

Hucksters in the classroom

Business



Hucksters in the Classroom

In the recent past, promotion and advertisement of schools due to intrusion of commercial interest in schools has been on the rise. According to Shaw and Barry (2007), the carrying out of product promotional activities within schools can be considered to be a business takeover of learning institutions, and which is not, in any way, concerned with facilitating educational activities, but is only meant to realize profits for the concerned corporations. At the individual level, I have had an experience with industry promoted educational resources.

In drawing a one to one relationship between education and business, a number of moral issues arise. Chief among these and as pointed out by Saddler (2011) is the treatment of school going children as a means to an end. This means that the purpose of commercial activities in schools is not to better education but to boost profits for corporations.

Commercial intrusion in schools alters the purpose and nature of education, which is meant to empower an individual in making sound judgment (Sharma, 2012). Sharma further notes that education is meant to bring out qualities that are locked within an individual and not impress values upon them. Contrary to this, commercial intrusion in schools aims at creating brand loyalty in the children, and not to empower them to exercise the power of choice.

2

It would only be right to conclude that students do have a “moral right” to receive education that is free from commercial indoctrination. This is more so the case considering that promotion of commercial indoctrination undermines the sole aim of education, which is to empower an individual to

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practice independence of making choices (Sharma, 2012).

If I was a parent of school aged children I would be concerned about their exposure to commercial and corporate propaganda. This is because as a parent I would have enough reasons to be concerned over the welfare of my child. Having held the school as an environment where my children will be free from the reach of such exploitative activities, as a parent I would feel uneasy with the position which my school going child is put by being exposed to commercial and corporate propaganda.

3

In the event that I take on the role of a board member in a school, I would be faced with the task of making a decision regarding the type of promotional method to be used in the school. As per the options, of either taking on industry-sponsored materials or channel one, I would opt for the industry sponsored materials. This method does not employ activities that are farfetched from the school curriculum. Secondly it incorporates learning activities, which apart from arousing an uncalled for interest in the products, motivates the student to associate learning with every day activities.

4

It is evident enough that industry and channel one in particular, are using teachers and learners as a means to an end. The motivation behind the activities being carried out by both parties is not to cater for either the learning needs of student or their teachers, but to build customer loyalty, which automatically translates to an increase in the profits realized for both parties. Therefore, it is clear that, in carrying out their activities, both parties do not have the interests of either the students or their teachers at heart.

On the other hand, one considers the fact that teachers and students benefit

from the learning materials provided by the participating industries and also channel one. Even in this case, I still hold that there is adequate ground for concern. This is due to the fact that, with time, education will be pursued for the sole aim of gaining entrance into the world of business and exploiting teachers and students.

Thus, all other aspects which education seeks to inculcate into the individual will lose significance. Further, one ought to consider that, away from home; the school is the only safe place where the student can have the chance to grow into an independent individual in society, able to make decisions based on personal evaluation and judgment.

References

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