) the acceptance of racial diversity without prejudice to national unity
- (b) the value of human life and the dignity of the human person
- (c) the value of simplicity of life style against the tendencies to consumerism, greed for goods, luxury and ostentation
- (d) readiness to sacrifice personal gain and comfort in favour of social/community service and national development
- (e) a universalist outlook which will see the Sri Lankan nation as part of the global family of man.

(Primary & Secondary)

The word "formal" has come under close scrutiny lately. Educationists today are reluctant to draw neat lines between formal, non-formal and informal education. They would reject the traditional privileged place given to formal education as the most substantial and "dignified". We recognise that, in reality, education is a life-long process which goes on all the time from birth to death. As Erich Fromm said, "The individual's entire life is nothing but a process of giving birth to himself; in truth we are only fully born when we die". The idea that formal schooling gave a person the intellectual and technical equipment valid for life - a fundamental tenet of traditional education - does not hold water any longer. On the contrary it is becoming more and more clear that education is "learning to live, learning to learn so as to be able to absorb new knowledge all through life; learning to think freely and critically; learning to love the world and make it more human; learning to develop in and through creative work" (UNESCO Report, "Learning To Be").

This view of education immediately relativises the importance of formal schooling making it one of the settings in which the child learns. This does not, of course, mean the abolishing of formal education and the school system. But this view, which we endorse in this paper, will make a difference regarding the place of formal education vis a vis other educational agents and settings.

Necessary as it is, formal education, therefore, is only one segment or component of the child's total and integral education. Specially, in the impressionable early years everything the child sees, hears, touches, feels, experiences etc. at home, school, in the neighbourhood, in the street, goes to educate him. Parents, in particular, should realise that they and the human environment of the home is as educative of the child as the school. With very good reason the Sinhala language uses the same word for both teachers and parents (parents are "de-guru", දෙගුරු).

1. Pre-School Education (up to 5 years of age)

All children should begin schooling at about three years of age in a pre-school or a Montessori school till they are eligible to enter year 1 in Primary school. Hence these schools should be available to all families preferably within walking distance of the home. Since it will be impractical for the State to operate

thousands of such schools all over the Island, they could be entrusted to religious and voluntary Organisations and even to qualified private individuals. But the State should ensure that they conform to norms and requirements laid down for them with regard to teachers, equipment and the educational program. As indicated earlier integral education must pay attention to the child's physical/bodily growth too. Since this is particularly vital in the early years it is incumbent on the pre-school (and the primary school) to look into the nutritional status of the child, specially of those who come from poor homes. Is the present mid-day meal arrangement adequate and effective? If pre-school and primary schools become more intergrated with the local community, could not the community too share responsibility in this regard, instead of depending on a dole out from the State.

2. Primary School (year 1 to year 5)

The foundation of the educational edifice of the child is laid at this stage, hence it should be strong and adequate in every respect. The awakening of the mind of the child to the world around him - the world of things, people, events - takes place in a conscious way during these years. It is the first opening of the bud which will later flower into the educated adult. Hence the educational program itself and how it is given and by what kind of teacher are all-important. If the opening bud is damaged in any way what kind of flower will come out of it?

We want to state very emphatically that the highest priority must be given by the Government to providing primary education of quality to all children throughout the country. Who can deny that every son/daughter of the soil is entitled to at least primary education. Though Sri Lanka can boast of an extensive educational system in general, too many children never go to school or drop out before year 5 (p.12). These children are mostly in the socially and economically disadvantaged segments of the population. A good percentage (as high as 40% ?) of primary schools in rural areas are woefully inadequate with regard to buildings (dilapidated, leaking) and essential furniture (children seated on the floor, or two to one chair etc.) and many of them are hopelessly under-staffed, sometimes one teacher for three or four classes (over 100 children), in a ramshackle shed. We urge the Government to begin its project of educational reform with the re-organisation of the primary school system, not only for the sake of the children but also for the sake of national development, because it has been established that the cost-benefit ratio for primary education is higher than for other stages.

As far back as 1943 the Report of the Special Committee on Education, chaired by Mr. C.W.W.Kannangara, said: "We emphasise the necessity for making elementary education genuinely compulsory. The State cannot justify a grandiose educational scheme leading to the University of Ceylon unless it provides sufficient primary and practical schools to provide education for every child in Ceylon.....The argument that parents cannot afford to keep their children at school until the age of fourteen has been the argument used in all countries where compulsory education has been established. The answer is that the community cannot afford to let them stay away. The full-time employment of children under the age of fourteen should be forbidden, as it is in most countries. The suggestion that they must be used in the paddy fields is incorrect in so far as it implies that this work will prevent them from attending school. There is nothing to prevent Ceylon from following the example of other agricultural countries, where part-time work in the fields is the normal lot of many children who nevertheless receive a full education" (8).

Surveys have revealed that one of the reasons for drop-outs from primary school is the inability of children to cope with the present curriculum. Specially for a rural child of uneducated parents the curriculum will have little to do with his home life, his needs and concerns, and the life of the village. Nor will his parents, say farmers, be able to relate to it. If we are convinced that education is for life and it must have social relevance, should not the curriculum, syllabus and time-table of the school, specially primary school, be of a piece with what is outside? Hence, with regard to the curriculum, we propose that it be made functional, that is, based on and related to the practical tasks and functions of the day-to-day life of the child such as going to the shop/market, rearing chicks, goats, cattle etc., milking cows, sewing clothes, cooking food, home gardening, sowing/reaping paddy, fishing in sea/lake, using house-hold "gadgets", repairing them etc. The so-called subjects of the present curriculum, if they are still considered important, could be related to these activities in a way which could be very enjoyable and meaningful to the student. This functional curriculum has the clear advantage of active student participation, relevance to life and of doing away with the need for examinations at this level. This in turn will automatically erode the need for tuition which has enslaved even the primary school students.

The present division of children into classes (grades) should be reconsidered. Perhaps a less rigid system of grouping children,

admitting criteria other than age, such as interests, occupation of parents, would be more relevant and appropriate.

The above considerations lead to the conclusion that the local community/village - parents and significant elders - should be given a voice in the educational program and operation of the primary school. If the community is given a major role in the affairs of the school there is a strong likelihood that it (the school) will impart a relevant life-education to its students; there will be very few drop-outs. For the parents and elders too, in constant dialogue with the school authorities, it will be a learning experience. The school in this way becomes an open one, a locus of education for both the young and the old of the locality. Such a school will also attract local resources of finance and expertise, reducing the burden on the provincial or national Centres; people will support what is their own.

Setting up this kind of school at the primary level, and with some modifications at the secondary level, implies some flexibility in the national educational system, given the diversity of social milieux in Sri Lanka. Nuwara Eliya, Hambantota, Anuradhapura and Jaffna will not have exactly the same type of primary school. The differences will reflect the peculiar characteristics of those regions to the advantage of the child's education. Moreover this is the kind of school which will cater to the needs of development at the grassroots level, the school becoming a potent agent of development with the students from their young age getting involved in the process.

In the kind of primary school envisaged above there will be no need for grades and examinations; instead there will be periodic assessments of the child by the teacher (or teachers) in consultation with the parents. This assessment will look at the child's linear progress, from past to the present, rather than compare him with other children. This could be done at the end of the term or half-yearly and yearly. The assessment record or performance profile will be passed on to the next "grade" or "class" at the end of the year.

The educational program of the primary school will naturally have less book work and more "action":

- (a) giving a large place to activities of making, discovering etc. through individual and group work.
- (b) exposing the child to experiences of the natural environment of plants, animals, water, forest, river, sea etc.

through outdoor programs, projects, visits, engagement in activities/celebrations of the village etc.

- (c) engaging the child in social interaction with peers, in cultural programs, aesthetic activities, shramadana work etc.
- (d) making extensive use of audio-visual aids
- (d) "exploiting" the natural interest of the child in stories of heroes, of courage and valour, of adventure & fantastic exploits, by offering him appropriate literature of Sri Lanka and other countries. This will also serve to inculcate painlessly a number of attitudes and values. Great care should be taken however to avoid ethnic bias and racial prejudice in the presentation of these stories.

3. Secondary School (year 6 to year 11)

Since this period covers a time span of six years when many important developments in body and mind take place, it is conveniently divided education-wise, into Junior secondary and Senior secondary.

3a. Junior Secondary (year 6 to year 8)

This period of the child's life brings him to the turning point of adolescence, biologically. Still during the first two years of this period they will be more children than adolescents. But significant changes will take place in the child at this time in mind and heart. His span of concentration will lengthen appreciably and he will acquire gradually the ability to deal with abstract concepts. The content and methodology of the learning program should change accordingly in graded steps. What is done towards the end of primary school will dovetail smoothly into the beginning of junior secondary. While certain elements and methods of the earlier period will be discarded other elements will be added, deepened and broadened. For example, the exploration of Nature through simple observation in primary school will be taken forward into an experimental study of Nature with simple laboratory tools and experiments. In general, the learning program will be more organised and structured without, however, stifling the child's propensity to search (re-search?), investigate, discover and experiment in his own way. In fact now he could be made gradually aware that real learning is self-learning. Greater use could be made of books appropriate to their age and of the library, through supervised reading assignments, poetry sessions and the like. The main thrust of the child's education would be to open his mind to the world around him in its different aspects, exercising its new powers of comprehension. The main "subject"

areas would be General Knowledge, Science (general), Literature, Basic Mathematics, Cultural Heritage (Sri Lanka & its people). Outdoor activities such as trips, tours, camps, projects etc. will be very much part of the educational program; they will not be extra-curricular, but curricular activities.

What was said above regarding the role of parents and other elders of the community in primary school will apply here too in junior secondary, by and large. Parents may not be so involved in the content of the learning program as before, but they will have to work closely with the teachers in the assessment of the child's progress, in the modus operandi of the school, in its welfare, development etc. The staff of the school must be in touch with the homes of the children to ensure that the direction of growth given to them in school is not distorted as home. Involving parents in the assessment of the child's progress and its record will apply "pressure" on them to be in touch with the school.

We propose that at the end of junior secondary there be an **aptitude test** for the purpose of getting some indication of the child's abilities and talents. This test will not have a competitive character whatsoever. Its sole purpose will be to indicate to the child himself, to the teacher and the parents what he seems more capable or less capable of without comparison to other children. The results of this test will indicate, but not determine, the path of further education of the child. Despite our best efforts there will be a number of children, particularly from under-privileged families, who will drop out of school at this stage. The educational program of junior secondary should be drawn up with one eye on this category of students - to give them enough education to manage their lives in a practical way and keep growing into adulthood and citizenship outside formal schooling. The system should also permit them to re-enter school later, if they so desire. They should not be labelled drop-outs in a derogatory sense.

We recommend that as physical units junior and senior secondary be together, with about 500 to 1000 students per school. The number of schools per unit area (AGA division, district) will depend on the density of the population and to some extent on travel/transport conveniences. These schools will not be as local as primary schools.

3b. Senior Secondary (year 9 to year 11)

At the end of junior secondary the average child should be ready to go forward in his understanding of the world and interaction

with it. He has acquired the fundamentals of logical thinking and the methodology of learning. He has become aware of his own role in the learning process, and with the aptitude test has some idea of where his strengths lay with regard to head and hands. If nothing untoward has happened in home or school he should have by now a certain degree of psychological self-confidence combined with a desire to become an independent as well as a socially responsible person.

At this stage the teaching/learning program will come into sharper academic focus through more distinct divisions into subjects and into sectors of education. On the one hand, we recommend that education still continue to have a "generalist" bias, while on the other, a choice of subjects will indicate the specific sector of education envisaged by the student. But at this stage the choice need not be definitive. At the end of senior secondary the student will sit for the G.C.E. O-level examination which should be of the same standard as the O-level examination elsewhere, for example, in the Commonwealth countries. The core (compulsory) subjects could be General Science, Mathematics, Native Language (Sinhala or Tamil; English may be permitted as native language for the Burghers), English, Cultural Heritage (Geography, History etc. of Sri Lanka) and Religion (one's own). Two (or three) other subjects of choice could be offered one of which will be from the category "vocational". This category will include such trades and crafts as Carpentry/Woodwork, Welding, Tailoring, Sewing/Needlework, Knitting, Flower-arrangement, Cookery, Motor mechanism, Agriculture, Aqua-culture etc. depending partly on the geographic location of the school and partly on the availability of teachers and facilities/equipment. This vocational subject will be taught from year 9 onwards.

A word about religion as a subject in the curriculum is in order here. The crux of the difficulty is that religion is not just a subject of knowledge like Mathematics or History, but a **vision of life and a way of life**. For that reason knowledge alone of religion does not make a person religious. Knowledge of religion (an understanding of doctrine, rites, rituals, discipline etc.) cannot be discarded, but it has to be closely connected with life and behaviour. This paper has included religion as a core subject in the curriculum on the assumption and condition that it is taught as it should be, namely in a way that lends itself to the existential practice of that religion. In this regard *how* religion is taught and *by whom* is decisive. The religion teacher must be well-trained in the methodology of religious education, and in

addition, be an embodiment of what he teaches. In the matter of religion it is fatal for behaviour (of the teacher) to contradict precept. The teacher's own life is the best religion lesson.

Though a case could be made to make religion an optional subject or leave it out of the curriculum altogether, we thought it necessary to retain it, because if taught properly as indicated above, the school could be an important locus of religious and spiritual growth for the vast majority of children in the country. In this way religion would dovetail beautifully with the goals of integral education envisaged in this paper - growth of the whole person, not only in mind and skills, but also in heart and spirit, growth in *metta*, *karuna*, *muditha*, *upekha*, in the love of God and man.

In most schools in Sri Lanka the student population would be of more than one religion. Though this could be a problem for religious education of the minority group in particular, it could also be looked at by religion teachers as an opportunity to expose the children to the beliefs, practices and rituals of other religions, so that they learn to accept and respect what is different. The seeds of religious and racial harmony in our society must sown in the school.

Senior secondary schools, specially those with A-level classes will have to be equipped with a decent library, and an adequate laboratory for science education. It goes without saying that there should be an adequate number of schools to serve the student population in a given area and the ideal would be that they are staffed and equipped to the same standard, more or less. Till such time, at least one school in the district should be set up as a "privileged" school, with the privilege of sharing its resources with the less-privileged neighbouring ones. The main reason for this recommendation is that it will eliminate the need for scholarships to the so-called prestige schools (in Colombo) and relieve the intense pressure of admission to them.

In the Education Order proposed here the present scholarship examination at grade 5 is clearly counter-productive, for:

- (a) it reinforces the academic and examination aspects of Education putting excessive pressure on the very young and on their parents.
- (b) consolidates the disparity between prestige schools in the city and poor schools in rural areas.

- (c) diffuses the urgency to raise the quality of poor schools to ensure greater equity of educational opportunity throughout the country.
- (d) scholarship recipients themselves may be frustrated later if they are shut out of University by a high cut-off mark, according to the present quota system, while their classmates in the former school gain admission on a lower mark.

3c. G.C.E A-level Education

Education at this level will have an orientation towards further academic study after the O-level examination. The choice of subjects will depend very much, but not entirely, on the results of the O-level examination. The teaching and learning of science subjects cannot be done at this level without serious laboratory work, with the Practicals Record Book available for scrutiny at the examination. The standard of the examination itself, in all subjects, should be on par with the equivalent examination of, say, British Universities.

Considering the gap that now prevails between the O-level and the A-level with regard to intellectual demands, it may be necessary to have an introduction/orientation period of about six months before the commencement of the actual A-level curriculum. A-level examination has become a frustrating bottleneck because of lack of opportunities and facilities for further education thereafter, with the existing Universities admitting only about 20% of those who qualify. Another bone of contention which has generated much anger and violent reactions is the distribution of university admissions according to the Quota system. Though well-intentioned, its *raison d'être* is very questionable today. The real solution to the problem is three-fold:

- (a) increased student capacity in the universities
- (b) an enlarged and diversified system of vocational education
- (3) greater opportunities and facilities for alternative tertiary education.

We recommend that a colourful **graduation ceremony** be held for those students who succeed in the O-level examination. This ceremony will serve many useful purposes: firstly, it will be a gesture of recognition by the School of 11 years of effort by the student, whatever be his level of academic achievement; this is bound to encourage him to do his best to further his education; secondly, the parents attending the ceremony will enjoy the "reward" of their own efforts and sacrifices for the education of their child; thirdly, it will be an encouragement to the other

students in the lower years/grades to put their best foot forward to arrive at their own graduation in due course. They have something more than a piece of computer paper to look forward to. By the way, this ceremony would be an excellent substitute for the School Prize-giving as an annual event of educational significance. Though an established practice in our schools, prize-givings, with prizes given on the results of a test, are of very doubtful educational value; they are more probably detrimental to the student body as a whole, because the rewards go to those who are gifted in intellectual ability (and memory), discouraging the large majority of students who tried harder but failed, because less gifted. Given the disparities of IQ among students in a given class, those with higher IQ will always beat those with less without much effort in a test. But what is more educationally useful and beneficial, to encourage effort on the part of the majority or reward a few gifted students?

TEACHERS, TEACHER TRAINING AND THE PRINCIPAL

8

It cannot be over-emphasised that the Principal and Staff of a School will play a crucial role in the quality of education envisaged in this paper. It is not difficult to surmise that a major cause of the problems which have plagued education in Sri Lanka in recent years is the poor quality of teachers and teaching. The first postulate in this regard is that all teachers be given some *basic training of at least one year* before appointment to a school. Further training to qualify as a trained teacher should take two more years, at least. We believe strongly that if a system of integral education is to achieve its goals, teacher training must include the development of the person of the teacher and not only his competence in the theory and practice of teaching. The practical consequences of this standpoint are:

- (a) that criteria be laid down for the selection of applicants for teacher-training.
- (b) that methods and techniques of personality assessment and development be part and parcel of the training program.
- (c) that another equally important component of the training program is the growth of the trainee in virtue and moral stature, which will overlap with growth in the religious dimension.

Final certification as a trained teacher should depend not only on marks at the examination but also on an assessment of the personality of the teacher and of his human stature by the Staff. If, in the course of training, a trainee is judged to be suffering from an undesirable personality characteristic such as neurotic anxiety, alcoholism, homosexuality etc. he should be discouraged or prevented from proceeding further despite good grades in academic work. Even regular, serious breaches of discipline could be considered a danger signal.

The whole thrust of the teacher-training program will be:

- (a) to generate the kind of teacher demanded by the new Education Order, namely, one who will be less an instructor and more an enthusiastic facilitator and stimulator of learning in and by the students, playing, as Plato said, the role of a mid-wife.
- (b) to generate a teacher of well-rounded personality, a person of good moral/spiritual stature who can serve as a life

model, a "guru" to the students along the lines of traditional eastern thought.

- (c) to create in the teacher a sense of vocation to life-giving service, since education has rightly been identified as a second birth.

All this may sound rather idealistic. But real life demands that an ideal be the guiding light of any purposive action. Though an ideal can never be realised here and now, motivation, direction and enthusiasm can be given only by a powerful ideal which beckons and challenges.

What has been said about the teacher will apply with greater force to the Principal of the School. **He is the king-pin of the whole system.** The tone and spirit of the Staff, the atmosphere and discipline of the student body, all depend very much on how he relates to the teaching Staff, the Administration staff, the student body, parents and past pupils; on his outlook, competence and commitment. We urge the Ministry to work out a well-studied program of selecting and training Principals. This training will not be confined to matters educational, but more importantly matters of human relations, management and inspiring leadership. Appointment by mere academic qualifications and years of service will not suffice. Very often the difference between one school and another, other things being equal, is the difference of the kind of Principal. Once a new Education Order is finalised and adopted by the Government, the first step in implementation will be familiarising Principals with its content, vision, goals and methods. This could be done at Provincial level by Education Officers specially trained for the purpose. Without the knowledgeable and willing co-operation of Principals we cannot expect the new Order to take hold.

In-Service Training

The complexities of the fast-changing modern world compel us to jettison the idea of a once-and-for-all training in any profession. The expansion of knowledge is so rapid that unless we keep abreast in some way we will get left behind and ineffective. Teachers' Colleges should drive this point home to the trainees. In a profession such as teaching the result of lagging behind is that children in the classroom are deprived of the best that the School and teacher can give. We suggest that in-service training modules be available to teachers on a graded basis, and they be given incentives to take those modules regularly, going from lower to higher grades. Incentives can take the form of salary

increments, eligibility for promotion, foreign scholarships etc. Seminars or Refresher courses for Principals too, on a regular basis, is a must. We also recommend that a Journal for teachers, a monthly or quarterly, be published in all three languages and be made available to all schools and individual teachers at a reasonable price.

Teacher Welfare

Training and in-service training will bear fruit only in proportion to the desirability of conditions of service provided for the teacher within the system. They should be such that the economic, psychological and professional needs of the teacher are met. Economic, through adequate financial remuneration; psychological, through acceptance, appreciation and recognition of work by the Principal and colleagues; professional, by providing the necessary teaching materials and scope for initiative, leadership and advancement (promotion on merit). The present system, as is well known, is seriously deficient in all these aspects of teacher welfare.

Attractive monetary and promotional incentives plus privileges regarding housing and travel should be given to teachers in remote rural schools. Otherwise it will be impossible to maintain in those schools the desired quality of education. Finally, a malaise which has afflicted our educational system needs to be cured once and for all: political meddling in teacher transfers. Since the Government has already taken a stand on eliminating political interference in the public service there should be no difficulty for the Ministry to spell out and implement guidelines for teachers based solely on concerns of teacher, school and students.

THE CURRICULUM, SYLLABUS, TIME - TABLE AND EXAMINATIONS

9

Since this paper is only an Outline we have not gone into details of Curricula, Syllabi etc., for each stage and each year of the educational process. But some general ideas about them have been stated here and there. Here we present a few more considerations which have a bearing on the day-to-day operation of the School.

1. As indicated earlier the daily study program should include a greater component of activity and participation by the student. At present there is far too much of didactic teaching by the teacher and passive reception by the students, within the four walls of a classroom. If education is to prepare a child for life in the modern and future world he must be trained to think for himself, pose questions and make judgements and decisions. **How we teach will become more important than what we teach;** with the rapid pace of change what is useful today may be irrelevant tomorrow, the child must learn to learn for later self-learning. Young has put it very forcefully: "...schools will use the development of critical thinking skills as their fundamental goal, with the role of the teacher changing from a dispenser of information to a facilitator - helping students acquire skills in solving problems and making decisions.

"Traditional educational disciplines will either disappear entirely or else play a subordinate role to the process of critical thinking. Schools will become think tanks addressing real world problems and issues as classroom activities.

"Students will become generalists in the finest sense, carrying to any vocation the necessary tools to quickly adapt and become proficient in that occupation. Graduates will be 'factually illiterate', knowing where and how to find needed information rather than having memorized it. They will know how to approach and resolve issues or problems no matter in what area or of what complexity" (9).

Making things, doing projects, visits to places of interest in the locality, participation in events/activities of the village/town should be part of the curriculum. In the later years, year 8/9 onwards some classes could take the form of discussions, debates and seminars. This and other reasons dictate that classes should be relatively small in number about 30-35, at most.

2. The question of changing the present, standard curriculum is a vexed one. The main problem is that of usefulness and

relevance. It was well stated by Dr. Udagama thus: "The school curriculum bears little or no relationship to the life of the community from which the pupils are drawn and to which the majority must now inevitably return. The nett effect is often alienation of the pupil from his environment - the young man with the GCE who waits in shirt and trousers 'unemployed' while his father does the heavy work of cultivation. The curriculum has done nothing to show him the desperate economic situation with which the country is faced or the fact that his generation must set over and invent new forms of production activity, whether through intensive cultivation of cash crops for export or small-scale manufacture. Nor has he been introduced to the skills and knowledge that such activities would require." (Problem of Education and Training in Developing Countries, in Commonwealth Asia-Pacific Regional Seminar on "Youth Problems, Youth Training & Employment", Kuala Lumpur, July 1971). We have already given an indication for change in the desired direction in the section on primary education. We strongly recommend that experiment as a starting point from which an opening to further change at higher levels could emerge. Making curricula personally enriching and socially relevant at local level has to contend with the demand for a certain uniformity of content specially in secondary and tertiary education at national level. Today with the increasing internationalisation of education (student exchange, foreign scholarships, international programs, World University etc) there is the added problem of relating to the curricula of educational systems abroad if we are not to isolate ourselves. However we feel that it is not impossible to satisfy in good measure all these contending claims providing we are willing to push aside traditional sacred cows and look at the complex realities of today in the eye and work with daring and imagination.

3. The school day could very profitably begin with a few minutes of meditation followed by some simple breathing, yoga and health exercises. There is much in yoga philosophy and in yoga systems which can enrich the educational program.

4. The length of each class period needs re-examination. Should all periods be of the same time-span? Shouldn't there be more flexibility with regard to length of periods as well as the timetable as a whole.

5. The division of the year into three terms with a month's holiday in-between also needs re-thinking. Could not one holiday period be of longer duration to enable students to get work experience or engage himself in to a job or in a non-formal

educational program. Different geographic areas (Provinces?) should be permitted to change the arrangement of terms and holidays according to local circumstances and needs, such as the harvesting season, fishing season etc..

6. Audio-visuals should figure much more prominently in the educational program. One picture, they say, is worth a thousand words. Slides, pictures, posters, cassettes, films and video tapes should be used to illustrate subject matter in an appropriate way. This implies that each School has the technical equipment necessary for the purpose - slide-projector, overhead projector, film projector, cassette-player, TV set and Video-recorder (or some of them). Schools should gradually build up a software library of films, slides, audio-tapes, video-tapes etc. The students themselves could produce some of this material as curricular projects. The Ministry should also liaise with the SLBC, Rupavahini and ITN to produce and broadcast programs of educational interest on weekdays, mornings; broadcast times should be determined in such wise that they mesh with the School time-table.

6. Another very important, but often neglected, educational resource is the **school library**. If the thrust of modern education, and of this paper, is to get the student to learn how to learn and to learn by doing, a good library is indispensable for every school. The library is the place for self-study and research. Students should be taught explicitly how to use the library at different stages of progress and given assignments involving library work. The Ministry should arrange to have a couple of teachers of each secondary school trained in basic librarianship in a short course of about six months to nine months.

7. Aesthetics is another much neglected means of a well-rounded, integral and humane education. Beauty is indeed capable of taming the beast in man; education is nothing other than the child's gradual awakening into the true, the good, and the beautiful. Every student in secondary school should be obliged to engage himself in one of the fine arts - music, art, dance, drama, and handicrafts. Most of these activities have been labelled extra-curricular, but we emphasise that they must be **part of the regular school curriculum**, though they may not be subject to examination. In this connection we suggest that every student be encouraged to pursue a hobby, however simple it may be - gardening, flower arrangement, cookery, collections of all kinds (stamps, coins, picture post-cards) writing poetry, short stories etc. hiking, star-gazing etc. etc. - systematically and with some guidance.

8. Can the time-table, from 7.30 a.m. to 1.30 p.m. take in all this? Perhaps not. One solution we propose is that 3 days of the week secondary schools continue after the lunch break till 3.00 p.m. The time of the lunch break too could be altered for those 3 days, if necessary. The after-lunch sessions are to be devoted entirely to library work, aesthetic and other activities which were labelled extra-curricular up to now. But in the new Education Order they will be as curricular as textbook work. Hence these after-lunch hours will be regular school hours for both Staff and students.

9. In the present system examinations have become a bugbear consuming a disproportionate quantum of time and energy of the student with all the attendant evils of competition, rivalry, cramming, copying, tuition etc. A central proposal of this paper is that **competitive examinations** which pit one student against another **be replaced by assessments of progress** to be done by the teacher(s) on a multi-criteria basis. Instruments of such assessment have been worked out in different parts of the world. We have also proposed an aptitude test at the end of junior secondary. Promotions from one year to another will be based on the progress assessment of each pupil. This does not mean that any exercise of written answers to questions on a particular subject is ruled out; that could be part of the assessment system. What is damaging is to get one student to score over and against another which often precludes cooperation, sharing of knowledge and notes, the stronger (more intelligent) helping the weaker etc. The de-valuation of examinations and its competitive character, and the emphasis on self-learning in the new system is likely to lessen appreciably the felt-need for tuition. The lamented tuition system thrives on competition for higher marks and grades that the present system calls for. This attitude and mentality has infected the Schools themselves: School A is said to be better than School B, because A had 10 students with 4 A's in the A-level Exam. while B had only 5.

10. Our plea is that Schools do not consider grades of students at O-level and A-level Examinations the sole criteria of excellence either of the student or of the School as a whole. That would contradict the whole vision and spirit of the new education Order. The endeavour of the School should be to bring to fruition the full capacity of the student, and that will vary from student to student. Each one should be made to do his best, be that little or great; and no student should be made to feel small because he could not do as much as another, be it in sports, studies or any other activity.

What is urgently required therefore is not so much a reform in A-level education as an expansion and diversification of tertiary education in the country. Then the majority of students judged capable of higher education at the A-level will be able to fulfill their hopes and ambitions. The criteria of admission to these different Institutes of Higher Education should be determined by each one of them separately within a broad policy outline given by the University Grants Commission, depending on their academic/practical orientations, nature and level of the courses of study etc. This will eliminate the need for a cut-off mark at the A-level to limit the number seeking admission to tertiary education.

All our Universities today cater to the basic Bachelor's degree in a limited number of disciplines and that too in a strictly academic way following the British system. The result is that we have a few thousand graduates with an academic degree - BA., BSc., LLB., MBBS. - passing out of our Universities each year; many of them specially the Arts graduates, will face the spectre of unemployment.

It is unfortunate that in Sri Lanka tertiary (higher) education has been identified almost exclusively with an academic degree. Breaking down this unrealistic and outmoded notion seems to be as necessary as changing the structures of higher education. In fact, the development needs of the country demand a large cadre of middle level "graduates" in a wide variety of fields. Engineering projects such as construction of roads, dams, bridges etc. may need to engage more personnel with middle level technical skills than BSc. qualified engineers.

Similarly there is a wide spectrum of health services which can be provided by persons with a medical education of two or three years, but less than the MBBS level. These middle level degrees may be termed a Diploma or Certificate, and they could be handled by a wide variety of Institutes, Colleges, and University Colleges offering different types of courses, at different levels on a wide range of subjects. On the other hand, those Universities/Colleges which cater to academic education, post-graduate work and research, are no less necessary for a developping country such as ours. They should be provided with sufficient funds for Staff, equipment, libraries etc. Research geared to our own developmental goals and programs is indispensable. Reducing allocations for

research for alleged reasons of financial constraints is a penny-wise, pound-foolish policy. One of the main reasons for the brain-drain, a costly loss to Sri Lanka, is the pathetic lack of facilities and equipment specially for scientific research, coupled with very poor remuneration, for our top-class Scientists.

It is imperative therefore that the Government set up different Institutions of Higher Education in different parts of the country so that a large percentage of those who are deemed eligible for tertiary education can continue studies at that level. The variety and diversity of such Institutions will ensure, (a) that the diverse abilities and talents of youth are catered to, and (b) that the development needs and job opportunities in the country are "matched" with the cadre of the graduates passing out. We envisage Institutes or Colleges/University Colleges in such disciplines as Agriculture, Food Technology, Gemmology, Metereology, Marine Biology, Oceanography, Computer Sciences, Business Management, Pharmacology, Cinematography, Textile Technology, Forestry, Surveying, Astronomy and Space Scicences, Psychology, Graphic Design, Fine Arts etc. etc. One Institute may group together two or three of these fields which are related, or may specialise in one of them, for example, a College of Gemmology or an Institute of Food Technology. These Institutions could offer Certification at two levels, a shorter course terminating in a Certificate and a longer one leading to a Diploma. Diploma holders could under stipulated conditions proceed further in the same Institute /College or in another.

Care should be taken in the geographical distribution of these Institutions throughout the Island. One factor would be the estimated quantity of the student population; the Western Province which is thickly populated would need more Schools, Colleges, Universities etc. than the North Central Province. The other factor would be the congruence of the specialisation for that geographic area. A College of Forestry is best situated near the Sinharaja forest, a College of Carpentry in Moratuwa and an Institute of Oceanography in Galle or Trincomalee. Since the costs of implementing this proposal in its entirety would be prohibitive, we suggest:

- (a) that existing Universities set up Certificate and Diploma Courses for which the extra funds required would be modest in quantity.
- (b) that other Government technical Institutions such as the Tea Research Institute, Coconut Research Institute, Rubber Re-

search Institute, The Arthur C. Clarke Centre etc. be re-organised to conduct Certificate and Diploma Courses in the relevant subjects. Resources of personnel and facilities are already available in them in large measure.

- (c) that the Government give the necessary help to non-Govt. educational Institutions to conduct such Courses according to the required criteria.
- (d) make use of Govt. school buildings which are vacant and unused after 1.30 p.m. to conduct Certificate and Diploma courses in subjects which do not require anything more than a classroom and its furniture.
- (e) start setting up such Colleges and Institutes, one by one, according to a well-planned, long-term program, soliciting funds from Foundations and other sources, local and foreign.

The type of teaching/learning and of examinations in the existing system of tertiary education in the country also needs substantial revision. Leaving details to be worked out by specialists in modern tertiary education, we suggest in general that:

- (a) all levels of tertiary education, except the Doctorate which is reserved for original research, be structured on a system of modules, each module carrying a certain number of credits. This is similar to the American system. A number of credits in a given package of modules (which would be called subjects today) would constitute a Certificate or Diploma, and a further number the Bachelor's Degree. Credits will be granted on the basis of a tutorial and an examination for each module; the awarding of the Certificate/Diploma/Degree will also depend on a comprehensive examination at the end. The tutorial will involve a certain quantum of reading and library work and also provide scope for personal thinking.
- (b) a greater flexibility be introduced into the choice of subjects (modules) in order to broadbase the intellectual culture of the student. While a certain amount of "specialisation" in subject matter is inevitable at this stage, still there should be some room for the student to step outside his chosen field and be credited for it. What we have in mind is that an Arts student reading for the B.A. degree should be able to (or be "compelled" to ?) offer a module in

General Science, and a BSc. student to offer a module in Literature or the Fine Arts.

- (c) that Institutes of tertiary education structure study schedules in such wise that students find it possible to do a part-time job; many of them are in dire need of financial help. Each Institute could work this out in its own way without a uniform imposition on all.
- (d) Another practical way of dealing with the clash between higher education and employment is the system of external degrees of regular Universities, and the operation of Open Universities. This has been facilitated by the popularisation of the media - Radio, TV and the printed word- in recent years. In fact it appears that distance education is the wave of the future. The Open University of Sri Lanka has been very progressive and innovative in this regard.

The advantages of this mode of education to Third World countries which are short on finances are obvious. We strongly recommend that the Govt. set up distance education Institutions, starting with areas which are more disadvantaged regarding tertiary education. But it must be emphasised that the degrees conferred by these Institutes should be on par with those of the conventional Colleges and Universities.

- (e) a certain number of modules, to be decided upon by the original University/Institute could be taken in another University or in an Open University recognised by the first. Such liaisons between Institutes of higher learning are desirable in themselves and also prevent a break in studies if a student has to move from one locality to another for reasons of employment.
- (f) Perhaps even more than at the secondary school level, Colleges, Universities and Institutes of higher learning should provide in the teaching/learning program, opportunities and challenges to the students to enhance their human stature - the quality of "being human" which stands behind the vision of education proposed in this paper. The University must aim not only at conferring an academic degree but also a high degree of human stature to the graduate.

We have not dealt with the administrative structure of the higher education system which at present is the responsibility of the University Grants Commission. Should Universities and other Institutes of higher learning have more autonomy? How will they

be funded? A number of such questions have to be addressed. The Report of the Parliamentary Select Committee chaired by Hon A.C.S. Hameed on Unrest in the Universities and their future has many valuable suggestions on these questions. (Parliamentary Series No. 107).

TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL EDUCATION 11

One of the biggest lacuna of our educational system is the lack of a viable, and "respectable" alternative to the way of A-level and University education, after the O-level examination. The vast majority of students who obtain some kind of pass at the O-level but are not qualified or inclined to continue to A-level, are virtually left high and dry to fend for themselves with hardly anything by way of facilities and opportunities for other types of education which would be more practical and job-oriented. Hence we consider it imperative that the Government open up another alternative way of further education which, we suggest, should consist of four types of Schools:

- (1) Technical and Trades Schools
- (2) Business and Commerce Schools
- (3) Arts and Crafts Schools
- (4) Agricultural and Farm Schools

Education in these Schools will be oriented directly towards a specific job, trade, occupation, with a large component of practical work, workshop/laboratory training, and/or field work. The Staff will consist of personnel fully qualified, including practical experience, to instruct and demonstrate at that particular level.

These Schools need not be very large in physical size and in the number of students on roll. Preferably they should be small and medium-sized schools which maintain a high quality of teaching and training. Some of the instructors and demonstrators in these Schools could be a master craftsman, farmer, or "Baas" of the area, whose experience and practical knowledge could be of invaluable help to the students.

The courses of study and training in these Schools should be available at different levels covering varying time periods (one, two, three, four years). This could take the form of different parts of the same course or they could be distinct courses of training for which a certificate will be awarded at each level. Flexibility of study/training programs should permit a student to leave, if necessary, at the end of one period (one or two years) for the sake of employment, and continue with the balance at a later time. It should even be possible for a student in these Schools to join the academic "stream" of University education, if he so desire, at a certain point under certain conditions. The trend today is to link these Schools with Industry, Business and Trade in the locality, going as far as to make the Factory, Workshop, Office

"part" of the School (the so-called Dual System of Vocational Training). This has been found to be beneficial to both parties. The Schools will be able to fine-tune their training programs to the actual needs of Industry, Business and the employment market and at the same time give in-plant experience to the students; while the latter will be assured of future employees tailored to their needs.

Subjects of study and training envisaged in **Technical and Trades Schools** would be: practical Electronics, Refrigeration, Motor Mechanism, Electrical Wiring, Welding, Metal work, Light Engineering, Masonry, Plumbing, Draughtsmanship, Lab technician training, Pharamacist training, Photography Dark Room Work, Aspects of the Printing trade (book-binding, compositing etc.).

Business and Commerce Schools will provide training in the commercial subjects: Accountancy, Book-keeping, Typing, Shorthand, Secretarial training, Office Administration, Business Administration etc. The so-called Polytechnics in Sri Lanka have been engaged in this field over the years.

The third kind of vocational schools which should be set up is what we might call **Arts and Crafts Schools**. Sri Lanka has a very long tradiuon of arts and crafts; besides, there are a number of new materials and techniques which have been developed through modern technology to create new crafts and art forms. There is therefore in this field, a variety of vocations which could engage the creative energy, artistic abilities and talents of our young people. Just to mention a few of them; Jewellery work and design in both gold and silver; brass and copper crafts, carving in wood, ivory, ebony etc., ceramics and pottery, batik work, handloom work, handicrafts with traditional materials such as reed, coir, ivory et., handicrafts with modern materials such as plastics and polymers.

The fourth prong of vocational/practical job-oriented education would be the **Agricultural and Farm Schools**. Considering the fact that the vast majority of the country is rural with a large segment of the population engaged, as a matter of fact, in farming and animal husbandry it is difficult to understand why an extensive system of Agricultural and Farm Schools had not been set up earlier. These Schools should introduce the student to modern methods and techniques which will make agriculture and farming a rewarding and financially profitable enterprise.

Schools of Fisheries, Aquaculture and Farming could be taken under this category for educational purposes.

Since it is envisaged that far more students (in number) will have to follow this line of education after the O-level examination, the Government will have to make a **determined effort to build an extensive network of Schools all over the country**, taking care to locate them according to student population and job opportunities and facilities in the area. We also recommend that the Government obtain the help and co-operation of non-Governmental organisations and educational Institutions which are already engaged in Technical and Vocational training programs for this purpose.

Finances will be the major obstacle to the implementation of this proposal; what we said on this subject above in connection with tertiary education will apply to these Schools too. A good number of Vocational Schools are already in operation both in Government and private sectors. As a first step these could be expanded to take in more students, or new Departments added to them. NGOs running such schools could be encouraged and given financial help to expand theirs. If the dual training system is adopted a good part of the financial burden of training could be passed on to the Company or Business involved. The construction of new buildings could be minimised if unused or partially used Government buildings are commissioned. New Schools could be opened if and when funds become available.

One of the recurrent complaints about the present system is that it is too heavily centralised, bucaucratised and out of touch with the day to day realities of school life especially in the outstations. The geographical size of the country and its socio-political set-up indicate that the administrative structure of education have both national and regional (provincial) features. Many matters which are now handled centrally from Colombo could and should be devoluted to the Provinces.

We suggest that the following demarcation of national and provincial sectors in the administration of education on the indisputable premise that a certain uniformity of standards has to be maintained throughout the Island while allowing room for local needs and circumstances.

(a) **At National level** (Ministry of Education, Central Government)

- spell out the basic requirements for the setting up and operation of any type of School or educational Institute
- play a consultative role to the provincial administration of education with regard to specific requirements in the different provinces
- be directly responsible for the operation of all Teachers' Colleges, and through the UGC, of all Institutions of tertiary education
- be directly responsible for setting question papers for the GCE O-level and A-level examinations
- supervisory function regarding implementation of directives at Provincial level

(b) **At Provincial level** (Provincial Ministry of Education)

- be responsible for the implementation of basic requirements for all schools as spelt out by the National Ministry
- be empowered to open, amalgamate, and shut down schools in its area according to need, up to the GCE A-level
- be responsible for the operation of all Schools up to senior secondary in its area
- be empowered to open and operate the different categories of Vocational Training within the area in collaboration with the National Ministry

- supervisory function regarding implementation of directives in Schools within Province
- (c) **At the local (School) level**
 - maximum permissible freedom to Principal and Staff
 - close connection with the parents and the local community in a structured way

In poor countries such as ours, a major constraint on any enterprise is inadequate finances. Hence it is incumbent that funds allocated to Education and to schools be administered carefully and wisely for maximum benefit. This it seems to us, comprises three factors:

- (a) strict financial discipline and accountability
- (b) professional administration/management of finances
- (c) minimising waste

Though all schools, except the strictly private ones enjoy financial support from the Government, they should also try to help themselves through appropriate fund-raising ventures, mobilising the goodwill and generosity of past pupils, local donor agencies etc.

1. Physical Growth and Health

If physical, bodily growth comes within the scope of integral education, the system must provide for it effectively at different stages. Now it is taken for granted that sports activities cater to this need. But a closer examination does not bear out this assumption. Only a small percentage of the school population, say a maximum of 20%, can find a place in the teams, including house teams. So the large majority is left out. Even PT which is not done regularly and systematically in all schools, is not the answer, for the simple reason that exercise is only one aspect of a child's physical growth. What is basic and central in this regard is the **child's health** which in turn **depends on nutrition** - food and drink. While this may not be a matter of serious concern in a urban schools it is a major problem in a large number of schools in the poorer areas of the country which are frequented by children of the Janasaviya category. If a healthy mind can operate only in healthy body, providing adequate nutrition for such children is as much part of education as teaching them the three R's. Ways and means of doing that should be worked at the local level (of the school in question) perhaps with the help of the provincial authorities.

Another important aspect of the child's physical growth is the training he should get to **live a healthy way of life**, through a proper, practical understanding of what is good and bad, healthy and unhealthy with regard to food, drink, rest, exercise, environment etc. It will not suffice to do this in an occasional talk and/or Seminar. It must find a place in the learning program of the child in a systematic way from year 1 upwards. Some elements of this will be, for example, the cleanliness of the school premises and classrooms, the example of the Principal and Staff regarding smoking and alcohol; regular breathing exercises daily for the whole student body (and/or simple health exercises).

In this regard, questions could be raised even about the prescribed dress and uniform of school children. Firstly health-wise, are ties, shoes and socks conducive to health in a hot climate? If order and discipline are the alleged reason for the uniform, will not an open collar and sandals (without) shoes serve the same purpose. Secondly, the economic factor. It is no secret that a large number of poor families cannot afford to provide their

children, specially girls, with the prescribed uniform, and this is one reason for their staying away from school.

2. Value Education

The growth of the child as a human being, in body, mind, heart and spirit, is largely a matter of values; values determine our desires and behaviour, often unconsciously. Value education will therefore be a large component of integral education. But effective education in values specially in the early years will have to be what we might call existential rather than didactic. In other words values are caught by the child rather than taught to his/her, from parents, teachers, other adults and from personal experiences in home and school. Hence much of value education takes place non-formally even within the formal system. This highlights what we said earlier about the teacher, namely that the person of the teacher, his/her values, outlook on life etc. as seen by the child, have a strong impact. The same is true of parents and other adults at home.

The teaching of each subject can be an occasion and means of value education. Biology can be taught in a way that instills in the child a great respect for the wonder and beauty of life. Traditional Sri Lankan values will become evident in studies on cultural heritage. For older children in secondary school, discussions on values, provoked naturally by a local event, a news item in the papers, by a tele-drama etc. can be very educative. They are capable of more direct study, discussion and critical assessment of their own values and those of present-day society. Cultural events, sports activities, social service projects etc., all of which are part of the school's educational program lend themselves easily to value education. Teacher training in the Training Colleges should pay particular attention to making teachers knowledgeable about the how and why of value education. It will be necessary to prepare Teacher Guides on different subjects to help teachers present relevant values in an appropriate way through that particular subject.

Value education is naturally connected with the religious development of the child; they go hand-in-hand. Religion is a matter of vision and values about man, the world and the Absolute and the shaping of one's life according to them. It is for this very reason that Religions and Churches want to run their own schools. Such schools can inculcate the vision and values of that religion more directly and specifically through the whole educational program.

Multi-denominational schools, the large majority in Sri Lanka, need not have any difficulty in agreeing upon a set of core values (human values) which are indisputably accepted by all religions. Among them would be the value of life, of human life, of liberty, of law and order, of simplicity of life, of honesty and sincerity, of justice, of hospitality, of self-lessness, of compassion and love or maithri.

3. Mental Health and Counselling Services

The human person is all of a piece, every aspect or part is inextricably bound up with the others: mind with body, emotion with reason and so on. Hence, we have been stressing right through in this paper that the whole person of the child be taken into account in the educational enterprise. One of the most neglected aspects of the student's life in our system is mental health. Though the term mental could cover the sphere of the intellectual too, what we are referring to here is the emotional and psychological areas of the students life - his feelings about himself, about home and parents, about other people, about the world etc. These have a decisive bearing on his personality development. This aspect is to a large extent shaped by the child's relationship to parents and other significant adults and the home environment starting from birth. For this reason we underline once again the importance of the School having a close connection with home and parents. Firstly, parent education about proper child-rearing can prevent emotional deprivation and consequent mental stress or even breakdown; secondly, if a child has had such deprivation its consequences could be mitigated or compensated for in school (if not too severe) through therapeutic programs offered by a Counseling service. This service need not be of a highly professional calibre; it could be manned by a trained Counsellor (or Counsellors). Such training is now available in Sri Lanka.

The number of children who will need this kind of counselling help is on the increase today because of increasing marital conflict and breakdown of family life, one parent (or both parents) going abroad for work, traumatic experiences of violence in the country etc. As a result even intelligent and normal children could be subject to serious stress and strain which will affect their studies and general behaviour. We strongly recommend that there be one trained Counsellor for at least every 500 students in a School. He will be a member of the Staff but without teaching and administrative responsibilities. Besides individual and group counselling the Counsellor could conduct what are called "growth

programs" i.e. programs of self-awareness, group dynamics, listening skills, sharing sessions etc. which will help the students directly or indirectly to grow in self-awareness, self-confidence, maturity and other essential life-skills. Time should be allocated in the time table for these activities.

It is important to remind ourselves that, unlike in former times, today's children and youth are subject to far more stress and strain because of many factors such as economic deprivation, faster pace of life, socio-cultural change, the generation gap, messages from the mass media etc. Many of them would need the guidance of an understanding and wise Counsellor especially during the personally turbulent period of adolescence.

If the School has close ties with the local community, resource persons for informal counselling will be easily available. That will lessen the burden on the school Counsellor and also permit more options to the students who may need help.

This Counsellor should not be confused with **another type of Counsellor** who should also find a place on the school Staff, namely, the **vocational guidance Counsellor**. His function is to help students specially at the school-leaving stage to assess their aptitudes and skills with a view to choosing a trade, vocation, job/profession for the future. This Counsellor should also be knowledgeable about what is available in terms of jobs and trades, of training programs and courses in the region and country. He should also be able to help the student with advice about the kinds of help available from Banks and other Agencies for loans and self-employment. There should be at least one Vocational Guidance Counsellor for every secondary School. Given the variety and complexity of Trade, Commerce and Industry in both public and private sectors, the Counsellor may have to get the assistance of professionals in the area, past pupils of the School in Industry and Business and Government officials.

4. English and the Vernaculars

The question of English and the vernaculars in Education has been a vexed one, and a bone of contention in the ethnic conflict. Reflecting on the experience of recent history, we have come to the following conclusions:

- (a) Each child must be educated in his or her own language which will be the medium of instruction. It is strange but true that despite vernaculars being the medium of instruction up to secondary school for about 30 years, students do not, by and large, show an adequate mastery of the

language, its grammar, vocabulary etc. This may be due to a neglect of literature which reveals the soul of the language. The language and vocabulary of the students do not go beyond the subject matter of the curriculum. Education in a language must necessarily imply some acquaintance with its literature. **The explosive demand for English should not distract us from giving our children a good grounding in their mother tongue.**

We must add here that even with regard to the subject matter of School curricula the reading matter available in the vernaculars is totally inadequate. It is foolish to limit knowledge of a subject to one textbook. The availability of more than one text (for any particular subject) and reading material around the subject are not luxuries. If producing such literature locally would be a difficult, long-term task, we propose that the Ministry for a start embark on a massive project of translating suitable foreign (English) books which are available in plenty.

- (b) English as a world language and as a link language between Sinhala and Tamil should be taught purposefully and systematically from, say, year 3 onwards (or earlier) - in a carefully graded program. By the time the student arrives in senior secondary School he should have a fair working knowledge of the language. It must be emphasised that the aim of this language education is not to make the student a Shakespeare, but to give him an ability to handle English for practical purposes.

English, without doubt is a very useful tool of international communication; but there seems to be a danger of exaggerating its need for national well-being. There are many countries in Asia which have advanced far beyond us in Trade and Commerce, Science and Technology, with much less English; good examples being Japan, South Korea and Taiwan. The reason why we find it difficult to handle Science subjects in Sinhala at University level is that we have not worked hard enough to produce the texts, literature etc. in adequate quantity and quality. We believe that while English is given a reasonable place for practical purposes, a concerted and sustained effort must be made to get the young generation to drink deep draughts of the native language within the educational system.

- (c) To what extent Sinhala students should study Tamil and vice versa is not easy to determine. Conversational fluen-

cy in both languages for all children is an ideal; in practice, the main problem will be one of motivation. If, for example, a Sinhala student in Matara or a Tamil student in Delft cannot envisage a need to speak/write in Tamil/Sinhala respectively, can he be motivated to study Tamil/Sinhala seriously? Still it seems important for Sinhala children to learn at least the alphabet and basic conversational Tamil, and vice versa. But in certain areas, for example the hill country, and for certain public offices (the S.L. Administrative Service) fluency in both languages will be a necessity. A Sinhala textbook for Tamil children and Tamil textbook for Sinhala children indicating the least level of expected proficiency in the language would be very helpful. The dearth of teachers could be offset to some extent by the use of cassetted lessons and other audio-visuals.

1. Parents and Home

We have already referred to the crucial role of home, parents, and the local community in the enterprise of integral education. What is vital is that parents be made aware of their role so that they (as many of them as possible) can be made to play it consciously and realistically. Uneducated parents of the poorer classes often do not realise even the need for schooling of their children. Even so-called educated parents have to be jolted into a realisation of other dimensions of parenting such as the kind of environment they create in the home, the example they set regarding values, and so on.

We must emphasise here that the personality development of the child -- his harmonious growth in body, mind, heart and spirit -- cannot be realised without the close co-operation of parents, specially, but not exclusively, at the stage of primary education. These years are decisive with regard to the structuring of personality. The child's relational experiences, the attitudes and values he absorbs, the examples he sees, should be positive and helpful in both home and school; one should not contradict the other. Both teachers and parents have to be "gurus" to their children. But in the existing system, the connection between home and school is tenuous at best. Parents are made to feel that they are ignorant and incompetent in educational matters; their responsibility stops with sending the child to school and providing the wherewithal for schooling.

But, as stated above, parents have an active role to play in a holistic educational program, particularly in respect of the child's growth in the psycho-social and moral-spiritual spheres. One serious difficulty here is that parents themselves are not aware of their own importance in this regard. Most parents think of themselves as providers of physical needs of their children -- food, clothing and shelter. Their only educational responsibility is to send the child to a good ("prestige") school and all the rest will follow. For this reason the school itself will have to play the role of parent-educator. Existing structures such as Parent-Teacher Associations and School Development Societies could be made use of for the purpose. But it may be necessary to induce and "pressurise" parents by appropriate strategies to follow parent education programs of a basic nature organised by the school

itself. The purpose of these programs is not to inform parents about the school curriculum and the academic progress of the child, but rather to make them knowledgeable about the process of personality development at different ages and stages, and the crucial role they have to play in it through their relationship to, and interaction with, the child.

2. The Mass Media

The mass media is acknowledged to be a powerful means of communication and education for weal or woe. Since the educational system of the country operates in the context of the media - papers, journals, radio and TV - the relationship between the two should be looked at carefully. They cannot go their separate ways because what the children read, hear and see in the media will definitely affect their attitudes, values and expectations etc. While the freedom of the media has to be safeguarded on the one hand, the media too on the other, have to realise their responsibility for the impact their products and programs have on the young generation. This question, we suggest, should be thrashed out in a **Committee** of Educationists, media personnel, representatives of the Ministry of Education, parents, teachers and psychologists.

At the same time we must recognise the value and power of the media specially radio and TV as **tools of learning** in and out of school. There is much room for improvement in our use of the media for both formal and non-formal education. The basic obstacles are the lack of radio and TV facilities in schools on the one hand, and the paucity of educational software on the other. They are hardly insuperable obstacles, if we really want to overcome them.

3. Public Institutions

One of the basic postulates we enumerated at the beginning of this paper is that much of real education takes place outside the formal setting of the school and classroom. In this regard we want to draw the attention of the Government and of the public to the woeful neglect of certain public Institutions which have a great natural potential for education. We are referring to such Institutions as Museums, Botanical Gardens, Zoos, Archaeological sites, the Planetarium etc. Except for the Colombo Planetarium and the Museum, none of the above-mentioned Institutions, as far as we are aware, offer an instructional or teaching program for school children. They are all "passive" Institutions, when they can be very active, interesting and stimulating agencies of education for students as well as for the general public. Why cannot for

example, the Zoo, the botanical gardens, conduct regular classes and Seminars on relevant topics for school children? Similarly, the Archaeological Dept. could have educational programs on site, at some of the principal places - Anuradhapura, Polonnaruwa, Sigiriya, Kandy. Programs of longer duration for more serious students could take the form of camps. Naturally these Institutions will have to be provided with Staff, facilities and funds for this purpose. For the students, participation in visits, study days, seminars and camps at these Institutions will be considered part of the normal school curriculum. In fact we recommend that a minimum of 14 days of the school year be spent in such programs and activities, from year 6 onwards. To ensure that the poorer children are not left out of these educational tours and camps a special fund should be set up by the school (or the School Development Society) to subsidise their travel and other costs. It is obvious that more facilities of this sort (Zoos, Parks, Museums, Planetaria) should be set up in different parts of the country for both school children and the public. This will also reduce the need for costly and tiring travel over long distances. Now that relations between India and Sri Lanka have been normalised, the two Governments should come to an agreement about subsidised tours for School children of India (at least S. India) and Sri Lanka - for Indian children to visit Sri Lanka and for Sri Lankan children to visit the numerous places of historical, cultural and religious interest in South India

4. Non-formal Educational System(Peoples School)

In the spirit of this paper it is not possible to draw a sharp distinction between formal, non-formal and informal education. What matters is EDUCATION. The complex and diverse circumstances and demands of modern life compel the setting up of non-formal educational programs. They will take the form of Courses, Seminars, Workshops, Camps, "Schools" etc. of longer or shorter duration, conducted both by the State/State agencies and by non-Government organisations, on a wide variety of subjects according to need and demand. Such a system of non-formal education available to the general public with no pre-conditions, across the country, would constitute what we might call a Peoples School. This Peoples School could have connections with regular educational institutions at secondary and tertiary levels and with vocational schools to enable students to pass from the former to the latter under certain conditions for purposes of formal certification or even for diplomas and degrees. The Government should give every encouragement and support to Agencies, Organisations

and Institutes offering different kinds of Courses and training programs to the general public. The remarks of Malcolm S. Adiseshiah, in his Bunker Memorial Lecture on "Educational and National Development" are well worth pondering: "Such non-formal education has many advantages over formal education. It is flexible in its functioning. The children who drop out of school because of poverty can be given education when they are free in the morning and/or evening hours and around the work they are doing. Similarly adult men and women who are working can study in the evenings and at the week-end and by correspondence. There are no fixed school or college hours in this system nor a rigid abstract curriculum to follow. Second, in the non formal education system there are no drop outs and no wastage. Only those who want the particular skill, the specific qualification or the needed upgrading enter the system and the result is usually an early return in employment or increased earnings. In a recent survey that I helped to conduct for my State in India, Tamil Nadu, I found that while in the primary schools the drop outs were as high as 53 per cent, in the out-of-school education training programmes there was not one who dropped out. Third, the unit cost of such education is usually about one third to one half the unit cost of the school and college. In informal education there are no costly buildings, no separate libraries and laboratories and even the teachers are part time. The facilities of the system are shared facilities--shared with the formal educational system or with the world of work--the farm, the factory, the office and the co-operative. Fourth, informal education uses the dialogue and discussion method. The lecture and monologue methods used in the class room is unsuitable to the factory, farm, the adult education group where there is a give and take between teacher and taught. In such a system there is constant feeding into the learning programme and feedback into the curriculum, correlating it and making it fit into what the students and trainees want. Non-formal education is the very substance of education which is a dialectic and a dialogue. Finally non-formal education is the system of the future. At the rate at which knowledge is growing and new technologies and techniques are exploding each or us--the farmer, the worker, the engineer, the teacher, the scientist, the manager and the civil servant--will find that our knowledge has become outdated, that our skills have become obsolescent in ten or fifteen years after we have left school, college or training programme. We will have to return for refreshment, retraining, and updating to some part of the education system and we will

have to do it as part of the out-of-school informal education programme. This means that in time the school and college which will always be the full time educational agency in our society will shed its present monopoly of education and the wave of the future is the many non-formal and informal programmes of education."

We hope that we have made a case for a Reform of Education which is different from what has been attempted earlier in the recent past. The basic thrusts of the Reform proposed in this paper are:

1. The philosophy and vision about man and world which stands behind the proposed Education Order should be spelt out.
2. The fundamnetal goal of the educational system taken as a whole is the flowering of the total person as a unique individual in all his components -- body, mind, heart and spirit -- in both personal and social dimensions.
3. This learning process unfolds not only in the classroom, in formal education, but outside it too, in and through a number of agencies & settings, and it is spread throughout the whole life- span of the person.
4. The context of this process of growth is the socio-cultural realities of Sri Lanka, as a. developping country, and of the modern world.
5. The world of today, both local and global, is not static but dynamic and evolutionary, the pace of change accelerating towards a new future whose features are recognisable in a general way, but cannot be brought into sharp focus.
6. Reforms of Education should therefore touch both the root and branches of the system, but in a practical and pragmatic way using all the insights and tools of modern knowledge, with the existing system as the starting point.
7. Such reforms have to well thought-out, carefully experimented on in pilot projects, and implemented in stages according to a systematic plan and time schedule.

All the above has been well expressed, very succinctly, in UNESCO's "Learning To Be", thus: "New educational strategies must proceed from an over-all vision of educational system and resources according to their capacity to meet the needs of societies in continual change. They must conceive of education as an enterprise transcending the framework of schools and universities, overflowing its constituent institutions. Under no circumstances should strategies be bound by the confines of one

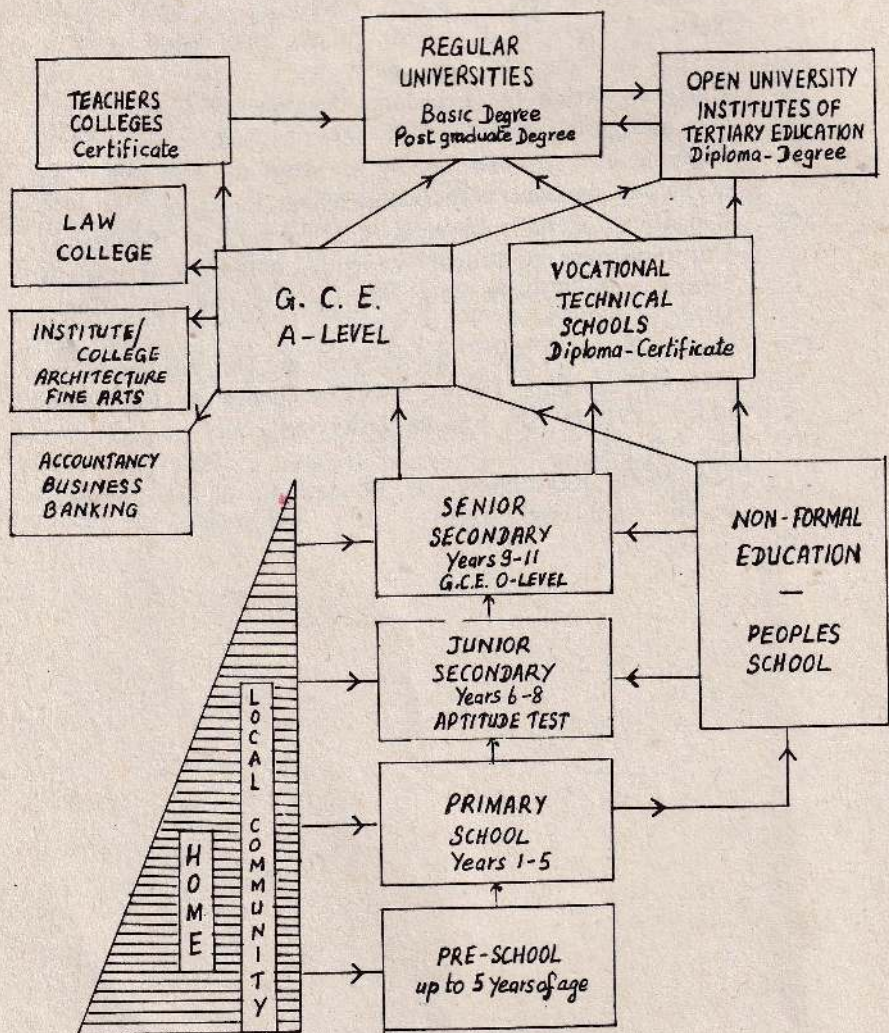
single medium, one form of institution or one so-called 'systemic' structure. Today, it is no longer desirable to undertake educational reforms in piecemeal fashion, without a concept of the totality of the goals and modes of the educational process. To find out how to reshape its component parts, one must have a vision of the whole. Today, whether reforms are partial or more general, we cannot dismiss the need to conceive of both one and the other in relation to the over-all situation, and to envisage their consequences....

We therefore no longer have the right either to improvise or to limit ourselves to narrow pragmatism. This does not mean we should dare nothing, fail to grasp new possibilities or commit ourselves to tomorrow. It means on the contrary that we must think clearly exploring new paths for the future. When developing and reforming educational institutions and methods we must not overlook the means and techniques in the present day world which not only enable us to improve existing modes, institutions and systems, but also to find fresh alternatives to them. This search for practical alternatives as part of a genuine strategy of innovation seems to us to be one of the primary tasks of any educational undertaking". (10)

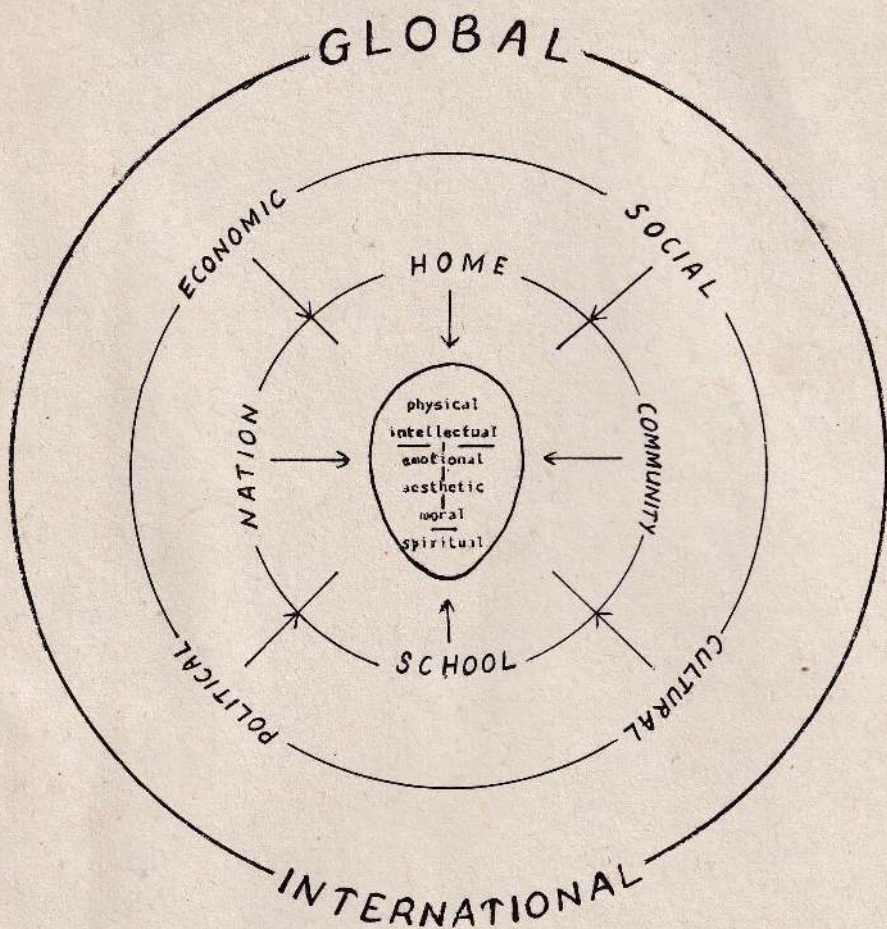
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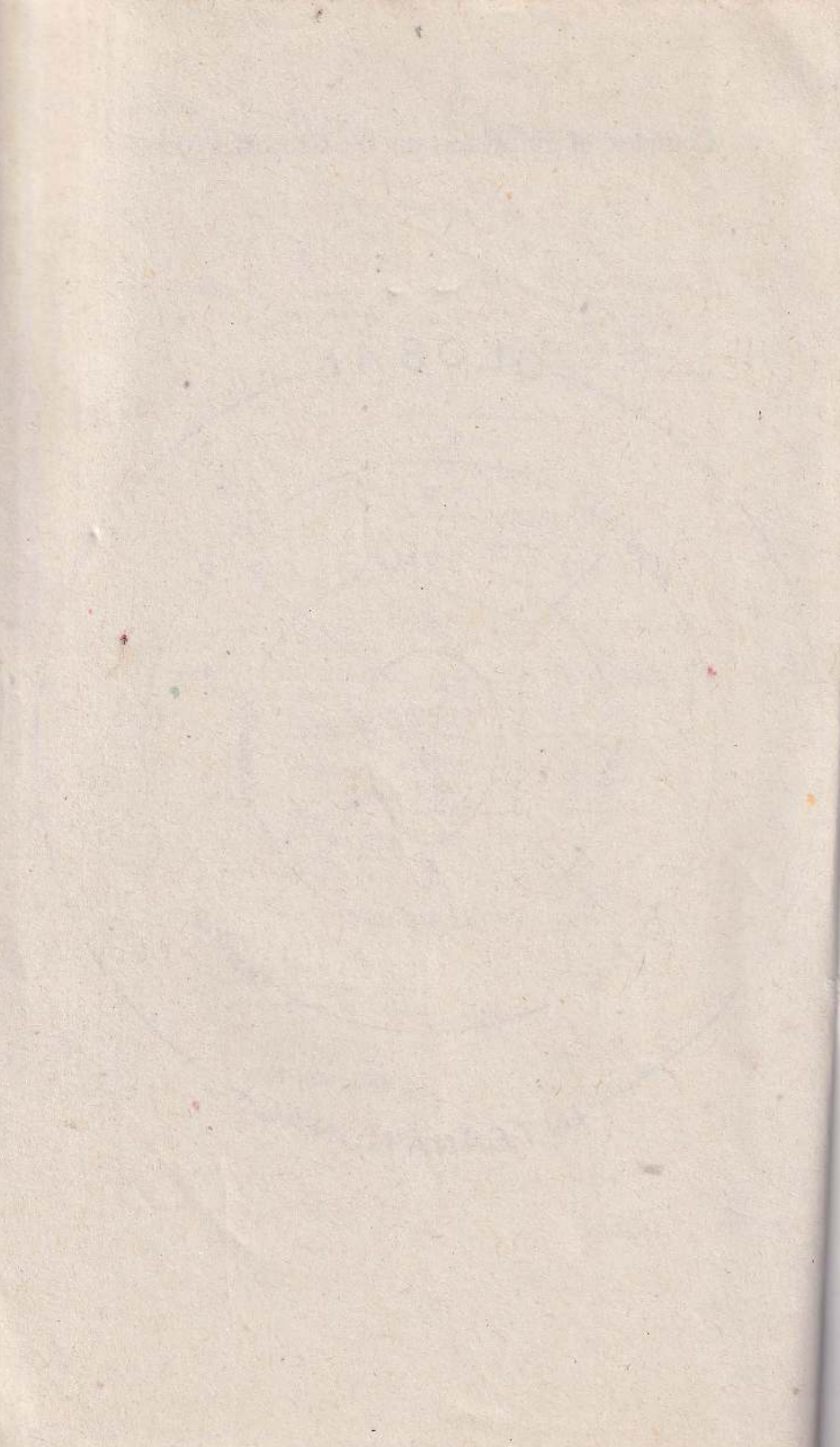
- (1) **Sunday Observer**, 17 March 1989
- (2) Sessional Paper No.1 - 1990, March 1990, Ch.4, p.30
- (3) UNESCO, Paris, 1972, p. xxxiii
- (4) **Cultural Action for Freedom**, Penguin, 1975, p. 21
- (5) We have used "he", "his" to refer to both sexes without implying any sex bias, purely to avoid the repetitious use of he/she, him/her, his/hers throughout this paper
- (6) "Cognition, Consciousness & Curriculum", in **Heightened Consciousness, Cultural Revolution and Curriculum Theory**, edit. William Pinar, Mc Cutchan Publishing Corp., 1974, p. 74
- (7) The problem is well documented in The J.E.Jayasuriya Memorial Lecture, **Equity and Excellence in Education** 14, Feb. 1991, by Dr. Swarna Jayaweera
- (8) No. 96, p.43
- (9) The Next "Revolution" in Education, in the **Futurist**, March- April 1986, p.60.
- (10) pp. 175-76

Diagrammatic Representation of System



Complex of Influences on the Growth Process





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