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EDUCATION AND HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

***Annotation.** This article is about how education could help individuals develop holistically rather than merely acquire money making skills, and education with values should be the goal of all educational frameworks.*

***Key words:** education, technology, values, holistic development, world view*

In most parts of the world, education is big business these days. Education is money for the providers and path to more money for the recipients. This is surely what would be considered real growth by most especially here in Pakistan. However, for some education is propaganda and mind control tool, which when scientifically implemented for specific purpose of indoctrination, would not just bring more money but also more power and control.

Before we dwell into problems in education and what would constitute good education we must ask what really is the purpose of education. Once upon a time education was a means to an end and not an end in itself. It was supposed to be a process through which we could acquire the necessary skills to become a human being worthy of our position as responsible members of societies. Unless we keep in mind the end goal of education of refining human beings, there would always be that danger of derailing the process of making ourselves wiser through education and simply giving in classrooms information that is already on the World Wide Web.

In education, there is now more and more emphasis on specialization, service delivery and most importantly speed with which these two are achieved. As we

need to train ourselves and acquire the necessary information and skills to reasonably generate enough income to feed our families and ourselves in the post industrial revolution economic conditions, our natural response is to try to find ways to rush through the process of acquisition of knowledge and skills, which can maximize income.

Another aspect affecting our training and education in this modern age is the dominating influence of computer-machines. It seems for many, engaging with artificial intelligence is easier and more enchanting than to engage with natural intelligence, and the flawless robotic lover could be more captivating in many ways in our pursuit of perfection. The nature of our learning today is oriented towards the use of computers and intelligent machines, and this has shifted the focus of refinement from humans to machines.

It is obvious education pundits fully realize the need for gadget-based multimedia and computer generated audio-visual software for educating children, as this is the era of technology. There is now an urgency to make our schools tech-savvy and rightly so, since technology is a symbol of progress and if a school offers technology, chances are that it must also offer real education that matters.

However, in this race of technology, are we forgetting tales from grandma, which were part of every child's bedtime stories? Bedtime stories have a very deep and profound effect on a child's mind. The old bedtime stories are increasingly being replaced by aggressive and violent games, cartoons, movies, and other web-based computer generated media. Media is engaging all of us — from bedtime entertainment for children to politically charged chat shows on numerous channels for adults.

There is now a direct relationship expected between skill development and income. The idea of acquiring skills today is primarily for service delivery in exchange for money. If enough money is being made in exchange for services, then by argument, there must be adequate useful skills developed by an individual. This would by assumption also mean that an individual must have successfully gained

enough sophistication on a personal level to be able to provide such services that can generate revenue.

By implication, the more revenue an individual can generate, the more sophisticated and more successful s/he must be and vice versa. We have all heard the phrase, «if you are so smart; how come you ain't rich?» In every sense of the word, money is success and for very good reasons.

In case of all the skilled and highly paid professionals like lawyers, doctors, engineers, and now artists, professional skill refinement is not distinguished from personal. In case of business owners, personal refinement is even more directly gaged by money.

It is perhaps reasonable to go along this yardstick of success and refinement since increasingly we are getting more and more dependent on the revenue generated on an individual level, as family and land support of the olden days is not there anymore. The harsh reality is that all of us need to survive on our own in this ruthless plastic world of material and money and the single most decisive factor in our survival is money.

In our efforts to become technologically advanced and generate more and more money and also judge individuals by it, information is confused with wisdom and technical advancement is confused with personal refinement. An individual is considered to be sufficiently developed even if s/he is merely an 'informed and computer-literate technician'.

As the renowned British Philosopher and Scholar Lord Bertrand Russell said about modern education, «Men are born ignorant, not stupid... they are made stupid by education». There is hardly any relationship between specific skill development and personal refinement. A carpenter can shape wood into nice furniture; a plastic surgeon can restore a mutilated face back into a beautiful one, and an artist can paint beauty on canvas, but how sophisticated and refined we are as individuals and how much do our internal code of behavior is moralistic and evolved depends on how

holistically we have developed with values inculcated and with a balance of intelligence quotient (IQ) and emotional quotient (EQ).

As opposed to our modern education and training approach of focusing solely on professional skills, most traditional processes of skills acquisition involved to a great extent holistic development aimed at inculcating traits and characteristics needed for human refinement in general as well as in particular for the specific trait.

For instance, if one had to learn music in the olden days especially in Pakistani tradition, the master would make the pupil demonstrate to have learnt respect, patience and self-control before teaching him anything. Similarly, for every new thing to be taught, the appreciation for it as well as the capacity (zarf) to handle it had to be acquired before learning the new skill. The ancient arts required 'zurf' (intellectual and spiritual capacity) to be developed before becoming masters of their skills. Most importantly respect for the skill as well as finer human qualities was taught and deeply inculcated. A musician would be taught to not just respect music and his/her master but also the musical instrument to the point of being sacred. Hazrat Imam Jaffar Sadiq (AS) highlighted this aspect when he taught his students, «seek knowledge and with it adorn yourselves with clemency and respect».

Traditional training took us on the path of self-improvement along with skill development as is obvious if we look at the old masters, their masterpieces and their lives. Modern approach and current methods, on the other hand, though help us in acquiring technical expertise directly sellable in the market, they however, take us away from personal refinement as the entire focus is on skill development.

Associated with the Frankfurt School, Lord Bertrand Russell was working in the area of mass social engineering. It is interesting to consider what he had to say about social engineering, media and education.

In his book, «The Impact of Science on Society», written in 1951, he explained the connection of education and media as mind control tools and their impact on mass psychology and social engineering, «I think the subject which will be of most importance politically is mass psychology... Its importance has been enormously

increased by the growth of modern methods of propaganda. Of these the most influential is what is called «education». Religion plays a part, though a diminishing one; the press, the cinema, and the radio play an increasing part.... It may be hoped that in time anybody will be able to persuade anybody of anything if he can catch the patient young and is provided by the State with money and equipment... the social psychologists of the future will have a number of classes of school children on whom they will try different methods of producing an unshakable conviction that snow is black. Various results will soon be arrived at. First, that the influence of home is obstructive. Second, that not much can be done unless indoctrination begins before the age of ten. Third, that verses set to music and repeatedly intoned are very effective. Fourth, that the opinion that snow is white must be held to show a morbid taste for eccentricity. ... although this science will be diligently studied, it will be rigidly confined to the governing class. The populace will not be allowed to know how its convictions were generated. When the technique has been perfected, every government that has been in charge of education for a generation will be able to control its subjects securely without the need of armies or policemen».

Interestingly, with much work and little time for individuals to carry out research on their own, our source of truth, morality and reality is mostly limited only to media and internet almost exactly as Lord Russell had predicted.

Jim Morrison of the band The Doors warned us exactly about this fact when he said, «Whoever controls the media controls the mind». Are we being mind-controlled by oligarchical interests pursuing hidden agendas and lucrative profits? Perhaps we all need to invest some time and effort in exploring this possibility further and how this media and web onslaught is affecting us as well as our children and current technological and web-based systems of education is only abetting this process.

Current lifestyles and economic hardships have forced both parents to work long hours. As a result, young children including the ones below the age of ten are

now in the hands of media and gaming corporate giants for whom the primary purpose is to generate profits at all costs, and even the greatest sense of ‘corporate social responsibility’ does not change this economic reality. As a result, all parental efforts to give their children a code of moral values not in tune with media messages are likely to be derailed.

The real question is if values-based education and moral code framework for human refinement and holistic development is even required when the need and desire are solely money and power. If human history is of any relevance here, it seems the less there is faith in the transcendent, the less the personal need to refine and more the need for making money by all means necessary.

Without a sense of self, values and morality, it is very easy for anyone to get demoralized and confuse priorities and lose direction in life and this seems to be the final revolution as Aldous Huxley in his book «Brave New World» suggested, ...«A really efficient totalitarian state would be one in which the all-powerful executive of political bosses and their army of managers control a population of slaves who do not have to be coerced, because they love their servitude».

The Canadian Professor and Clinical Psychologist Dr Jordan Peterson in his podcast rightly points out that the crisis of our age that is bigger than environment is the loss of values. It is time to re-align our education with our worldview and inculcate values in our youth before it is too late.

In the final analysis, it is our worldview that determines if we choose to educate our youth for the better or relentlessly pursue acquisition of wealth, power and authority till death do us part.