

LINKING SCHOOLS WITH THE CORPORATE WORLD A SOLUTION TO FILL UP THE GAP BETWEEN THEORY AND PRACTICE

M. MERU

India is experiencing many changes with the onset of the globalisation process. To mention two changes, the country is experiencing increasing urbanisation, and more women are joining the paid workforce. Many of the social changes experienced by us in India are common to other nations too. The country is undergoing a shift towards a market-oriented economic system. This change has not spared the education sector too, specifically the schools. The result is that schools are only preparing the young students “on how to live in the adult world”. However, available evidences reveal that students are not adequately prepared for the world of work from their learning or studies through the education system.

Hence it is time to generate meaningful debates on linking schools with industry and commerce without losing sight of agriculture. There is a big gap between what the students learn in the educational institutions especially in schools and the outside world. There is also a gap between the world of education and the world of work or employment and higher education. The students (and politely the teachers too..) are not aware of how the country earns and maintains its standard of living and prosperity to esteem the essential role of industry and commerce in the process.

At the micro level, the need for enriching the teaching and learning process with more practical information is required, based on what is working and what is not for the country. The context of the external world should be the base for imparting skills and competencies in the present need. Even the foundation at the primary school level should be strengthened and extended to the secondary schools with better and more systematic career education guidance to the learner.

In the 21st century, an important goal of education should be to develop individuals with a high level of mathematical proficiency to support future participation in employment and citizenship. Mathematical knowledge is fundamental to the understanding and development of science and technology and also applicable to many areas in the social sciences. It is vitally important that in the highly competitive global economic environment, there are continuing difficulties in developing a successful education system which supports all pupils to reach their mathematical potential. There are many reasons for this, which include:

- Insufficient number of quality teachers both at primary and at secondary level to teach mathematics and science
- Less number of primary school teachers with adequate mathematical and scientific knowledge
- Too much emphasis on syllabus completion and examination rather than learning achievement of students
- A temporary and inadequately paid teaching workforce

These issues are complex and not easy to change. A sustainable method of enhancing the teaching and learning of mathematics in the primary phase of education is very important. There is a need to put a strong mathematical foundation in the primary school, taught by mathematically competent teachers to make mathematics enjoyable to the students. If we provide such a foundation in mathematics, students will be able to achieve better at the secondary level. By enhancing primary mathematics teaching and learning initiatives, more competent students will pass out of the school, ready and equipped for higher studies and vocational education.

To fill up the gap between knowledge and skill, the corporate sectors can extend a meaningful support to the schools by sharing their practical experiences and conducting hands-on sessions with students, which will definitely prove to be more interesting and rewarding compared to theoretical teaching. Hence it is important that schools link with the industry and commerce to enhance the learning achievement in the scenario of market economy and the changing employment market. Skill based education will be possible only if the industry extends a supporting hand to the schools.

Ps: Our experience with the industry and corporate sectors can be shared with those who are interested in this area.