

WANTED :- A New Vision for Educational Management

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Every teacher at every level, partakes of the management function – (as pointed out in the Sociology of teaching). The Principal delegates his function to the teacher when he is entrusted with a class of students. He not only transmits information but also the ethos of the institution to the students. It is essential therefore for all members of staff – rather all employees to be on their best ethical and moral behaviour at all times.

We have all heard the quip that a doctor's mistake will be found out very soon; an engineer's mistake after some years, whereas an educationist's mistake will take a whole generation to come to light. It is the ironic that while India strives to be a knowledge society and we would like to be a knowledge hub of the world, it is educational part of our services sector that is stuck at far too low a level below its true potential. At one time, India was the knowledge hub of the world, as testified by Lin Yutang in the twentieth century, the Japanese scholar Okura in the nineteenth

century and several European scholars before and after the Renaissance.

Aristotle wanted Alexander to bring back six Brahmin teachers with him to help in the great mission of civilizing the world. Not only advanced knowledge of the material world but also of the spiritual aspect within us were areas in which ancient India enjoyed a world reputation.

The Greek idea that praxis (meaningful activity) ought to be informed by correct gnosis (awareness); insistence on Truth, Goodness and Beauty; the idea that all work should be looked upon as a form of worship of God, Architectonic seem to have originated in India.

However, the glorious vision which educationists once had about their own role got lost somewhere along the line during the advance of the commercial civilization to its dominant world position today. There is a

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clear need to alter the perception which educational managers have of themselves – if we want to raise our young populace to fulfill their promise.

Today, at all levels of educational management, we find power without accountability. Or else, why should pass-percentage be so low anywhere? Should it require a court injunction to hold Principals responsible for ragging in their institutions? Every head of institution ought to have felt morally responsible for what happens in his turf, during his guard. No doubt, in education every adult partakes of the management function. If the institution had succeeded in convincing its senior students that ‘ragging’ is relevant only as an initiation ceremony and is a part of social engineering, there would have been no excesses and no opprobrium, and of course no judicial involvement.

Educational Managers ought to be irreproachable. They ought to be examples of righteousness – Dharma – to their colleagues, to their students and to the world outside. I am privileged to have seen people like that as well as persons who have been anything but that.

During part of my life, I was engaged in a commercial career, as Manager of an educational publishing house. Part of my duties then, was to meet Heads of Departments of India and push our publications. Incidentally, they were among the best in the world. Imagine my shock when I found some heads of some university departments totally devoid of ethics. They denied having taken thousands of Rupees worth of books which I had given on approval in good faith without any formality. I had to skimp and save to make good that amount to

my foreign employers. No doubt it was a good lesson. The value of ethics and morals is felt keenly only when it is conspicuously absent.

Not only to the world outside, but to the people to whom management delegates their functions as well as the students, educational management should be models of probity, upholders of ethical and moral values and exemplars of civilized behaviour. A very tall order indeed! In addition they should be repositories of knowledge and masters of communication. They ought to realize that they are in a campus which is a controlled ‘microcosm’ in which they have a duty to train their wards. All of this was implicit in the old Gurukula system. It would be jejune to regret the past glories and impractical to turn the clock back. But unless we succeed in shifting the self perception of educational management to one that is informed by an ethical moral code of behaviour, we will be doomed to remain mediocre.

In Gunnar Myrdahl’s ‘Asian Drama’, we find Teacher Training Colleges described as the ‘power plants’ which can electrify or empower the whole population. It is in these institutions that a paradigm shift in self-perception, if it happens can be most effective. “If one is honourable, one will not stoop to unethical and immoral acts.” If, one is true to oneself as Polonius points out, “one cannot be false to any man.”

What has all this got to do with educational management? Every teacher at every level, partakes of the management function – (as pointed out in the Sociology of teaching). The Principal delegates his function to the teacher when he is entrusted with a class of students. He not only transmits information but also the ethos of the institution to the students. It is essential therefore for all members of staff –

rather all employees to be on their best ethical and moral behaviour at all times. Only they can serve as the leaven to leaven the whole of future Indian society.

The educational system has been jettisoning moral and ethical content in gradual stages ever since the European renaissance starting in the fifteenth century. The advent of liberal education, Francis Bacon's emphasis on the inductive method as the only firm foundation of knowledge, Macaulay's introduction of European forms into India, have all been partially responsible for this state of affairs. The rise of 'commercial civilization' – the phrase was coined by Adam Smith as the motive and dominant force in world affairs resulted in any discussion of ethics and morals to be inconsequential and slightly comical. In that quintessential renaissance play which deals with today's questions, Polonius is portrayed by Shakespeare as a pompous and slightly ridiculous figure. He gives excellent advice to his son on his going to an English University. But despite the best moral and ethical advice, both Polonius' son Laertes, his daughter Ophelia and he himself meet with separate and sticky ends!

It was mentioned that only in their absence do we realize the necessity and importance of sound ethical and moral training. Any overt attempt to foster ethics and morals in the modern world has so far ended in failure or worse. The famous Oxford Movement and Moral Rearmament Programs ended in ignominy. Even some regimes in the modern world have their notorious moral policing and these are tied to some dogma or the other. The post-modern view-point aims to be ethically and morally 'neutral' and value judgements are frowned upon. This is because values themselves are held to be temporary and

conditioned by society. This disturbing scenario presumed each individual to be capable of judging what is right for oneself. Perhaps this is the reason for so many education commissions after independence dexterously skirting the issue of providing moral instruction or beating about the bush and leaving it in a limbo. The curriculum and course content of some of the colleges remain as 'laughable' as when V.S. Naipaul found them in the fifties.

This however will not do. Paradigm shifts of many types are needed. Ethics and morals have to regain their old position of being 'logos centric' or 'originary'. That is they exist from the beginning of the world and are not to be swayed by fashions. They are sempiternal values; they partake the quality of 'Sanatana Dharma'. Philosophically, they fall into the category of the 'universal subjective'. That is to say, despite changes in tastes, everyone has to admit that sugar is sweet. Everyone knows what is morally sound or not. A good self image has to be created where one will not stoop to do anything that is ethically wrong. Personally, I would humbly suggest that some essays be made essential reading for all teacher aspirants. One is Philip Sydney's, 'An apology for Poetry' and the other Emerson's, 'The American Scholar'. A third is Newman's 'Idea of a University'. The titles are rather misleading but it will serve our purpose. A place where ethical and moral values are upheld is Heaven; where they are absent is Hell. Finally, let me introduce an enjoinder often made by one of India's modern Renaissance men, educationist and founder Director of the I.I.M., Bangalore, National Professor N.S. Ramaswamy. "Let us build a Heaven around us wherever we are," he says. He generally succeeds in doing so too!