

Centre of Biomedical Ethics and Culture, SIUT

Bioethics Links

H. G. Wells writes that “human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe.” This issue of our newsletter focuses on various aspects of education in Pakistan. In our opinion, education is a moral debt we owe to our future generations. Editor

Nadia's dream. Will it come true?

*Zubeida Mustafa**

Nadia is a bright youngster who is nine. She has a dream. She wants to train as a doctor when she grows up. Will her dream come true? The odds are heavily stacked against Nadia. For one she is poor and cannot afford to go to a high-fee private school one of the institutions where a child can hope to learn something. Second, our educational system is such that it does not offer a level playing field to all children. This is a pity.

Dr. Atta Ur Rahman, Chairman of the Higher Education Commission (HEC), has pointed out repeatedly the low enrolment ratio of students in the universities and other institutions of higher education in Pakistan - standing at a mere 2.9 per cent. According to the HEC about 423,000 students were enrolled at that level in Pakistan in 2004. Dr Rahman's strategy has been to counter this shortfall by launching a massive drive to open new universities and enroll more students.

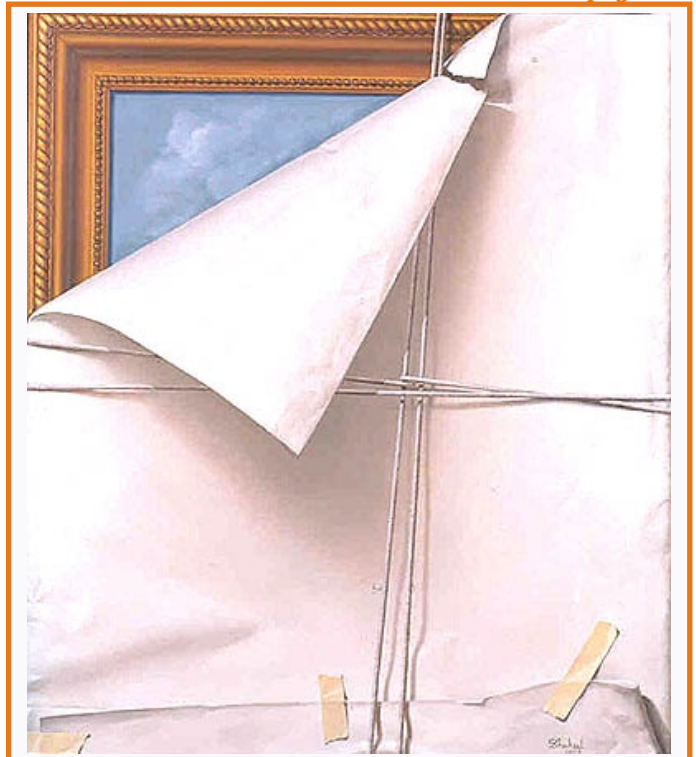
But it remains uncertain whether this approach alone will really benefit the country. The fact is that we do not merely need educated people holding higher degrees. Our need is for well educated people who have learnt to use their critical faculties, and are capable of creative thinking, people who know how to ask the right questions. Undoubtedly good education must impart knowledge and information but it must also help to develop an intellectual capacity to synthesize and assimilate this knowledge, and apply it in useful ways. In the absence of this,

“educated” people remain no more than conformist robots of society.

Another important characteristic of good education is that it imparts communication skills to the students. This includes proficiency and comprehension of languages that are the lingua franca, languages commonly spoken in their societies and also used in official transactions in the country.

In my opinion, without possessing these two basic prerequisites analytical power and

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