

In the Name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Kind



April 30, 2018

The Forgotten

Responsibilities of our Schools

So as to understand and to decide what the actual role of schools within our society should be, it is really vital to understand the overall aim and objective of education itself. It is of utmost significance to realize that the aim of education is not only to impart some factual knowledge to the students but to ensure their overall and balanced development. Children do not need only mental development but also physical, social, moral and emotional ones. All these needs cannot be met only with book reading. They need specific activities to satisfy these needs. And, these needs can be satisfied through proper co-curricular activities. Unfortunately, these facts are not realized by different schools in our country. Both the public and private schools in Afghanistan lack facilities and even the will to give proper preference to co-curricular activities. The public schools are mostly irresponsible in this regard, while the private schools have their businesses to pursue. Therefore, the schools in our country require to have comprehensive co-curricular programs as they ensure proper development of the students.

Co-curricular activities ensure a balance and wholesome personality development. They make children well-adjusted physically, mentally, emotionally and socially. They are helpful in moral training. Children find opportunities to decide and choose the right things and to learn the great values of self-control and moderation. Through the community life of games and activities, the children learn an inner discipline which remains with the children as a directing and restraining influence when they are away from the school. Students, through co-curricular activities, develop a sense of cooperation. They study, work, play and visit together and co-operate with each other. So, a spirit of team work and coordination develops among them.

By taking part in co-curricular activities, pupils realize the relation of the society to the individual and of the individual to the society. The pupils become members of the group and thus they learn universal brotherhood, true democracy and cooperation. In fact, schools can become a sort of primary training ground for democracy. They should be organized and administered on democratic lines. This will help students to become active citizens and to develop civic sense.

Co-curricular activities retain not only the physical health but also the mental health of the students. By doing regular exercise their bodies become healthy, which ultimately generate healthy minds. At the same time, because of the psychological training involved in such activities the students get ample chances of improving their mental health.

One of the most important aspects of the co-curricular activities is that they will inculcate discipline among the students. Every activity has some rules and regulations. During these activities students abide by these rules and regulations and they become well-disciplined. The same discipline learning can support students to develop a sense of respect for discipline in other spheres of life.

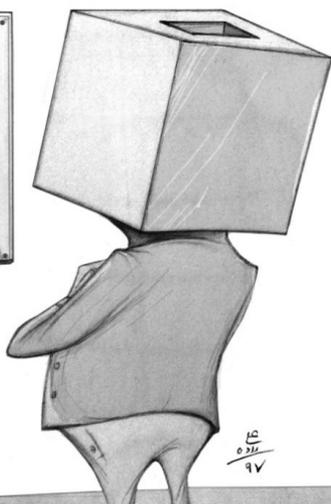
Most of the co-curricular activities are performed in the form of teams and groups which need a leader. So, leadership qualities are promoted in the students. And, when students spend their spare time in constructive and positive activities, their time is saved to be wasted in destructive and negative work. Moreover, during co-curricular activities students attend different matches and compete with one another in order to win these matches. Thus, they develop a sense of competition which is of great help in their future life. There are different sorts of activities that can be adopted as co-curricular activities by the schools in Afghanistan. One of them is school assembly. By arranging school assembly, the students get together, recite verses from Holy Quran, sing national anthem and raise national flag. These all acts will develop a sense of patriotism among the students.

Students can also be allowed to organize unions and associations for different sorts of purposes, for example, art council etc. These unions and associations can help students in their social lives in future.

Sports and games form an integral part of co-curricular activities. Therefore, the schools must ensure that they have enough space for sports activities, like football, cricket, basketball etc. Unfortunately, most of the schools in our country only have some classrooms while there are many others that even do not have classrooms, as well.

Different sorts of competitions like debate, quiz, writing and many others can support students in developing their skills like oratory and speaking skills and show their different sorts of talents, as well. They will also enable them to express themselves freely and confidently.

The government authorities, particularly Afghanistan Ministry of Education, requires to have a proper check on the schools and ensure that they include co-curricular activities in their programs. Limiting the students only to the books will limit their thinking horizons and ultimately deprive them of different skills and advantages which they have the potential for and, at the same time, the right to learn. In the run for quantity, mostly the quality has been ignored in education sector in the country. Many public and private schools have been established only to increase the number of the schools and the students attending them, not to generate proper education and personal development of the students.



A glance at challenges of media in Afghanistan

By Mohammad Zahir Akbari

Freedom of speech has been facing may ups and downs in Afghanistan while considered one of the top achievements of the new political system. After a few months of relatively calm, last week Abdul Manan Arghand, who worked as journalist for Kabul News TV, was shot by gunmen in the way to work in the southern city of Kandahar, the attack raises new concerns might be faced by media workers in Afghanistan. The attack came the same day a meeting in Kabul to discuss how to safeguard journalists. However, in a recent report revealed by the Organization of Journalists Without Borders, Afghanistan is ranked 118th in the world in 2018 stepping two levels up in comparison to 2017 which was the bloodiest year for journalists in Afghanistan, with at least 20 killed and 169 cases of violence or threats.

Attending the recent events, the Second Vice president, Sarwar Danish welcomed the ascending positions of Afghanistan ranked by Journalist without border and said it is a great achievement for Afghanistan. He also appreciated the activities and effectiveness of Joint Committee of the Government and media in the field of media protection, follow-up of violations against journalists, creation of coherence between the media and the government, investigation of the prosecution of violent events against journalists and the finalization of remaining cases of violence against journalists. He pointed that strengthening and revitalization of the journalists' support fund was another important achievements of the joint committee of government and media society.

The Second Vice President stressed that the government is fully determined to support freedom of expression and considers it to be its most important responsibility. Speaking at a meeting of the Joint Committee on the Media and Government with the representatives of the international community on the security and impunity of journalists, he said that freedom of expression is one of the most important achievements of the government and citizens of Afghanistan. The meeting was attended by officials from the domestic media, the members of the Joint Media and Government Committee, the United Nations Representative for Afghanistan, the EU Representative, Representatives of the UNESCO Office, the British Ambassador, Ambassador of Germany, the Embassy of Sweden, Ambassador of Holland, Ambassador of Denmark and Ambassador of Spain.

The United Nations Representative, Tadamichi Yamamoto, as well as the European Union representative in Afghanistan announced that they will continue to support the freedom of speech and the media in Afghanistan and will work with the Afghan government. The Afghan government has recognized freedom of expression and media freedom as one of its most important accomplishments in more than a decade and a half. Afghanistan's position in the world ranking of journalists without borders is better than the neighboring countries such as Iran and Pakistan. Though freedom

of the media in Afghanistan is a new experience but Afghanistan has surpassed many countries in the area of freedom of expression from neighboring countries and regions, and the country's media are also making it more professional. Although the interaction between the government and the media was not satisfactory in the recent past.

In spite of some gains, the experience of media and freedom of expression has not been flawless. It was repeatedly criticized by government that the media that they do not reflect the facts; on the other hand, the government itself, which is an important source of news and inquiry, refrains from providing the necessary information to the media. An overview of the statistics of violence against journalists makes it clear that most of the violence has been imposed by government officials but this should be assessed from both sides. Means, from one side the government employees may have been involved in corruption or some things illegally run in the offices, which, due to fear of disclosure, may not be ready to give the necessary information to the media.

But on the other side of the case, may be it is related to the function and impartiality of the media. In the sense that the media do not act in an impartial manner in the investigation or reflection of the issues distorting the atmosphere of freedom by biased political tendencies. The other part of the case may refer to the lack of professional journalists who go to government departments for information. Respecting the law and the media ethics and gaining the trust of the party for its impartial and fair reflection is something less taken seriously by some journalists.

Anyway, it is highly important for media to have freely access to information so as to monitor and control over the state authorities elected by the society and to make a self-controlled society, which is the demand of democracy. The definition of a self-controlled society means that it itself shall make own decisions. And the society can do this in case it is informed in aggregate with the open exchange of opinions. Mass media as an instrument for the exercising of freedom of speech and expression gains importance for a democratic society. Hence, Political pundits believe when the people are aware of the facts, the country will be controlled and calm. Overall, support of media is support freedom and democracy; democracy is meaningless without freedom of media and freedom of thoughts but there is a dire need to promote media skills as a safeguard against any destructive and divisive factors. It is also important to realize that today's world is ruled by media monopolies; positively or negatively it can affect our thoughts, attitudes, society, families and future generation. So, it highly important to monitor the content of public accordance with national interest.

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Is Realism Trumping Populism?

By Anatole Kaletsky

With economic conditions returning more or less to normal around the world after a decade of financial crises, nationalist populism is now seen as the biggest threat to global recovery. That was certainly true of the finance ministers who gathered in Washington, DC, this month for the IMF's annual spring meeting. But is it possible that this consensus has emerged just as the populist wave has crested? Rather than populist politics undermining economic recovery, could economic recovery be undermining populist politics?

Looking around the world, populist economic policy appears to be in retreat, even though no clear alternative is visible. In the United States, President Donald Trump seems to be curbing his protectionist instincts, and economic relations with China are stabilizing. In Europe, despite the media focus on the success of xenophobic politicians in Hungary and Poland, the pendulum is swinging away from economic nationalism in the countries that really matter: France, Germany, Spain, and Italy, where the two populist parties that recently achieved electoral breakthroughs are now vying to show their devotion to the euro.

Even in Britain, where economic nationalism won its most spectacular victory over globalization and multiculturalism in the 2016 Brexit vote, the tide may be turning. The British government is gradually realizing that voters do not really want the complete rupture with Europe demanded by hard-core Euroskeptics. Neither of the two alternatives to EU membership presented in the Brexit referendum - an inward-looking, protectionist "Little England," or a post-imperial "Anglosphere" based on the "special relationship" with America and the Commonwealth - is turning out to be economically feasible or politically attractive to voters. While only 3-4% of voters admit to changing their minds about Brexit, large majorities want to keep most of the benefits of free trade, easy travel, immigrant labor, and strong environmental, consumer, and health regulation.

Voters' aversion to Brexit's adverse consequences, analogous to the realism that gradually dawned in Greece after its 2015 referendum rejected an EU bailout, helps to explain the otherwise perplexing tactics of Prime Minister Theresa May and her Conservative Party. After starting out proclaiming a clear instruction from the people to "take back control" from the EU, May has gradually blurred and erased her red lines: an end to EU budget contributions, limiting European immigration, and an exemption from European rules and court judgments. Instead of strident demands for restoration of untrammelled national sovereignty in March 2019, she is now pleading for a transition, in which nothing noticeable to voters will change at all.

Surprisingly, May's compromises have all been accepted by nationalist hard-liners who previously threatened her leadership. The zealots still hope for a total rupture with Europe eventually, but seem relieved about postponing the day of reckoning until the end of May's "status quo transition" in December 2020. But if a "clean break" from Europe is too dangerous to attempt now, why will it be more acceptable in 2020? It won't be - and presumably that reality will dictate extending the transition until after the 2022

general election, then beyond.

The upshot is that, as I wrote nearly a year ago, Britain's belligerent Hard Brexit is turning into a docile Fake Brexit: Norwegian-style associate EU membership. Both Leavers and Remainers will be dissatisfied with that outcome, which will turn Britain into what Brexiters justifiably call a "vassal state": a country that abides by EU laws but has no voting rights or ability to influence those laws.

Why would Britain accept such second-class status? This is where we come to the relationship between nationalist populism and economics. The only remaining justification for the obviously inferior form of EU association that May is now proposing is the populist claim that "the people have spoken."

Until recently, wielding this slogan allowed all opponents of government policy to be branded as internationalist elitists, "citizens of nowhere" who despise the "real people." Delegitimizing political opposition made Brexit appear inevitable, which discouraged voters from even thinking about the issues that might change their minds. But Britain's political atmosphere is changing. With the Brexit deadline of March 2019 approaching, May's "transition" extending into the distant future, and all of the tangible promises of Brexit receding like a desert mirage, both parliamentary and public opinion are shifting. The Labour Party is slowly coming to the conclusion that, even though many working-class voters supported Brexit, opposing it offers the only chance of bringing down the May government. As a result, May has repeatedly been defeated in Parliament and forced to concede a full parliamentary vote on whatever agreement she negotiates with the EU.

These parliamentary conflicts mean that opposition to Brexit is no longer discredited as anti-democratic and elitist. And public opinion is responding, with clear majority support for a "meaningful vote" in Parliament to decide whether May's final deal with Europe is genuinely better than remaining in the EU. When this vote occurs, probably in October, a tactical alliance of all opposition parties with a dozen pro-European Tories could well defeat the government. If such a defeat looks imminent, May will probably move to avert it by herself proposing a referendum to make the final decision between her version of Brexit and the EU status quo.

But would such a referendum, now backed by a recently launched campaign for a "People's Vote," simply mark another descent into populism, instead of a genuinely democratic conclusion to the Brexit debate? The answer is no, because voters would be offered an honest choice between two well-defined alternatives: to accept whatever agreement for leaving the EU the government negotiates, or to stay in the EU by withdrawing the Brexit notification before the March 29 deadline.

By contrast, the 2016 referendum offered voters an illusory choice between reality and fantasy: a fair-tale Brexit, onto which they could project whatever hopes or prejudices they cared to imagine. The opposite of nationalist populism is not globalist elitism. It is honest realism, as Britain is now re-discovering.

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