

RAMAMURTI COMMITTEE

FOR REFERENCE ONLY

Towards an Enlightened and Humane Society

A PERSPECTIVE PAPER ON EDUCATION

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Committee for Review of National
Policy on Education (NPE) 1986

New Delhi
September, 1990

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L.C. No. D-3419
Date 16/10/90

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राष्ट्रीय शिक्षा नीति (1986) की समीक्षा समिति
COMMITTEE FOR REVIEW OF NATIONAL POLICY
ON EDUCATION (NPE) 1986

ACHARYA RAMAMURTI
CHAIRMAN

MY APPEAL TO YOU

When on the 7th May, 1990 the Government of India announced the appointment of a Committee 'to review the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986', there were people who asked why this hurry in instituting a review even before the expiry of the stipulated period of five years.

The question is legitimate. But the reasons that influenced the decision of the Government have been given in detail in the government's resolution itself (which is quoted in the Prologue in full).

Briefly, the basic concerns are these three :

- one, the Right to Work which is proposed to be enshrined in the Constitution ;
- two, the unity and integrity of the nation that are seriously threatened ;
- three, the impoverishment of the inner man in India.

While these concerns may not be new except the challenge of the Right to Work a great difference has come about during the last few years.

The concerns and problems that remained unresolved have over the years produced an extremely difficult situation leading to mounting unemployment and violence of all kinds that is becoming a way of life. The nation is already in the grip of a total crisis. The Challenge of Education of 1985 has now become a life-and-death question- a question of the very survival of the nation.

In the total crisis of the nation education has its full share. But the sad fact is that the system of education as it prevails in the country today seems to have lost the capacity to find a solution to the crisis of many dimensions it is faced with. If that be true, the reasons are not far to seek. Our education is confined to the four walls of a school or college. It is tied down to text-books and examinations. Even then, the books are unreadable and the examinations totally unreliable. Our education has failed to equip our students with any productive skills. It cuts them off from their natural and social environment. They become aliens to their own community. Worst of all, they lose faith in life itself, and all that it should mean. How can an education such as this ever become a fit instrument for national reconstruction, or inspire the youth to any higher endeavour? One is sometimes led to ask, is not no education better than bad education?

What we want is a new education. We want education for life. We want education for all, not for a chosen few. This demand was made by the Kothari Commission a quarter of a century ago ; it was repeated by the New Education Policy, 1986. But the demand remains unfulfilled. How long are we to go on repeating it, and be satisfied with a patch here and a patch there?

The need of the hour is that education truly becomes a people's movement, and it ceases to be a routine departmental activity left to the initiative and judgement of the people at the desk, controlled and guided by those far removed from where people live and work. Only then will education become a preparation and discipline for life, a liberating force. Integrated with life and work, it will make the Right to Work a reality. Education will then develop the power to fight, in the minds of men and women the battle against pride, prejudice and passion and forces that destroy cherished values and the best interests of the common people. This is an age of science and democracy. But can science and democracy survive without creative education which places human being at the centre and which is available to everybody throughout life? This is what real education should mean.

In its introduction the Education Policy of 1986 says, "There are moments in history when a new direction has to be given to an age-old process". This is a truth of great significance. The authors of the New Education Policy, 1986 felt that such a moment had come in 1986 with the challenges of the twenty-first century on the horizon. Four years have gone by and only ten years remain for the new century to dawn. These ten years are crucial for us. We must now give up for ever the legacy of the Macaulay tradition, and start afresh. What we do in the next ten years will largely determine how we shall face the challenge of the new century.

The Perspective Paper that we are herewith presenting to you in all humility contains the ideas and thoughts that we as a Committee could bring to bear on the problems of education as we perceived them. We have drawn upon the great tradition of India, experiences and experiments of pioneers in our own country and abroad, and great thinkers like Tagore, Gandhi and others. I do hope that you will

find time to read these pages, closely scrutinise the contents, and let us have the benefit of your ideas and thoughts before we finalise our report. I have no doubt that if we put our heads together, we shall discover the right direction and the first correct steps. The future belongs to those that dare and act.

NEW DELHI

September 6, 1990

Sd/-
(RAMAMURTI)

(This is a discussion paper only.)

TOWARDS AN ENLIGHTENED AND HUMANE
SOCIETY
(A PERSPECTIVE PAPER ON EDUCATION)

I

PROLOGUE

At the time of the announcement about a new education policy and the issue of a public document called Challenge of Education, in 1985, much public expectation was raised. In a democratic society, the practice of imparting education and the policies informing it, must have the support of the people. Such support can be ensured only if our people see education as bringing benefit to them in appreciably concrete ways. It is in order to examine the National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 and its implementations in terms of concrete benefits to the people that Government of India have constituted a Review Committee. The following extract of the Resolution constituting the Committee spells out the specific concerns of the Government :

“Despite efforts at social and economic development since attainment of Independence, a majority of our people continue to remain deprived of education, which is one of the basic needs for human development. It is also a matter of grave concern that our people comprise 50 per cent of the world’s illiterate, and large sections of children have to go without acceptable level of primary education. Government accords the highest priority to education—both as a human right and as the means for

bringing about a transformation towards a more humane and enlightened society. There is need to make education an effective instrument for securing a status of equality for women, and persons belonging to the backward classes and minorities. Moreover, it is essential to give a work and employment orientation to education and to exclude from it the elitist aberrations which have become the glaring characteristic of the educational scene. Educational institutions are increasingly being influenced by casteism, communalism and obscurantism and it is necessary to lay special emphasis on struggle against this phenomenon and to move towards a genuinely egalitarian and secular social order. The National Policy on Education, 1986 (NPE), needs to be reviewed to evolved a framework which would enable the country to move towards this perspective of education."

2. The struggle for survival is more urgent for many people of India than educational needs. Therefore, education and its planning must be organically linked with the larger socio-cultural, economic and political context. Specifically it must be linked with live issues of development. Then it will be possible for education to play a catalytic and interventionist role. Only then.

3. Almost half of the children in the age group of 6 to 14 either do not enter the school at all or drop out at an early stage. Of these, according to a recent National Sample Survey, about one-third to one-half find school either boring, irrelevant or threatening (i.e. failure in examinations). Almost another 40 to 45% of them have to stay away from school due to strong economic compulsions and the demands of home and family life. Only about 5% of the children manage to reach the higher secondary stage and a smaller percentage go on to higher education.

A negligible number from the disadvantaged sections are able to get admission to the excellent professional institutions, due to poor quality school education apart from their socio-economic backgrounds. The calibre of those making it to excellent institutions might have perhaps been better had they been drawn from a larger social base of children. Efforts to link education with life have not met with any appreciable degree of success and our goal of attracting all children to the schools and increasing their retention has remained largely unfulfilled.

4. The school curricula have tended to be rigid and stagnant, lacking in responses to new methods and innovations in educational practice. There is also all-round concern regarding the load of the school bag.

5. It isn't as though we haven't had innovations and initiatives in the field of education. Today we talk of the need for a more accommodating and shortened school day for the working children and we have had the 'pahar pathshala' experiment in Rajasthan in the sixties. Our teacher-training courses do not seem to draw upon our own experiments in education for the purpose of enriching the theories of teaching and learning. The educational experiment of Tagore's Sri Niketan, relating education with rural development and of Gijubhai Badheka in Gujarat about teacher education, are two cases in point.

6. In our system of education we are, by and large, ignoring the rich treasure of traditional knowledge and wisdom derived often empirically over several hundreds of year or longer. Such traditional knowledge and wisdom are, available in diverse areas like agriculture, land management, watershed planning, forestry, ecological balance, housing, medicine, cottage industries etc. These need to be integrated with the content and process of education.

7. In the case of adults, inability to read and write has not necessarily meant lack of education. The illiterate may have numeracy skills needed for life situations and sensitivity and capability of a high order to cope with very difficult conditions. They are also in possession of a whole range of vocational skills needed at home and in the area of work, quite a detailed knowledge of the local natural resources and environment and an understanding of the social structure and of the historical and cultural traditions. Hence attempts at emphasizing adult literacy as such, as constituting education would be misplaced, the clear perception being that an illiterate adult is not necessarily an uneducated person. The intention is not to romanticise illiteracy but rather to underscore the need to redesign adult education programme meaningfully. What is of far greater importance, however, is to ensure that all children receive school education in this decade so that they do not grow to become illiterate adults in the next century.

8. While we have many achievements to recount at the higher levels of learning, the constitutional mandate of providing elementary education to all till the age of 14 has remained a teasing illusion. And this, in spite of such huge quantitative expansion of primary schools, so as to make available a primary school within one kilometre from the residence for every child. The educational pyramid has no solid and strong base to stand on even today, not to speak of the poor quality of education itself. In fact, the pyramid is precariously balanced upside down. The decreasing proportion of allocations to elementary education over the last seven Plans has aggravated this structural imbalance. (The share of Plan and Non-Plan allocations for Elementary Education in the States/UTs has remained stagnant in recent years. As a percentage of GNP, share of this sector of education has come down since 1985-86). Nor have the attempts to provide a complementary structure, through

non-formal education and adult literacy helped in the rectification of this imbalance, though these programmes do involve substantial financial outlays.

9. The real challenge is to provide and ensure that an education of comparable quality is made available to all through the evolution of a Common School System. The challenge is also one of identification and removal of elitist aberrations that have crept into the educational system over the years ; and of remedying the erosion of community involvement in making the educational system work. Are we committed to stop "tinkering with the existing situation, and moving forward with faltering steps and lack of faith", and to act on the conviction that "Indian education needs a drastic reconstruction, almost a revolution"? (quotes from Dr. D.S. Kothari's Foreword to the Education Commission Report, 1964-66).

10. Despite many policy statements relating to improvement of higher and technical education, the majority of institutions at this level have not fulfilled their expectations. There has also been a mushroom growth of substandard colleges which are of little academic or socio-economic value.

11. The rural areas in general, and the tribal areas in particular, have suffered in terms of resources, personnel and infrastructural facilities. This phenomenon of regional disparities in education and development has acquired a major political dimension on the Indian scene. It is reflected in the regional and sub-regional movements. (Incidentally, it is noteworthy that one of the stated objectives of bringing Education under the Concurrent List of the Constitution was minimisation of educational disparities).

12. There is a growing concern about the increasing tendency to centralise and bureaucratised initiatives,

decision-making and planning in all sectors including education, both at the level of the Central and State/UT Governments. This has resulted in steady erosion of the role of the teacher and the community in educational planning and development. While it is accepted that, in the context of education being in the Concurrent List of the Constitution, the Centre's role has assumed special significance, it is also widely felt that time has come to judiciously limit and redefine this role.

13. Education is stated to be an investment for the present and the future, in NPE. But this in no way is reflected in plan allocations. In fact, education gets relegated to the back-stage as a 'social service' item and does not seem to be perceived as a significant instrument to bring about national development. The inability of the Government to provide an increased percentage in the educational budget of the 7th Plan and the promise of reaching at least 6% of GNP in the 8th Plan is a case in point. India ranks 115th amongst the countries of the world in terms of investment in education as percentage of GNP. For a people that set such store by knowledge as a means of liberation (sā vidyā yā vimuktaye), this is indeed a strange paradox.

II

POINTS OF DEPARTURE : FOCUSING ON ISSUES

The Review Committee has reached a broad consensus regarding the manner in which NPE, 1986 needs to be modified and the issues on which focus should be directed. These include :

i) An integrated and holistic view of education should be taken avoiding the dichotomies such as formal and non-formal, academic and vocational, technical and non-technical education which inhibit attempts at radically over-hauling the system.

ii) In the scheme of educational development, the human being is not to be treated as a mere 'asset' or 'national resource' because such an approach is utilitarian. The human being is to be developed into much more than a mere asset by bringing into play the humanistic, liberal, social, cultural and spiritual functions of education.

iii) School—the base of the educational pyramid—is to be the main instrument for moving towards the goal of universalisation. All essential resources, both financial and intellectual, should be made available to the school to enable it to REACH OUT TO the children outside the school, at least two thirds of whom are girls. The school should OPEN-UP AND NON-FORMALISE in creative ways. This would be preferable to building up an exclusive parallel system of non-formal education for the poor and working children. Creative non-formal education, respond-

ing to the need-patterns of dropouts or left outs such as the working child, girls who cannot attend schools and children in unserved habitations or social situations can continue to play a supportive and, more importantly, a challenging role in society during the transitional phase so that there is a continuous pressure on the school to OPEN-UP AND NON-FORMALISE itself.

iv) Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is to be made an integral part of planning for primary education.

v) The content and process of adult education, as distinct from adult literacy, is to be reorganised. The questions of survival, development and justice are to be interwoven into the content, pedagogy and learning situation of the adult, letting literacy come in organically in the process when, and if, it becomes the felt need of the adult learners. This understanding would help in avoiding the disproportionate emphasis on literacy campaigns. A major objective of these campaigns should be to enthuse the adult illiterates to send their children for school education. Other objectives may include education for democracy and Panchayati Raj and for eschewing violence, casteism, communalism, gender bias and all other forms of discrimination.

vi) The principle of equitable opportunity for all as a path of educational development in the Indian context is to be preferred to segregated nurturing of talent amongst a few in separate schools. This will ensure an egalitarian social order, as well as scope for achieving the nation's full potential for 'excellence' by broadening the social and ethnic base of education. Indeed, in the ordinary course, the teacher does identify and respond to talented children. Therefore, the appropriate course would be to specially train the teachers to enable talented children to learn at a

faster pace without segregating them from other children and involve them in group or peer learning processes that encourage non-competitive environment. In this view, in any case, further encouragement of Navodaya Vidyalayas may not be justified.

vii) In order to promote 'social cohesion and national integration', a Common School System is to be built up over a ten-year time-frame, both through persuasion and essential legislation. As a first step, the quality of government, local body and aided schools is to be improved, so as to transform them into genuine 'Neighbourhood Schools'. The question whether and how the Common School System should gradually reach out to include private schools as well should be examined.

viii) Education for women's equality is to be redesigned with a view to :

a) create essential conditions for all girls to successfully participate in school education and reduce drop-out rate amongst them by linking an effective programme of Early Childhood Care and Education with every primary school of India, at the same time providing in the community a complex of support services for making available drinking water, fuel, fodder and health care ; and

b) remove gender bias and eliminate sex-stereotyping from the structure, content and process of education by taking into account the broader social framework which has so far denied empowerment of women.

ix) The phenomenon of regional disparities is to be tackled with a view to allocating additional intellectual and financial resources to educationally and socially backward areas to compensate for the past deprivations of the people, mostly belonging to scheduled castes and tribes.

other backward communities and minorities, (particularly women amongst them) living in these areas and to decentralise planning and implementation through area-specific and disaggregated perceptions of what and how it needs to be done.

x) Use of mother-tongue as a means of facilitating learning, self-expression and promotion of social identity of the child, at least in the initial stages is to be ensured, and if the mother-tongue is different from the State regional language, then provision for switching over to the latter at an appropriate stage of elementary education is to be made too. The medium of instruction at the tertiary level is to be such that it does not act as a deterrent against teachers and students joining higher educational institutions from all over the country.

xi) Dynamic interaction amongst the regional languages of India is to be facilitated with a view to promoting horizontal mobility and interaction amongst people and not just among those few who have access to English, thereby strengthening the process of social cohesion and national integration.

xii) Socially Useful Productive Work (SUPW) is to be made an effective medium of learning, sensitisation and of developing problem-solving skills and creativity for all students at all stages of education with a view to EMPOWER PEOPLE FOR WORK. The objective is to ensure that SUPW does not remain a ritual as has often been the case. In order to achieve this and an all-round improvement of quality of education at secondary and tertiary levels, we need a further direction of focus on the following :

a) Integration of the 'hand', 'head' and 'heart' to ensure an education that would not alienate the students from the family, community and life.

b) Vocationalisation of secondary education (classes IX to XII) for all with a vocational component built into the curriculum as an integral part, and with provision of additional vocational components for those who opt for job placements or self-employment.

c) Operational linkages between the 'world of school' and the 'world of work' by institutionalising the concept of 'work benches' and 'practice schools' for vocationalisation.

d) Opening up the system through provision for multiple entry and exit points for those who wish to join the 'world of work' and return later for further education or upgradation of skills.

e) Introduction of modular courses and credit accumulation with a view to allowing maximum flexibility to the students to select a combination of courses according to their orientation and needs.

f) Building up a system of comprehensive and continuous internal assessment for promoting learning and midcourse correction, with a commitment to replace the annual public examinations at all stages of education from primary to tertiary in a given time-frame, admissions to higher stages of education being based on separate entrance examinations.

g) De-linking degrees from jobs through the instrumentality of letting user agencies build up their own testing mechanisms and modifying the recruitment policy of the government and the public sector accordingly.

xiii) The quality of higher and technical education is to be improved in real terms not only to make them relevant to our society as it is, and as it is envisaged, but also to cater to the needs of competitive industry, indigenisation

of technology and advanced science and technology including Research and Development therein and their application.

xiv) In the colleges and universities, the curriculum and educational process are to be dynamically and integrally linked to issues of regional development and improvement of school education. The objective is to strive for balance between the regional expectations from these publicly financed institutions and their global objectives in education and research. This exercise is to be distinguished from the extension function of the universities. This would require a complete reorganisation of academic life in colleges and university campuses with a fresh direction to the faculty and the students. In the long run, this involvement in development would endow the colleges and universities with capability to guide planning and assist people's initiatives, thereby infusing life in the campuses with a sense of societal relevance.

xv) The emphasis on social science research in the higher education sector has often been halting and hesitant, with inadequate financial support, though there are many higher education research institutions in the country, not to speak of research being undertaken in the various universities. Alongside the importance assigned for modernisation of science & technology institutions and education, there is need for promoting orderly growth of higher education research in social sciences too. The area of social sciences needs to be developed as it generates new thought processes and creative thinking. It also facilitates insights into the nature and direction of development which are vital for evolving new frameworks for fresh policy thrusts. There is also need for study of, and research on, our classics not merely for their literary eminence but also for the dissemination of their underlying values and traditions.

xvi) Full scope is to be provided for diversity in content, and pedagogy according to the socio-cultural milieu of the school, college or University, while giving due regard to national core curriculum as well as to the objective of liberation from parochialism, self-centredness, obscurantism and social fragmentation and elimination of casteism and communalism from national life.

xvii) In recent times there has been perceptible universal decline of basic moral values. This phenomenon acquires a special poignancy for us in India, considering our great civilization and heritage. Our education institutions which have not escaped the impact of this pervasive value decline, have a special responsibility to respond to the situation with great concern and subtlety, playing a vital role in value education. This cannot be just in terms of special classes or lectures in morality or in terms of mechanical, text-book-based learning methods. It should become an integral part of the entire educational process and school climate. Values such as democracy, secularism, socialism, scientific temper, equality of sexes, honesty, integrity, courage and justice (fairness), respect for all life forms, different cultures and languages, etc. constitute the mosaic of values which is vital to the unity and integrity of the country. If the process of education is not informed by these basic values it loses its intrinsic merit altogether. All curricular and extra-curricular activities in schools and colleges should convey this message with clarity and resolution. Not to be lost sight of, is the need to remind ourselves that Right to Work is the correlate of duty to work.

xviii) School education, having to cater to the millions of children virtually at their door-steps, and in diverse socio-cultural conditions, has to be freed from the stranglehold of 'higher levels' of planning and management. 'Local area planning' as envisaged in the Eighth Five Year Plan

Approach Document approved by the National Development Council is indispensable, the teacher and the local community being given the centre stage. The Head of the institution has to have meaningfully delegated authority. The schools should have autonomy and be liberated from the line hierarchy and the policing by the inspectorate system. Internal democracy in each institution is to be ensured. A cluster of educational institutions at different levels, primary to tertiary, should come together to form Educational Complexes. They should mutually interact, pooling material and intellectual resources together. They should internally deal with all educational activities (formal, non-formal, adult education etc.) in their varied dimensions like planning, implementation, monitoring, research and innovation, and teacher training. The grass-root level official development agencies should undertake school-centred activities in co-ordination with Educational Complexes, benefiting mutually in the process.

xix) Educational management within the Government is to be viewed afresh in the new decentralised perspective proposed above. All major resource institutions and standard setting agencies at the Central, State or District level may redefine their respective roles so as to strengthen institutional capabilities at the local levels all along the line, rather than building themselves up into remote control agencies. This would call for significant self-restraint on the part of these higher level agencies. Academics are to be involved intimately with educational administration at all levels. Flexible systems are to be evolved for ensuring that the administration has the sensitivity to continuously respond to the initiatives, demands and innovations by the decentralised structures and processes.

xx) The major innovative measures proposed for non-formalising formal education, empowering people for work,

equalising educational opportunities, for women's education, modularisation and semesterisation of courses, replacement of the public examination systems by continuous comprehensive internal evaluation, decentralised management of education and linking university courses with development, call for the teacher being placed centre-stage. In this context, the entire question of the status of teachers, their recruitment, service conditions and training would have to be examined afresh.

xxi) Ever increasing tension amongst the teacher and student communities is symptomatic perhaps of lack of an adequate grievance redressal machinery. This should be viewed in the context of diversification of educational disciplines, overall expansion of higher education and consequent increase in personpower, disputes concerning admissions, malpractices in examinations, etc. Certain Court rulings have also resulted in a situation of lack of clarity about the status and rights of the teachers in particular. The Law Commission has gone into the campus situation in the context of decentralisation of administration of justice and given certain recommendations regarding 'tribunalisation of justice' in the higher education sector, including provision of participative mechanisms. It would be appropriate to go into the adequacy and feasibility of implementing these recommendations.

xxii) Substantially larger allocations for education in the Central as well as State budgets are to be secured. It also needs to be ensured that the resources are earmarked for reducing social and regional disparities and for widening educational opportunities. By implication the intra-sectoral distribution of the allocations should, apart from being rational also be consistent with considerations of equity and social justice which are sought to be secured through the revision of Education Policy. New modalities of raising resources are to be explored. This should include

the various developmental departments of Central and State Governments coming together, aggregating their educational components and offering additional resources to support school education through the Educational Complexes. In this way, school education would come to be a multi-sectoral responsibility.

xxiii) The avowed objectives of bringing Education into the Concurrent List of the Constitution have included universalisation of elementary education, removal of educational disparities etc. While, Centrally Sponsored Schemes for achieving these objectives may or may not be justifiable, the Eighth Five Year Plan Approach Document approved by the National Development Council emphasises local area planning. Therefore, the on-going Centrally Sponsored Schemes would also need to be transferred to the States. However, sudden disruption of the initiatives already taken in critical areas should be avoided. As a rule of practice, Centrally Sponsored Schemes run for a full five-year Plan period. The on-going Centrally Sponsored Schemes started in pursuance of NPE 1986 have been effectively under implementation only for two years. They may continue till the end of 1992-93. The status of implementation of these schemes may also be reviewed well before the end of that year. In any case, no new Centrally Sponsored Schemes may be initiated unless they be for the purpose of securing decentralisation of educational management at the grass-root level.

xxiv) Voluntary organisations and activist groups are to be viewed as expressions of people's own initiatives and of will to bring about social change, rather than as mere implementing agencies of Government for undertaking officially sponsored individual schemes and programmes. It should be ensured that a liberal flow of funds from Government does not dilute the voluntary spirit of these institutions or distract them from their self-chartered

courses of action. The preferred path could be for the Government to respond to the initiatives of voluntary organisations with reference to their own programmes, rather than voluntary agencies being mobilised to respond to patternised Government programmes. At the same time, it is equally important that voluntary groups realise the adverse impact that receiving large scale funds from Government and foreign sources is likely to have on their own voluntary character. Transparency in the working of voluntary agencies is to be ensured in order to make them accountable to the community. Decentralised mechanisms for monitoring the work of voluntary agencies at the local level will have to be evolved too.

xxv) Education is to be built up as a people's movement wherein the Government, Centre and State, may play a supportive and facilitative role. People, through local bodies and voluntary agencies, may assume increasingly larger share of responsibility for creative, innovative and participative management of all educational needs of the area.

xxvi) 'Universal Declaration of Human Rights' declares that all individuals, irrespective of sex, caste, creed and economic status, have the 'Right to Education'. India rightly, has subscribed to this declaration. The proposed 'Right to Work' may not be capable of being secured in practical terms if 'Right to Education' were not assured as a fundamental right so as to enable people to have minimum levels of learning and competencies. Therefore, the feasibility of a Constitutional amendment to make 'Right to Education' a fundamental right may be examined.

III

SOME MODALITIES

1. Opening up and non-formalising the School System

The school should be taken as the principal vehicle for achieving universalisation. It should perform not merely for those children who attend but also for those who remain out. Provision of financial resources to the school should be significantly enlarged. Some of the features of a flexible school system could be the following :

- Shifting of the school timings to early morning hours, afternoons or late evenings, as per the convenience of majority of children and in consultation with the community.
- Adjusting school calendar to agricultural activity, local cultural involvements and weekly markets with a view to maximising school attendance.
- Reduction of school hours and increasing learning hours.
- Holding of classes twice in the day where needed—morning for written tradition and evenings for oral tradition and cultural action.
- Special attention to improved methods of learning languages.

- Ungraded class rooms ; children at different levels, setting their own pace ; provision for supplementary remedial instructions.
- Freedom for first generation learners and working children (particularly girls) to drop in the school at any time they want.
- Exploring, inquiring, questioning and enjoying.
- Group learning.
- Peer teaching.
- Relating content and process with environment and community life.
- Continuous built-in evaluation as an integral part of the teaching activity ; evaluation being as disaggregated as feasible.
- Community participation in the learning process by inviting people for folk tales, music, puppetry, herbal medicine etc.
- Teachers to be trained on the job according to the internship model.

Introduction of the above features (and more to be conceived) in different combinations in the school opens it up and non-formalises it, so to say. In essence, the school reaches out into the community.

The rigidities of the formal school system can be removed only over a period of time. Even when the quality of education in the school has thus improved, segments of child population may still remain outside the school

system on account of economic compulsions or their special social situations. To cater to their requirements, Work/Awareness-oriented models of non-formal education will have to be in operation during the transitional phase. Such models will have their own definitions of minimum levels of learning.

2. Common School System

The Common School system was recommended by the Kothari Commission. It was accepted in the National Policies of 1968 and 1986. The Policy of 1968 states :

“To promote social cohesion and national integration the Common School System as recommended by the Education Commission should be adopted. Efforts should be made to improve the standard of education in general schools. All special schools like Public Schools should be required to admit students on the basis of merit and also to provide prescribed proportion of free studentships to prevent segregation of social classes. This will not, however, affect the rights of minorities under Article 30 of the Constitution.”

The concept has not, however, been translated into action so far. This is one of the reasons for development of exclusiveness in the school system, in the sense that provision of education of a comparable quality to the poorer sections has not been feasible and the affluent sections have had access to education in expensive privately managed institutions. In order to bring the Common School System into practice, the following actions would be required :

Provision of significantly increased outlay for elementary (particularly primary) education. This

would help in the building up of the required levels of infrastructure and quality of education, thereby transforming Government, local-body and aided schools into genuine Neighbourhood Schools.

- Provision of special allocations for improvement of school system in backward areas, urban slums, tribal areas, hilly tracts, desert and marshy areas, drought and flood-prone zones, coastal belts and islands.
- Ensuring instruction for all in the medium of mother tongue at the primary level, particularly for linguistic minorities ; active encouragement of teaching in the regional languages at the secondary level ; and discontinuance of State aid to the schools imparting education otherwise than in the medium of mother tongue/regional language.
- Phased and time bound implementation of the Common School System within a ten year time frame ; and essential minimum legislation, particularly to dispense with early selection process, tuition fee, capitation fee etc.
- Exploring ways of including the expensive private schools into the Common School System through a combination of incentives, disincentives and legislation.

3. Empowering people for work

The design of Vocational Education in the school system has not succeeded in attracting students to the vocational stream. The aim of transforming education to empower

people for work is not to be construed as merely one of creating marketable skills. In the entire process of education, a culture of respect for socially useful work and productive labour is to be developed. This, in turn, will facilitate the development of not merely a more relevant knowledge base but also creative intelligence on which one can keep building throughout life. It is only this way that people could be empowered for work. The crucial role of education has to be to equip the students with capability for creative work. The process of developmental planning will have to generate opportunities for work.

The basic aim is to establish effective linkages between the 'world of school' and 'world of work'.

Vocationalisation of education, in the above context, may be redesigned with the following features :

- Work Experience/Socially Useful Productive Work (WE/SUPW) should be introduced in the school curriculum at the elementary level as an integral part. WE/SUPW should be linked with various subjects both at the level of content and pedagogy, as distinct from the present practice of ritualistic allotment of a few periods for WE/SUPW.
- Secondary education should not be fragmented into academic and vocational streams. All students may follow a core curriculum which would include an important vocational component.
- Secondary education may not be compartmentalised into lower and higher stages.
- Substantive structural changes may be introduced in secondary education—allowing modu-

lar courses, semester system and credit accumulation with flexibility for multiple exit and entry points for the students. (This principle may be extended to tertiary levels as well).

Schools are to offer vocational courses in varying combinations with academic subjects such as languages, mathematics, sciences and social studies ; (academic content is not to be reduced in the process of introduction of integrated courses).

- For students taking up vocational courses at the secondary stage leading to direct job placements or self-employment, provisions may be made for further education in their vocational subjects or in other fields, if necessary, by bridge courses.
- Vocational courses may be re-organised so as to make them relevant to a number of vocations in both the organised and unorganised sectors—particularly the rural sector including the official developmental and social welfare agencies.
- The design of vocational courses should be such as to promote transferable skills in order to optimise vertical and horizontal mobility and to cope with the demands of rapidly changing technologies.
- Course development and training in skills may be matched with the requirements of user institutions/agencies. The personnel of these user agencies may be involved in designing courses, teaching and training. These user institutions/agencies may be utilised for setting up 'practice schools' and educationally supportive 'work

- benches'. ('Work benches' and 'practice schools' refer to work situations selected for the purpose of giving vocational training and direct experience to students within production units or developmental activities of the official agencies. This arrangement offers to students a more effective educational strategy for vocational experience than what can be arranged within the four walls of the 'class room'. Here the training would revolve around real problem—solving and on-the-job development of skills. Whereas 'practice school' is a more institutionalised arrangement with larger units in the organised sector, 'work benches' can be carved out of smaller units from the unorganised sector as well within the neighbourhood of the school. In both cases, the school would not be required to make any investment on skilled personnel or equipment, the latter being contributed by the 'world of work', with or without a mutually worked out fee.)
- Accreditation of production units and developmental agencies may be undertaken in both the organized and unorganized sectors with the purpose of decentralising the function of certification of students. A system of monitoring the maintenance of standards in the accredited units would have to be evolved.
- Concurrent changes may be made in the recruitment policy of the Government and the public sector to give recognition for the vocational courses.
- Amendments to the Apprenticeship Act may be made to make provision for apprenticeship of

students receiving vocational education at the secondary and tertiary levels.

- User agencies may follow their own testing mechanisms so that degrees would be duly de-linked from jobs.

4. Examination Reform

The imposition of a centralised Public Examination at the end of various stages of education, primary to tertiary stage, tends to be discriminatory in effect. Examinations have failed to evaluate the students or the system. Instead they have tended to corrode the educational system by distorting the very purpose of education. Examinations are also far too many in number and highly expensive. The Universities are also over-burdened with the conduct of examinations throughout the year. What is needed as a matter of immediate attention is a process of modularisation and semesterisation and entrustment of the function of evaluation to the teachers. Students are to have the freedom of choice of modules rather than whole course packages. Provisions are to be made for credit accumulation and facilities for transfer of credit from one institution to another.

A system of comprehensive and continuous internal assessment, both oral and written, is to be introduced. The prescription of text-books should be replaced by lists of readings. The objective of the system is to promote learning and facilitate mid-course corrections. The effort should be on a committed basis, to replace the annual public examinations at all stages in a time-bound manner. The principle is that 'he or she who teaches' shall lay down the syllabus and also evaluate. Students shall move from one stage of education to another by appearing in entrance tests. While NPE, 1986 has spoken of examination reform

of the above nature, the reform has not been implemented. Examination Reform should be construed as a package of all the above mentioned features and may be tried out on pilot basis to begin with. A fragmented and half-hearted approach would be misplaced and counter-productive.

5. Languages

The policy regarding languages to be used in imparting education, over the years, has been primarily one of laying emphasis on adoption of the mother tongue and regional language. Article 350-A also specially mandates that the State and local authorities should provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage to children belonging to linguistic minority groups. NPE 1986 commended the implementation of 1968 Policy in regard to languages 'energetically' and 'purposefully'.

In spite of sound policy prescriptions, in practical terms, switch-over to the mother tongue/regional languages has been rather uneven in the country. In higher education, particularly, adoption of regional languages as media of instruction has been very sluggish. Large masses of children, particularly, in the rural areas, remain denied of entry into higher education, not being in a position to succeed in compulsory public examinations in English language at school stage. This contributes to a certain degree of discrimination in education and a consequent dual system of education, one for the affluent and the other for the under-privileged.

A phased strategy is required for giving the mother tongue/regional language their pre-dominant/due position in all stages of education. This calls for examination of a number of problems at what stages learning of different languages should commence, the manner of evaluating language competencies, how the learning of classical and foreign

languages should be designed and fitted into the curricula, what new modalities need to be adopted for training of the language teacher, and how to define the role of educational technology in language teaching/learning.

For purposes of development, all Indian languages should be construed as equal. Jawaharlal Nehru's assurance on the language issue is to be borne in mind too.

A fresh linguistic survey of India is needed to take stock of the latest situation, considerable changes having occurred since the earlier survey undertaken decades back.

In order to facilitate interaction between the regional languages of the country, existing teacher education facilities and language resource institutions should be used to full capacity. Special incentives may be provided to the teachers who wish to learn modern Indian languages other than their own. Findings of modern researches in language pedagogy should be brought under application.

In higher education, provisions could be made for the teaching of Indian Literature in the regional languages, with a view to promoting national integration.

6. Education for Women's Equality

Enhancing participation of girls and women in education calls for a modality of tackling women's issues universally outside the precincts of the schools as well. These issues concern all those factors which tend to prevent them from their access to educational institutions. Some of the important steps, apart from those mentioned elsewhere, required for tackling all the issues comprehensively are :

School being made the nodal point for delivery of essential services by the various grass-root level

government agencies delivering services concerning nutrition, health, child-care etc.

- Increasing availability of schools, especially middle schools, near homes.
- Providing hostel facilities, where needed.
- Proportion of women teachers to be raised significantly.
- Incentives in terms of scholarships, free supply of text-books, uniforms etc.
- Establishment of Women's Polytechnics [not so far implemented, despite stipulation in the Programme of Action (POA) formulated in pursuance of NPE, 1986].
- Development of Women's Studies Research Centres in the Universities, again explicit in the POA³ but implemented only in a scattered manner.
- Earmarked funding for women's education.
- Earmarking for women 50 % of resources provided for primary education.
- Earmarking for SC/ST women, 50% of the resources provided for the educational development of these communities.
- Media programmes (particularly of Doordarshan) are to be freed from tendencies conducive to gender bias, sex stereotyping and sex violence.

Unless this is done, inculcation of the appropriate values in the school system regarding gender equality will not be feasible.

7. Removal of Regional Disparities

The country being very large, marked by striking diversities in terms of language, culture and resource endowments, blanket policy options, strategies, investment patterns and targets do not help in tackling the problem of regional and sub-regional disparities. No doubt, efforts have been made in the past to deal with the problem of inter-state disparities by special planning and allocation of funds for educationally backward States/UTs. This, however, is not adequate. There are, indeed, backward areas within States that could be construed as educationally not backward in terms of certain parameters. 'Approach to the Eighth Five Year Plan' lays much store by decentralisation in planning. Therefore, there is need for identification of backward areas at the district and sub-district levels. District, block and village level profiles have to be prepared in meaningful planning for educational development.

It follows that target setting for educational development also has to be disaggregated and area specific (even gender specific), whether it be for Universal Elementary Education, Adult Education or Vocational Education. Full scope would have to be given for diversified content planning, plural learning strategies and variable ways of non-formalising the school, according to the socio-cultural milieu of different regions. Special efforts are needed to develop learning resources in regional languages to reduce inequities. It is only in this way that backward classes could be provided education of comparable standards without which reservations for job opportunities cannot be meaningfully availed of by them.

8. Decentralised School Management

Consistent with 'local area planning' mentioned elsewhere, the management of the school system should be decentralised. The entire school system should be managed by the Community and be accountable to it. The management model may be that of local college, a high school or a group of high schools and the associated middle and primary schools coming together in a cluster. The Complex may work in co-ordination with Panchayati Raj institutions as well as local development and social welfare agencies, voluntary or Government. The university serving the region may affiliate itself with this Complex. The university may help in the development of the Complex through its faculty, students and technical resources. There could be a memorandum of understanding between the Complex and the university on the one hand, and the Complex and the local body, on the other. The Complex will follow its own self-monitoring system. Parallel systems of monitoring through the university, District Board of Education, local body, resource agencies (SCERT/SIE/DIET) etc. could coexist. The Complex should be provided with adequate intellectual resources as well.

The long-term objective is that these Educational Complexes will come under the umbrella of Panchayati Raj institutions/local bodies. The details of devolution of responsibilities at different tiers of education will no doubt depend upon the legal framework that may be designed by the States for the purpose.

The basic idea is that management of education in the Complexes should be the job of professionals, i.e. the teaching community. Various aspects like curriculum, syllabi, content and process, evaluation, monitoring, teacher training and modes of delivery of education to

different segments of the society will be the responsibility of the teaching community itself.

In discharging this responsibility, teachers will closely interact with the community they are serving. In this arrangement, the quality of education will not be determined by a body of inspectors or functionaries external to the educational system. Consequently, education being directly in the hands of those for whom it is a matter of day-to-day concern, its quality should significantly improve.

While the running of the Educational Complexes will be the joint concern of the community and the teachers who are internal to the system, their funding will necessarily come from the State Government and other local bodies that may have jurisdiction. For the purpose of ensuring that the financial resources deployed by them really result in efficient delivery of education, the State Governments and the local bodies may interact with the Educational Complexes through District Boards of Education and Block-level and Village-level Education Committees. These bodies will consist of educationists, teachers, social workers, representatives of voluntary organisations, trade unions and official development agencies as well as representatives of disadvantaged sections such as scheduled castes and tribes, other backward classes, women etc.

As already brought out elsewhere, in the whole arrangement, the Head of the educational institution, the Headmaster/Headmistress/Principal shall have meaningfully delegated authority with the teachers being centre-stage.

The community also will need to be made aware of simple parameters with reference to which they can make their own assessment of the learning outcome from the schools, in both the cognitive and the affective domain.

9. Resources

Considering the Constitutional directives the need for State intervention in education for reasons of equity and social justice, and the gigantic magnitude of the clientele to be provided education, public expenditure, indeed, has to be very significant. Over the years, no doubt, the percentage of GNP spent on education has been increasing. In 1950-51, it was 1.2%. In 1986-87, it was 3.9%. But the actual requirements are far in excess of the present level of expenditure. It is also much below the level of 6% of the GNP envisaged in NPE, 1986. As stated elsewhere, India ranks 115th in the world in terms of investment in education as a percentage of GNP. Amongst countries with a population of 10 crores and above, India is at the very bottom barring Bangladesh. Share of educational plan expenditure came down to 3.55% in the Seventh Plan from 7.86% in the First Plan.

Within Education, intra-sectorally, there have been serious distortions in outlays. The share of Elementary Education decreased to 29% in the Seventh Plan, from 56% in the First Plan. Over the same period, share of University and general education increased from 18% to 44%. These retrogressions are serious, considering that the rate of return on elementary education, is considerably higher than in tertiary education. This could be perceived as much more glaring, viewed from the angle that certain University Scholarships, reportedly, have been higher than the fees charged. The tertiary level student fees, not having meaningfully increased over the years, there is a strong case for their upward revision. (The student fees also are far lesser than per student cost).

Government share in the overall expenditure on education increased from 57.1% in 1950-51 to 77.9% in 1979-80. The share of local bodies and internal resource generation

and of private agencies has significantly come down. (Data for years later than 1979-80 are not available).

Strategies for augmenting resources for education and distribution of the same would need to be : a significant increase in public expenditure—at least 6% of the GNP; substantially larger allocations in the Central as well as State budgets ; mobilisation of resources from the community and through local bodies; increased ratio of allocation for Elementary Education; non-divertible allocation within Elementary Education for special sections such as women, SC/ST/OBC communities etc.; equitable formula for enhancing the fee structure for higher education, simultaneously with offer of scholarships for the weaker sections and student loan facilities ; and alternative measures like graduate taxes on the users of the services of graduates.

APPENDICES

HIGHLIGHTS OF NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION (NPE) 1986

The National Policy on Education (NPE) 1986 approved by the Parliament in May, 1986, having recognised that over the years, particularly since the Education Policy of 1968, education facilities had expanded and the common structure of education (10+2+3 system), had generally come to be accepted, stated that the general formulation of 1968 Policy had not been translated into action including by provision of financial support. This had caused serious problems concerning access, quality, quantity and utility of education. In this context the Policy called for a new design of Human Resource Development. Education was described as an investment in the present and future which was to further the goals of crucial values, apart from developing manpower to serve the economy.

The Policy called for a National System of Education. The implication was provision of access to education of a comparable quality upto a level without discrimination on grounds of caste, creed, location or sex. It also meant a common educational structure-10+2+3 structure.

Consistent with the Constitutional Amendment of 1976 which brought education under the Concurrent List, the Policy called for a new sharing of responsibility between the Union Government and the States in all its ramifications —substantive, administrative and financial.

The policy envisaged education for equality and called for catering to the specific needs of those who had been educationally disadvantaged, that is, the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, minorities, women and the handicapped.

Adult education, apart from facilitating creation of ability to read and write, was to be linked with poverty alleviation, national integration, environment conservation, energisation of the cultural creativity of the people, observance of small family norms and promotion of women's equality. Adult education was also spelt out as the responsibility of the whole Nation—all sections of the society. Functional literacy was to be another important concern of adult education.

In the area of elementary education, apart from universal enrolment and retention, a substantial improvement in the quality of education was envisaged. Elementary education was to be child-centred and activity-based. First generation learners were to learn at their own pace supported by supplementary remedial instruction. Cognitive learning was to be increased and skills developed through practice. Evaluation of children's performance was to be as disaggregated as feasible.

The non-formal education programme for out-of-school-children was to be made systematic. Modern technological aids were to be used. Instructors were to be from the local community. Entry of non-formally educated children in the formal system was to be facilitated. While the framework for the curriculum was to be on the lines of the national core curriculum, it also was to have reference to the local environment of the learners. Non-formal education was to be substantially the work of voluntary agencies and Panchayati Raj institutions. The resolve of NPE 1986 was that all children who attain the age of 11 years by 1990 were to have had 5 years of schooling or its equivalent through the non-formal system. Likewise, all children were to be provided free and compulsory education upto 14 years of age by 1995.

The main emphasis in regard to secondary education was to be on consolidation, at the same time widening access to cover areas that remained un-covered. Children with special talent were to be provided opportunities to proceed at a faster pace, pace-setting schools being established for the purpose. Vocational education was to facilitate enhancement of employability. It was to be a distinct stream too. It was to help in the reduction of mis-match between demand and supply of skilled manpower. It was to be ordinarily provided after the secondary stage. However, it could be flexible and may be made available after Class VIII. The establishment of vocational courses was to be the responsibility of the Government as well as employers in the Public and Private Sectors. Vertical mobility for vocational graduates was to be provided through bridge courses. For this, out-of-school vocational programmes were to be organised non-formally. There were to be tertiary level vocational courses as well. The target was coverage by vocational courses of 10% of the higher secondary students by 1990 and 25% by 1995.

In the area of Higher Education, emphasis was on consolidation and expansion of facilities in existing institutions.

The strategies for improvement of Higher Education were: Development of autonomous colleges ; redesigning of courses and programmes ; establishment of State Councils of Higher Education to develop co-ordinative methods ; transformation of teaching methods ; enhanced support for research ; creation of a National Council of Higher Education to co-ordinate general, agricultural, medical, technical and other professional fields of education ; use of the Open University system as an instrument of democratising education, delinking of degrees from jobs except in the case of occupation-specific courses ; and consolidation and development of Rural Universities for them to be instruments of transformation of rural areas.

Technical and Management Education was to be modernised, taking into account the anticipated scenario by the turn of the century. The education programmes were to be on a flexible modular pattern, based on credits with provision for multi-point entry. To encourage career option for self-employment, training was to be provided in entrepreneurship. Polytechnics were to be pressed into the service of the community through a system of community polytechnics. Networking of technical education institutions with User system was to be encouraged. The All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) was to be vested with statutory authority in order to make it effective in regulation of standards in technical education. Commercialisation of technical and professional education was to be curbed.

The strategy envisaged for making the system work to ensure that the teachers taught and students studied were providing a better deal for the teachers with greater accountability, provision of improved students' services, provision of better facilities to institutions and creation of a system of performance appraisals.

Reorientation of the content and process of education was also to be brought about, according to NPE 1986. The curricula were to be enriched by cultural content ; value education was to be given significant place ; media and educational technology were to be employed in all the spheres ; work-experience was to be an integral part of the learning process at all stages ; environment consciousness was to be promoted ; science and mathematics teaching were to be geared for promoting a spirit of inquiry ; the examination system was to be recast in terms of continuous comprehensive evaluation of scholastic and non-scholastic performance ; and development of languages was to be in terms of 1968 Policy.

The teachers and their role were considered by NPE 1986 as very basic and crucial to the system of education. Teacher recruitments were to be merit-based. Objectivity was to be ensured in their postings and transfers. Teacher evaluation was to be participative and data-based. Their pay and service conditions were to be made commensurate with their social and professional responsibilities. Their uniformity throughout the country was considered desirable. National level associations of teachers were to prepare their own code of ethics and also see to its observance. The teacher-education system was to be overhauled. Sub-standard teacher education institutions were to be phased out. National Council of Teacher Education was to be set up to accredit teacher-education institutions and to provide guidance regarding curricula and methods.

Another important element of NPE 1986 was the call for an overhaul of the system of planning and management of education. The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) was to play the important role of reviewing educational development. In the States, there were to be State Advisory Boards on the model of CABE. District Boards of Education were to be created to manage education upto Higher Secondary level. School complexes were to be promoted on a flexible pattern. In due course they were to take over much of the inspection functioning. Local communities were to be involved in programmes of school improvement. There would be consultations with the States, in the matter of establishment of the Indian Education Service.

NPE 1986 considered education as a crucial area of investment for national development and survival. It called for stepping up of outlay on education to the extent essential for policy implementation in the Seventh Plan. It also envisaged that from the Eighth Five Year Plan onwards it should uniformly exceed 6% of the National Income while resource mobilisation from the beneficiary communities,

from beneficiaries in higher levels of education and through internal economies was contemplated. It was recognised that such resources would contribute only marginally to the total funding.

The main task for the future spelt out by NPE 1986 was strengthening of the base of the pyramid (of education) at the same time ensuring that those at the top of the pyramid were amongst the best in the world.

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