

Committee IV
Crises in Education in the 1980's:
A Survey of Educational Values and Systems

Draft --
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To: Jim Baughman
From: M. Alonso

Please find some corrections to my discussion paper.
I hope it is ~~is~~ not too late to make them. Some are necessary
but others are a matter of style. Regards.

M. Alonso

DISCUSSION PAPER

by

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on

Toshio Toyoda's

DIFFICULTIES IN EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH ASIA

The Thirteenth International Conference on the Unity of the Sciences
Washington, D.C. September 2-5, 1984

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Comments on "Difficulties in Educational Development in South Asia"

by Toshio Toyoda

Prepared by Marcelo Alonso

The paper by Toyoda succeeds in portraying the overwhelming difficulties confronted by the 17 ~~committees~~ ^{countries} that constitute South Asia in his analysis. When compared with the region I know best, Latin America, we can see profound differences between the two regions, that make the educational problems in Latin America appear a lot simpler in relative terms.

Toyoda's paper basically concentrates on primary and secondary education, although he also briefly touches on university or tertiary education. In my analysis of the paper I will deal with some of the general considerations made by Toyoda and then will draw comparisons between South Asian and Latin American educational problems. However, first I want to point out the magnitude of the educational problems faced by the world.

The current population of the world is about 4.6×10^9 people; in Latin America it is 400×10^6 people; and in South Asia there are about $1,450 \times 10^6$ people. But in the year 2000, that is 15 years from now, the respective populations will be 6.2×10^9 , 566×10^6 and $1,980 \times 10^6$ people, respectively. In Latin America and South Asia that is an increase of 166×10^6 and 530×10^6 people, respectively; most of them in school ages, thus requiring educational services.

If we consider only the population of school age or that about to enter it (0 to 24 years of age) in the year 2000, we have the population for Latin America as

233 x 10⁶ people. This represents an increase of 22 percent relative to 1984 and for South Asia about 800 x 10⁶ people, or a 22 percent increase of 14 percent. For all the lesser-developed countries (LDC) the population in school age will be about 2 x 10⁹, or an increase of 25 percent. These staggering figures bring out in a dramatic way the investments in education that the LDC face in the next decade due to the unchecked population growth: teachers, schools, equipment, laboratories and textbooks. The problem becomes even more complex if we add to this the relatively high levels of illiteracy in the LDC for the population with ages above 15 years; which in some few countries reach about 90 percent. Can the LDC solve their educational problems by themselves? Can the LDC help to solve the problems? How? These are big questions that we have to face with realism and courage if we want a more just and better world in the year 2000. And the response has to be done promptly or the crises will become unmanageable.

Next I shall refer to some of the general questions raised by Toyoda in his paper. The first and perhaps the most important one is the relation between education, values and religion. An educational system that just provides information and develops some skills but fails to inculcate fundamental values in the students is imperfect and inevitably leads to a materialistic society, with all its undesirable consequences. But it is religion which serves as a basis for recognizing values.

Thus the dilemma faced by many countries, including the United States: the development of a ~~more~~^{non} religious educational system that ~~should~~ pay due attention to values. The Soviet Union has recognized this problem and has created a new "God"--embodied in the concept of the all-powerful "state"--and a new religion which is the Marxist doctrine. This of course is completely unacceptable from a purely humanistic point of view. In Latin America (like in most of the Western world) general education and religion were closely connected until the middle of the

19th century. However, even after they became officially separated in Latin America after the independence wars, Christian philosophy and principles remained the foundation of the educational system. It is interesting to observe in South Asia that this connection between education, values and religion is still strong and accepted by most of the countries, except those which have gone Communist. However a word of caution: It is very important that religious dogmas and doctrines do not detract from the quality of general education by imposing scientifically untenable positions and concepts.

Another point in Toyoda's paper related to the previous one, is that of the relation between education, values and modernization. If by modernization we mean transforming a LDC according to the patterns of current Western-industrial societies, it is possible as Japan has proved, to rapidly modernize the educational system without a great sacrifice in traditional values, although this matter may be questioned right now in Japan. To a certain extent India has done the same. On the other hand, in Iran we are witnessing a "de-modernization" based on recovery of certain traditional values for which the educational system is an important tool.

A point in order is that modernization cannot mean the same thing to all societies and it depends greatly on what model of development or kind of industrial transformation is adequate for each society. Industrialization requires the development of certain skills which should be done through the formal educational system and by retraining the adult population. Here arises a new problem, the different time-horizons between education and industrial development. This matter is also brought out by Toyoda, and a partial answer is good educational planning properly coordinated with economic planning. In Latin America there is a long tradition of both educational and economic planning but it has failed, in my opinion, to resolve in a satisfactory manner this problem of matching education and skills

demanded by a continuously changing economy. It might be interesting to know more about how some of the South Asian countries are tackling this problem. Of course for good educational planning, stability and continuity are essential, and I wonder if under the current conditions of unrest and turmoil in many countries of the region it is possible to achieve that goal.

A third general point I wish to consider is that of the relation between the quality of education and investment in education. Education must not only be relevant in terms of content, but also must use the best technological tools and well-prepared teachers for transmitting the message effectively to the massive numbers of students in these countries. Both factors combined determine the "quality" of education. But attaining and maintaining a high quality of education requires considerable investment by the public sector in competition with other investments required for economic development. Unfortunately, as Toyoda very correctly recognizes, most governments in South Asia, and I regret to say that ^{it} also holds true for Latin America, fail to recognize that education is a "productive" investment. The consequences are inadequate schools, ill-prepared, poorly paid, overburdened teachers and a lack of appropriate teaching tools.

I regret to say that the Communist regimes have recognized the economic value of good education, as well as its effectiveness as an indoctrination mechanism, and thus have paid special attention to it. ⁹ No specific figures are given in Toyoda's paper about the current investments in education by the governments of South Asia. In the case of Latin America the public-sector investment in education varies from one country to another, but is of the order of 25 percent to 30 percent of their national budgets or about 4 percent of the respective GNP's. It is generally recognized that these ^m accounts are insufficient. However, it is very difficult to give general guidelines for investments in education in relation to GNP ^{which are} of universal

value and the matter has to be resolved on a country-by-country basis.

~~Another~~ matter closely related to this point, but ^{that} ~~one which~~ also has a direct incidence on educational planning and policies, is the relative investment of the public sector in the three levels of education: primary, secondary and tertiary (university). The first level has lower unitary costs and is more attractive from the social point of view, while the two other levels have higher unitary costs and in general benefit the higher-income population, but at the same time serves the important purpose of preparing the necessary skilled workers and leaders. It would be interesting to know how the South Asian countries have faced this problem.

Another factor related to the financing of education is the role of the private sector, which in Latin America is a very important one, but basically serves the population of upper and medium income. However from Toyoda's paper one gets the impression that the role of private education is rather limited in most South Asian countries, placing the burden of education on the public sector.

To conclude these general comments on Toyoda's paper, I would like to refer to some of the major differences between South Asia and Latin America. The first one refers to the ethnic composition of the population. While in South Asia one recognizes among the 17 countries at least 31 different languages and many more ethnic groups, ~~In~~ Latin America there are basically four languages with Spanish being the official language of about 80 percent of the population. In each country there are essentially two ethnic groups: the non-Indian, mostly Caucasian and African population, well-^{integrated} ~~interpreted~~ and constituting the majority; and the Indian population, only partially integrated with the first group and which still speaks in many places their original languages as well as the official language. Thus it becomes easier ^{in Latin America} to provide the same type of education and use the same textbooks. This obviously is impossible in South Asia.

The second point refers to cooperation among the countries in education. In Latin America there is a long tradition of cooperation and both UNESCO and OAS have played an important role in promoting such cooperation. I believe that such cooperation must be rather difficult in South Asia. This is another obstacle for improving education ^{in South Asia} since it severely limits the use of multinational facilities for the establishment of multinational programs.

One final difference is the access to education of males and females. In South Asia males predominate over females at all levels of education, while in Latin America both sexes attend education in comparable numbers, especially at the primary level. I hope very much this situation will soon be substantially ameliorated ^{in South ~~South~~ Asia}.

Of course in this brief review it has been impossible to do justice to the excellent analysis by Professor Toyoda and to comments on all his points. However, I believe I have been able to touch on some of his most important ideas.

