

The value of practical education

(Original)

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One morning, when I was walking down the stairs of the Temple of Pashupatinath with one of my cousins, he deliberately threw a chocolate wrapper in the pavements. Astonished by the act of the 12 year old boy who knew what it costs to pollute the UNESCO site, I thought of setting an example to him. I silently picked up the wrapper and put it in my pocket. Few minutes passed and after a long silence, he approached me and said "I'm sorry" and from that day, I never saw him littering the environment, at least not in front of me.

His act, though was trivial, forced me to contemplate about the education we acquire in the schools in my country, Nepal. Is the education we receive really helping us to change our deeds? I recall the words of Herbert Spencer in this regard, "The great aim of education is not knowledge but action". It then began to dawn on me that the education we receive is only based on rote learning but no actions. What importance will it carry then? My cousin had received the knowledge that littering pollutes the ecosphere but he had not been practical enough to put the knowledge into action.

Last April, a devastating earthquake shook our country and thousands lay dead, other homeless and helpless. Apart from the human casualties we suffered, the fear of epidemic had already been set in our minds. Rubbles lay everywhere, unhygienic garbage disposed near settlement and yet everyone sat quiet, criticizing the government. I thought of initiating something to prevent another epidemic breakout because we already had suffered so much. I, with many of my friends started local cleanliness campaign. Every day we would visit people's temporary settlement areas and clean them. Educated, the people were, only with grades full of A's and B's but no deeds. After few days of rigorous cleaning, however, our selfless works seemed to trigger their inner consciousness and they began to join us in cleaning. In fact this was the moment, to say, when they really got educated.

I belong to the capital of the country, the city with seven of the UNESCO world heritage sites, and yet, ironically, the same city has been ranked the third most polluted city in the world.

With so much to study about environment conservation in our courses, we haven't been able to materialize it. We point the government authorities for not taking actions but the people are not realizing that they are the ones who degrade it. This, what I believe, is the result of money centric education system of the country. The present education system is preparing more and more citizens whose sole purpose of gaining education is to earn money. However, we are in need of schooling that does not just encourage us to collect wealth but also contribute to create a sustainable society.

So what is considered an ideal education? A few examples and actions are all that is necessary to make a long lasting impression. I vividly recall once our teachers quietly initiated picking up litters and wrappers thrown by students in our school fair. Having seen this, my heart sank. I, and later every one of my friends, joined our teachers and this time, not with obligation, but with our hearts. I firmly believe that this exemplification had me saturated with eco-centric conducts and pragmatic knowledge which I prefer to say I inherited from the incident. Knowledge, in the ideal kind of education, thus, should be disseminated practically with exemplification and participation of students themselves.

I was quite inspired by what my Environment teacher always told us, "We don't want to manufacture more money-making machines, rather, we want you people to grow into wise men, wise enough to preserve our mother nature". Ideal education, I believe, must be something like that- one which is responsible for instilling values in students and not only make them literate but also help them to take shape of a good human morally, socially and culturally. The process of education should be such that it not only produces a yet-another-graduate but also a human who contributes to make this world a better place to live.