Title: Education and development – Singapore’s experience

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Introduction
In learned journals and in International Conferences, "Development" frequently appears to be a favourite topic for discussion by Economists. I am not an Economist by profession and hence I am not able to comment on problems of development as an Economist. In this paper, I shall view development and problems connected with development from the standpoint of an Educationist, an Asian Educationist at that. My presentation will not be so much a theoretical exposition as a discussion based on practical examples found in Singapore's experience.

For this paper, there are certain premises which I accept as the theoretical framework on which to base my analysis:

a) Development in Asia is to go on. In the recent environment and growth debate, Western critics have warned Asian countries about the detrimental effect of continuing development on nature and on man's environment. The Asian point on this issue, as shared by most developing countries, is; While we should avoid making the same mistakes as the West has made, our effort in developing our nations is not to be deterred by the prophets of doom. We need to develop in order to improve the well-being of our people.

b) I share the optimistic view about the future of development and about the benefits development will bring to the people in developing countries. Furthermore, I believe in the vital role education can play towards development in an Asian country. Once again, the cynical caution directed to us about the naivety of the Victorian belief in progress is not accepted here.

On this note of optimism I shall proceed to define what I mean by "Education" and "Development".

Education - the term "Education" as used throughout this paper refers to formal education only. It excludes informal education, out-of-school education, education in the family, community education or any other form of education which does not come within the Education System.

Development - The word "development" is used in its comprehensive sense. Development is not confined to economic growth; it also embraces social and cultural aspects.
Relations between Education and Development

From my study of educational patterns and practices in developing countries in relation to development, I have drawn some conclusions about the relations between education and development. There are three possible kinds of relationship with their varied, but inevitable consequences:

a) A process of education could be developed with a serious adverse effect on the development of a nation. In short, education could become, consciously or unconsciously, anti-development. This phenomenon can be found in countries where the old colonial or feudal concept of education still prevails. In such a system of education, the traditional contempt for manual labour is strongly held and preserved. The educated who have gone through this system, are taught to avoid using their hands. In the process of industrialisation for any country, a large number of skilled and unskilled workers is needed. How could a nation develop itself if its nationals harbour a deep-rooted prejudice and refuse to work by hand? Again, there are countries where the age-old traditions in education encourage education for the elite, with a bias towards achieving a liberal and humanistic education for the cultivation of the individual, to the exclusion of national needs. Education, when developed in this fashion, will only hamper, and not help, development.

b) Education and development could each go its separate way. Again, as in some countries, education is developed independently or in total disregard to development, especially economic development. Education is still conceived in a simplistic and romantic way as in the past. The provision of education for the young is conceived without due regard to the economic needs of their future. In some countries in Asia, higher education is expanded along the lines of an "open-door" policy to meet popular demands. One of the sad consequences of this divorce between educational planning and economic development is the existence of a large number of unemployed graduates, which threatens or has threatened to become a social problem in the countries concerned.

c) The third, and the right kind of relationship between education and development is a harmonious partnership between the two, for mutual benefit. How can education help stimulate and expand development and how can development help education to grow? The two can
respect, Singapore's experience could be used to illustrate how this kind of relationship can be cultivated in the right direction.

Singapore's experience

It is realised that Singapore is not a typical case as a developing country in Asia. Singapore's position is unique. It is a small and compact island-state with a predominately urban society and practically no rural sector. It has the advantage of being placed in a favourable geographical position at the hub of South-East Asia. It has very limited natural resources except human resources which form its greatest asset. The three major ethnic groups, Chinese, Malays, and Indians make up the bulk of its two million population. The Singapore society is multi-racial, multi-lingual and multi-religious. The last decade has seen a rapid and tremendous success in industrialisation in Singapore. At the moment, its industrialisation programme has gone past the "take-off" stage and Singapore is now well on its way to becoming an industrial state. With its per capita income of over US $1000.00 per year this nation is no longer grouped in the 'under-developed' or 'developing' category. Yet in more senses than one, we are still very much in the transitional period towards the stage of being accorded an 'advanced' or 'developed' status.

The presentation in this paper is therefore made in terms of a case study to show how education, if handled properly, can be used as an instrument for economic, social and cultural development. Moreover, it serves to demonstrate the possible outcome of a close liaison between education planning and economic development. In addition, I hope my paper will, in some indirect and intangible way, help bring about a greater understanding among Friends who have shown concern for or interest in developing countries and the problems of development.

Contribution of Education to Development in Singapore

Like other developing countries, Singapore has received aid from developed countries for which we are grateful. However, what should perhaps be mentioned is the considerable efforts made within the country that have accelerated development of the nation. Education is only one area into which we put our energy to raise the level of development. Other areas like housing, health service, and social service have, in their own way, grown and developed tremendously so as to raise the standards of living of the people, to reduce problems of poverty and to narrow the gap between the rich and the poor. Likewise, economic expansion has
I am not competent to comment on other areas, I shall have to concentrate on efforts made in the field of Education.

Besides, it is not feasible, in the limited time to give a lengthy treatment to the progress of education in relation to development in Singapore. I shall therefore confine myself to the main features that characterise education's contribution to development in Singapore since the early 1960's.

a) Education is developed in line with the economic needs of the country.

   Education in Singapore to-day is seen as an essential process of development. Many years ago, in the colonial era, the system of education was largely designed to produce white-collar workers. As rapid industrialisation took place, a correction of the imbalance of education became imperative. The emphasis of education has since been shifted from general education to science and technical education.

   To meet the manpower requirements at all levels, all-out measures were taken to revamp the education system. Since 1968, the secondary school curriculum has been revised to include technical subjects as a 'must' for all boys and half of the girls in Secondary I and Secondary II classes. Vocational institutes and technical schools were set up, and students with the right aptitudes are channelled into the technical stream of education. At the tertiary level, at the Universities, the Singapore Polytechnic and the Ngee Ann Technical College, new courses in engineering and science were offered and students are encouraged to take up a variety of applied science, building and engineering courses for their career. In this way, education is planned and developed in rapport with the needs of the economy. At the present moment near full-employment has been achieved and manpower at all levels is deployed to the full, yet the needs in our industry are expanding so enormously and rapidly that we are still short of skilled and unskilled labour.

b) Education for an integrated society.

   Education in Singapore is regarded as an important tool to bring together people of different linguistic, racial and cultural backgrounds. We aim not only to foster tolerance, goodwill and understanding among the different ethnic groups, but also to forge a bond among them directed by a strong sense of nationhood. Under the British rule, education was developed along four separate language streams, viz. English, Chinese, Malay and Tamil. To-day, all these schools share common curricula and syllabuses. Common loyalty is fostered through the study of common content and the learning of the reading and writing of the same language.
of education under one roof in order to break down language barriers. Now the term 'integrated school' has ceased to be used as such, for most of our schools are in fact integrated with two, or more than two, language streams.

With the greater emphasis on the study of a second language, from this year onwards, a number of subjects in all our primary schools are taught through a second language (which may be any one of the four official languages in our country). The learning of a second language is aimed at fostering greater understanding among the different linguistic and ethnic groups and at the same time a better understanding of one's own cultural values. It is envisaged that the division of language streams in our future schools will be blurred or even eliminated and this should form the basis for a united and cohesive society of tomorrow. The road leading to this destination is long and naturally full of obstacles, but we are not daunted by difficulties, and we are prepared to work hard to overcome whatever obstacles that come in our way.

c) Education is developed in line with social and cultural change

Education has expanded tremendously to meet the social aspirations of the people. In the process of achieving higher development in our country, certain traditional social prejudices have to be eradicated and certain qualities have to be cultivated in our people. Education is entrusted with this task. For example, we are trying hard to overcome the traditional prejudice against manual labour. The effect of changes in school curriculum and the pattern of available employment opportunities are directly and indirectly contributing towards a gradual change of attitude among the people. It was reported recently that 65% of our parents have expressed a preference for technical and vocational education for their sons. Yet we still have a long way to go before we can say that we have eradicated this prejudice. Qualities that are desirable in an industrial society such as ability to work hard, right working habits, self-reliance, punctuality and group discipline, are to be fostered in our schools through formal instruction as well as informal extracurricular activities.

On the other hand, because of the changing patterns of our style of living, it is being realised that many of our traditional values have been eroded. We are in danger of losing grip of some of our age-old treasured values such as thrift, filial duties towards one's parents, family loyalty and respect for the old. How are we to retain these
What should we do in order that our young will have the moral fibre and stamina to live in an age of change? Moral and ethical education in our curriculum has an important role to play in fostering right values and attitudes necessary for national development. Efforts to strengthen family ties and to develop a sense of community should also have beneficial effect. Those of us who are in Education are very much concerned with this problem and much thinking and discussion has taken place as to how to bring about favourable results in moral and ethical education.

To what extent education has benefited from development in Singapore

As education feeds the developmental needs of economic growth in Singapore, so it also reaps benefits from development in the nation. These are some main benefits education has drawn from development:

a) Strong financial support from the State - As Singapore is growing rapidly with a 13% increase in GNP last year, the country is in a financially sound position to develop its various Government Services and infrastructure. Education, being one of its services, is financed almost entirely by the State. Expenditure in Education occupies second place in Singapore's national expenditure. With sound government support, teachers have decent salaries and security, and schools are adequately equipped. Education is thus able to carry out its many reforms and programmes.

b) Modern knowledge and technology have an impact on Education itself. The schools have gone through many changes in the light of available modern knowledge and technology. This can be seen in improvements in the curriculum, in methods of instruction, the use of modern educational technology, in the buildings and equipment in schools, etc.

However, education in Singapore is also feeling the backwash effect of industrial and commercial growth. The teaching service is now experiencing some strain in its attempt to retain Science, Mathematics, Technical and other teachers in the service. As industrialisation gathers momentum, a variety of manpower at all levels is needed in industry and commerce. Experienced men with special knowledge and skills in Science, Mathematics, or with organisational and managerial expertise are in great demand. Teachers with such experience and expertise are attracted to the private sector by better and more attractive salaries. If the trend of teacher resignations is not reverted, the shortage of this category of teachers would eventually have a
Problems we are facing to-day

We have succeeded in many aspects of our national development. Nevertheless, even though many difficulties have been overcome, a number of new problems have emerged.

a) Problems concerned with value systems

We are an open society subject to all kinds of influences from without and within. How can we maintain our own identity and retain our own Asian values while accepting Western science and technology? How are we to achieve some equilibrium in face of conflicts between Eastern and Western cultures, and between old and new values? Certainly reliance on civics and moral teaching in school alone is not sufficient. Social awareness and a strong sense of nationhood to be inculcated and ingrained in the public will be an imperative.

b) Problems concerned with the quality of life.

In Education, we have passed the stage of quantitative expansion, and we are now intent on qualitative improvements. Our concern with qualitative improvement has led us to question the quality of life as existing to-day.

As we have economic growth, we should be more aware that we should not allow economic growth to dominate or overshadow other aspects in our life. Unfortunately, this is not true with us. The tendency for the people in Singapore is to become too materialistic-minded and too success-oriented. Sociologists tell us that that is an inevitable concomitant of industrialisation and urbanisation. The relations between men and men and the more cultural and spiritual side of life have been neglected. Something has to be done to revert this tendency. A more important question could be posed; How can we reconcile material progress with ethical and spiritual advancement? Friends with their long-cherished love for simplicity in living and their concern for others may have a solution to offer to a newly-developing country.

c) Problems concerned with attitudes and change

While many traditional societies in Asia are resistant to change, we found ourselves too ready to accept change. There is the tendency to over-react from one extreme to another. We tend to react too fast and too much. In educational matters, there are many such examples; in the zest of correcting one imbalance, we tend to proceed to another imbalance. From a lack of extra-curricular activities in the past, we have swung over to the other extreme.
is more maturity in our thinking and our action.

Another obvious weakness in our society is a general lack of independence of mind and of an inquiring spirit. Hence there is the tendency for the public to be easily swayed by the mass media. In order to become less vulnerable and gullible when faced with alternatives, we shall need to have better and more mature judgment in deciding issues on what is good and what is right.

While we have acquired many desirable qualities such as self-reliance, drive and hardworking attitudes, we have yet to cultivate other qualities in life which we have to possess if we are not to degenerate into a purely technological and industrial society without a soul. Selflessness, willingness to serve and consideration for others are some of the foremost qualities we need to foster in our society.

d) Problems concerned with environment

As we progressed in our industrial development, we are becoming more aware of the problems of pollution and environmental health. We have begun to take precautionary measures for industry and the public to reduce pollution in our environment and to better utilise the limited resources in our country. For example, an intensive campaign for the careful use of water, the main supply of which has to come from a neighbouring country, is at the moment well underway. And the recycling of used water has been given serious thought by our experts and scientists. Earlier, the campaign to make "Singapore clean and green" which educated the public to preserve and beautify our environment has produced positive results. Members of the public have been urged to think and act for the sake of national interests, and not only their own sectional or individual interests.

However, isolated campaigns and punitive measures are not enough to produce a lasting effect in the minds of the public. A comprehensive and well thought-out programme on environmental education should be intensified and included in our school curriculum in order to ingrain in our young consciousness and attitudes that would lead to actions beneficial for our environment. This has yet to be achieved.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: I have in the above paragraphs listed some of the perplexing problems that face a rapidly industrialised Asian country. Some of these problems, to a greater or lesser degree, can be found in other industrialising States in Asia. May I now make a closing remark? I believe that Religion can play a significant role in offering some inner peace and security to individuals in a rapidly changing society and to restore in people some sense of direction in their search for what is good and what is right. When people are subject to conflicts between different value systems in complex situations, religion, be it Christianity, Islam or Buddhism, can come to their aid as a spiritual force. Christians, in particular, through their faith, can offer much spiritual strength to the developing countries in Asia, by combining their religious