Nationwide Debate

on

Vital Issues

of

Education

Background Papers

Department of Education
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COMPULSORY ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

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1. Constitutional Provision (Article 45) :

Envisages provision for free and compulsory education for children. The State shall endeavour to provide, within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of fourteen years.

2. National Policy on Education (1986):

The Policy gives the highest priority to the programme of Universalisation of Elementary Education and recommends that it shall be ensured that free and compulsory education of satisfactory quality is provided to all children upto the age of fourteen years before we enter the 21st century. The Programme of Action 1992 outlines relevant strategies to be acted upon.

3. Compulsory Legislation:

14 States and 4 Union Territories (UTs) have passed acts making education compulsory.

States: Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamilnadu, Kerala and West Bengal.

UTs: Chandigarh, Delhi, Pondicherry and Andaman & Nicobar Islands.

These legislations have three parts :

(i) Power vested in the state government to notify the area in which the Act can be implemented;

(ii) Penalties for not sending children to school.

(iii) Power in a vested authority to grant exemption from the legislation.

Tamil Nadu recently replaced the earlier Act. While the earlier Act had envisaged certain areas to be notified, the present Act extends to the whole state.

II. PRESENT STATUS

1. Free Education:

All State Governments have abolished tuition fees in Government schools upto upper primary level. Education in schools run by local bodies and private aided institutions is also mostly free. However, unaided Institutions (3.7%) do charge fees. Other costs of education such as textbooks, uniforms, school bags, transport fee etc. are not borne by States except in few cases by way of incentives to children of poor families and those belonging to SC/ST categories. The reason being 96% of expenditure on Elementary Education goes in meeting the salaries of teaching and non-teaching staff.

2. Compulsory Education:

The Compulsory Education Acts enacted in 14 States amd 4 UTs have remained unenforced due to socio-economic compulsions that keep the children away from schools. There is no central legislation making education compulsory. The consistent position has been that compulsion contemplated in Article 45 of the Constitution is a compulsion on the State rather than on the parents.

3. Universalisation of Elementary Education:

The thrust in elementary education is on three aspects:

(i) Universal access and enrolment;

(ii) Universal retention of children upto fourteen years of age; and

(iii) to bring about substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential levels of learning.

The Government policy is to motivate children to attend the school regularly and to improve upon the facilities in the school system, provide training to teachers and upgrade learning acquisition of children; to enforce compulsory education with punitive measures.

4. In spite of our consistent efforts, a quarter of the total school going age population is outside the formal educational system. As of now, the gross enrolment ratio in the country as a whole is 104.5 for classes I-V and 91.2 for classes I-VIII. After adjustment is made for average and underage children, the corresponding ratio is 86.7% for classes

I-V and 75.7% for classes I-VIII. In terms of numbers it is estimated that around 28 million children are out of school, constituting one of the largest groups of out of school children in the world.

5. **Supreme Court Judgement:**

i) In Unnikrishnan Vs. State of Andhra Pradesh (Writ Petition No.607 of 1992), Supreme Court held that citizens of this country have the fundamental right to education and the said right flows from Article 21 of the Constitution. This right is, however, not an absolute right. Every child/citizen of this country has the right to free education until he completes the age of fourteen years. Thereafter, his right to education is subject to limits of the economic capacity and development of the State.

ii) In the case of Common cause Vs. Union of India (Writ Petition No.697 to 1993) wherein the petitioner requested the Court to direct Government to provide all facilities for attaining the goal of universal, free and compulsory education for children upto the age of fourteen years, latest by end of 1999, Hon'ble judges after hearing the arguments declined to grant any relief to the petitioner and advised him to withdraw the petition.

III. THE QUESTION

The question is, how do we move towards UEE at a faster pace? Can a legislation for compulsory education help? If so, how should it be framed? Who should enact it - central government or state government? Should it contain penal provision? If not, would the law have a deterrent effect? If yes, can its misuse by petty bureaucracy be minimised? These are some of the issues which need to be addressed, deliberated upon and a national consensus evolved.

IV. THE PROS: ARGUMENTS IN FAVOUR OF LEGISLATION

1. The desirability of enacting a law for compulsory elementary education and its impact on enrolment has been discussed and debated extensively in recent years.

2. Prof. Myron Weiner of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, an ardent protagonist of compulsory primary education has presented a very incisive analysis of the positive impact compulsory schooling can have on eradication of child labour in his book "The

child and the State in India". He also made a presentation on "Compulsory Education and Child Labour" at the Rajiv Gandhi Centre for contemporary Studies.

3. He argues that what has been done historically by every developed and, now, by many developing countries is to declare that all children aged six to twelve or fourteen must attend school. That no matter how needy, will not be permitted to remove their children from school, that school attendance will be enforced by local authority and that government will be obliged to locate a primary school within reasonable distance of all school age children.

4. It is, therefore, a legislation in which the child, the parents, local bodies and the government have specific obligations.

5. Myron Weiner believes that compulsion does not necessarily imply prison sentences or heavy fines. Local officials, teachers, members of local school boards, can visit the houses of parents who have removed their children from school to inform them that school attendance is compulsory. Within a few years of implementation a norm is established in the country that all children must attend school, a norm more enforced by community pressures than by the authorities.

6. In essence what Myron Weiner says is that penal provisions need not be invoked; Law acts as a deterrentand therefore, parents can be better persuaded by VEC's, teachers and others.

7. An argument in favour of legislation is that it is an expression of political will and it would send out a strong signal to International Community that India is serious about eradication of child labour.

V. THE CONS: ARGUMENTS AGAINST LEGISLATION

As opposed to Myron Weiner's thesis, there is a School of thought which believes that legislation may not be an effective solution in the existing circumstances in our country. Researchers like Christopher Colclough quote the experience of Africa where there is some evidence of an inverse relationship between compulsory schooling legislation and the value of gross enrolment ratio. His argument, primarily, is that regulation like this should not be introduced when large numbers of school children do not attend school because sufficient places are not available. He admits, however, that compulsory schooling regulations do promote continued high levels of enrolment once school places for all children are

genuinely available. In states which have near universalized elementary education like Kerala and Tamil nadu, legislation may help 'mopping up' the out of school children. But what about other States where out of school children constitute a significant proportion? J.P. Naik had once observed that with a Compulsory Primary Education Legislation, in some States, there may be more parents in jail than children in school.

2. This School of thought advances the argument that it is necessary to not only increase public expenditure on education but also introduce measures to mitigate the costs of school attendance. Even this would be a partial solution, they feel, more important being the attitude of parents who may perceive the opportunity costs of schooling to be too high.

3. It is essentially seen as an attitudinal problem - attitude of the parents towards their children's education, state's attitude towards child labour and towards improving the quality of educational system.

4. The stand we have been taking in international forums is that child labour would be abolished in a phased manner. By enacting a legislation for compulsory education would we not be detracting from our current stand.

5. Is this not liable to be used by developed nations as a lever for enforcing social clauses of trade by developed countries?

6. The Legislation focus Hobsons' choice - If the law does not have deterrent penal provisions the law becomes redundant and if such provisions are incorporated they are liable to be misused by petty bureaucracy.

7. Our experience in other Social sectors indicates that negative incentives or coercive strategies like in family planning programme, can be counter-productive. If this be so, should we embark on a coercive legalistic measure in a realm of attitudinal reorientation and qualitative upgradation of the systems and processes.

8. A legislation cannot be self enforcing. A strong enforcement machinery may have to be installed. Apart from being an additional burden on the exchequer, it is likely to misuse the power.

ANNEXE - I

LEGISLATION FOR COMPULSORY PRIMARY EDUCATION

LEGAL POSITION

- Article 45 (Free and compulsory Education to all children upto the age of 14 years)
- Supreme Court held free education until a child completes the age of 14 to be a right (Unnikrishnan and others Vs State of Andhra Pradesh and others)
- 14 States and 4 Union Territories have compulsory Acts.

States: Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Gujarat, Haryana, Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and West Bengal.

UTs: Andaman & Nicobar Islands,Chandigarh, Delhi and Pondicherry.

- These Legislations have three parts

  i) Power vested in the State Government to notify the area in which the Act can be implemented.

  Penalties for not sending children to school

  Power in a vested authority to grant exemption from the legislation

- Not being implemented
- Tamil Nadu recently replaced the earlier Act- Extends to the whole of the State instead of notified areas
- Centre can legally bring in an All India Act.

PROS

- Immediate applause from UNICEF and activists like Myron Weiner
- They argue that
- Penal provisions need not be invoked; Law acts as a deterrent; thereby parents can be better persuaded by VECs, teachers etc.
- Strong signal to International Community that India is serious about eradication of child labour.

TECHNICAL DETAILS

- Should Centre enact legislation?
- Should it persuade the States to enact?
- Should penal provisions be inserted?
- If not, would the law have deterrence?
- If yes, how to avoid misuse by petty bureaucracy?

Cons :

- In States which have near universalised elementary education like Kerala and Tamil Nadu Legislation may help "Mopping up" the out of-school children. But what about other States where out-of-school children constitute a significant proportion?
- Would it detract from our stand in international forums about phased abolition of child labour?
- Would it be a lever for enforcing social clauses of trade by developed countries?
- Is it like the upper house?
- Redundant if there is no penal provision
- Mischievious if penal provision implemented
- Experience in other social sectors
- Negative incentives/coercion in family planning
- Precedents of social legislation
- Can a Legislation be self-enforcing?
- Strong machinery for enforcement found necessary (e.g. atrocities against women, discrimination against SCs).

VIA MEDIA

- Assent to states which wish to go in for such legislation provided compulsion is as much on the States as on parents
- Tamil Nadu precedent

ANNEXE - II

Extracts from the Supreme Court Judgement on Writ Petition of Unni Krishnan, J.P. vs A.P. (B.P. Jeevan Reddy.J.) - on right to education Petition may be disposed of according to law and in the light of this Judgment.

PART-V

242. For the above reasons the Writ Petitions and Civil Appeals except (W.P.(C)855/92/ C.A.3573/92 and the Civil Appeals arising from S.L.Ps. 13913 and 13940/92) are disposed of in the following terms:

1. The citizens of this country have a fundamental right to education. The said right flows from Article 21. This right is, however,not an absolute right. Its content and para-meters have to be determinded in the light of Articles 45 and 41. In other words, everychild/citizen of this country has a right to free education until he completes the age of fourteen years. Thereafter his right to education is subject to the limits of economic capacity and development of the State.

2. The obligations created by Articles 41, 45 and 46 of the Constitution can be discharged by the State either by establishing institutions of its own or by aiding, recognising and/or granting affiliation to private educational institution. Where aid is not granted to private educational institutions and merely recognition or affiliation is granted it may not be insisted that the private education institution shall charge only that fee as is charged for similar courses in governmental institutions. The private educational institutions have to and are entitled to charge a higher fee, not exceeding the ceiling fixed in that behalf. The admission of students and the charging of fee in these private educationaal institutions shall be governed by the scheme evolved herein - set out in Part-III of this Judgment.

3. A citizen of this country may have a right to establish an educational institution but no citizen, person or institution has a right much less a fundamental right, to affiliation or recognition or to grant-in-aid from the State. The recognition and/ or affiliation shall be given by the State subject only to the conditions set out in, and only accordance with the scheme continued in Part-III of this Judgment. No Government/University or authority shall be competent to grant recognition or

affiliation except in accrodance with the said scheme. The said scheme shall constitute a condition of such recognition or affiliation, as the case may be, in addition to such other conditions and terms which such Government, University or other authority may choose to impose.

Those receiving aid shall, however, be subject to all such terms and conditions, as the aid giving authority may impose in the interest of general public.

4. Section 3-A of the Andhra Pradesh Educational Institutions (Regulation of Admission And Prohibition of Capitation Fee) Act, 1983 is violative of the equality Clause enshrined in Article 14 and is accordingly declared void. The declaration of the Andhra Pradesh High court in this behalf is affirmed.

5. Writ Petition No.855 of 1992 is dismissed. Civil appeal No.3573 of 1992 is allowed and the impugned order is set aside. The main Writ Petition wherein the said interim order has been passed may now be disposed of according to law.

6. Civil Appeals arising from S.L.Ps.13913 and 13940/92 (preferred by students who were admitted by private unaided engineering colleges in Andhra Pradehs, without an allotment from the convenor of the common entrance examination) are allowed. The students so admitted for the academic year 1992-93 be allowed to continue in the said course but the management shall comply with the direction given in para 77 hereinabove.

ANNEXE - III

COMPULSORY SCHOOLING

Extract from the book "EDUCATING ALL THE CHILDREN" by Christopher Colclough & Keith M. Lewin

It seems fairly obvious that a government which genuinely intended to provide sufficient school places for all, and that these should be fully utilized, would introduce legislation to make school attendance compulsory for the relevant age-group. Such legislation is widespread around the world, typically stipulating both the minimum duration of school attendance in years, and the ages during which it should occur. Table 7.5 shows that 85 per cent of developing countries have enacted laws which make schooling compulsory, and that on average they require attendance for about eight years. Both the incidence of legislation and the length of attendance required are less in Africa and Asia than in Latin America. The industrialized countries, on the other hand, have regulations making schooling compulsory, the average duration being slightly more than nine years. The question arises, therefore, as to whether there is any relationship between the non-enactment of legislation and the incidence of low enrolment ratios caused by low demand for schooling. If so, the act of legislating could be expected to be a useful response.

Table 7.5 The incidence of compulsory schooling legislation around the world

	No. of countries	No. of countries with compulsory schooling	(2)as % of (1)	Average duration of compulsory schooling (Years)
	1	2	3	4
Africa	55	44	80.0	7.4
Latin America	44	42	95.4	8.3
Asia	36	29	80.6	7.0
Subtotals				
Developing Countries	135	115	85.2	7.6
Developed countries	34	34	100.0	9.4

Source: Calculated from Unesco (1989 : Table 3.1)

This apparently straightforward question is in fact too complicated to answer accurately, given the available evidence. Observed enrolment ratios are the result of the interaction of supply and demand, and as regards the determinants of supply, the state provision of school places may in any case not be independent of the demand for them. What can be said is that a puzzlingly large number of countries with low GERs have laws making primary-school attendance compulsory. For example,there are seventeen countries with primary GERs of less than seventy having such legislation. Sixteen of these are in SSA, and they include five cases where primary enrolments in the late 1980s were equal to less than one-third of the eligible age-group.

In Africa, there is actually some evidence of an inverse relationship between the incidence of compulsory schooling legislation and the value of the GER: for the group of eleven African countries not having such legislation the mean GER for 1986 was 85, whereas for the continent as a whole it was sharply lower, with a value of 74 for the same year.

We should note that in most cases the legislation exempts children from attending if there is no suitable school within reasonable distance of their homes. The question whether or not such regulations ensure attendance where schools exist thus remains open. However, the cases of Ghana, Liberia, Mozambique, Nigeria, Somalia, Tanzania and Zaire are instructive in the context. In those countries all of which have compulsory schooling legislation, the GER fell by between 10 and 50 per cent over the years 1980-6, partly as a result of economic hardships which caused families to withdraw children from school. Here, then, the laws were not sufficient to sustain enrolment in the face of falling demand.

Thus, across developing countries, the existence of compulsory schooling regulations often seems to have had little impact upon the proportion of children actually enrolled. Historically, these laws were introduced in most countries in response to international convention and pressure. Often they date back to the years following the Unesco conferences of the 1960s which, as indicated in Chapter 1, adopted targets for universal compulsory primary enrolment in each region of the developing world.. Sometimes, as in India, Taiwan, North Vietnam, and South Korea, the legislation was on the statute books much earlier, although in India it has never actually been enforced. It is now clear that these regulations were often introduced too early to be of much help: where large numbers of school children do not attend school because sufficient places are not available, it is difficult for the law to insist that attendance should be compulsory for those who do not seek it. The evidence from the industrialized countries suggests that compulsory schooling regulations do promote

continued high levels of enrolment once school places for all children are genuinely available. They would thus become important for countries to adopt and enforce as net enrolment ratios move up towards 90. But where the coverage of school systems remains partial, such regulations are probably of little help.

5.2 Mitigating the costs

One of the causes of the concentration of low enrolment ratios amongst the poorest countries is that state expenditures upon schooling cannot completely remove the costs to poor households of their children's attendance. Even if fees are not charged, there are usually the costs of some books to meet, and often there are school uniforms to buy. Moreover, the opportunity costs of school attendance are, in practice, a negative function of household income. It is the poor who depend upon the income from child labour. For the middle classes, by contrast, household incomes often benefit directly from the child-minding role which full-time schooling provides, and indirectly by allowing more of the time of other members of the household to be spent on income-earning tasks. As pointed out in Chapter 2, in order to move gross enrolment ratios up towards 100, it is not only necessary, at given unit cost levels, that public expenditures on education should rise, but it is a requirement that this should also happen within the budgets of private households. By consequence, the poorer are the households concerned, and the higher the direct and indirect costs which they would need to meet, the more likely is it that public measures to increase primary provision would fail to elicit the required enrolment response.

Crucial, therefore, to the success of state policies for UPE and SFA, particularly where (as is usually the case) it is the children of the poorest families who remain out of school, will be the introduction of measures to mitigate the costs of school attendance. Methods of community financing at primary level would need to be confined to the wealthier communities and school (with the possible exception, as indicated earlier, of contributions to capital costs via own construction), and all direct costs of attendance, such as fees or charges for books, materials, and other consumables, would need to be reduced and, where possible, removed. In a number of African countries a strong positive enrolment response to the abolition of school fees has already been demonstrated, even in circumstances where such charges were the equivalent of only a few dollars per year. Thus, price and income clasticities of demand for primary schooling are sometimes high. This will need to be both recognized and utilized by strategies for UPE and SFA.

Even so, policies which substantially reduce the direct costs of school attendance may yet prove insufficient to overcome problems of low demand for primary schooling where the opportunity costs of sending a child to school are judged, by its parents, to be high. Unhappily, this happens in a wide variety of countries and circumstances. As household income have fallen in Africa in recent years, the widespread withdrawal of children from school indicated not just an increasing inability by parents to meet the direct costs of schooling, but also an increased dependence by them upon the incomes, however meagre, which their children could earn. More serious, because more long-standing, is the issue of the institutionalisation of child labour which has been tolerated in a significant number of States, particularly those of South Asia and North Africa. In India, as Myron Weiner observes:

Indians of virtually all political persuasions oppose the notion that education should be imposed. The major objection is that poverty forces children to drop out of school to find employment to augment the income of their families. It is an argument widely subscribed to by all political groups ... In the debate over the government's new policy toward child-labour laws, critics were distressed that the government accepted child labour as a 'harsh reality', but virtually no one urged the government to remove children from employment in cottage industries and agriculture by forcing them to go to school, irrespective to their parents' wishes.(Weiner 1991:186)

These circumstances obtain in India owing to the set of interests served by the system of child labour. Poor parents seek the income it provides. Exploiters, and ultimately consumers, profit from the much lower wages commanded by children in comparison with adult labour. The middle classes find it convenient not to disrupt a system which prevents large numbers of those from poorer backgrounds from entering their own ranks. The conspiracy of silence to which this array of interests leads will not be overcome merely by further reductions in the direct costs of schooling. What is required is a change in attitudes within the State, leading to firmer action against child labour and in support of more universal attendance at school.

ANNEXE - IV

AN OPEN LETTER TO SCINDIA (by Tavleen Singh)

Dear Madhavrao Scindia:

If you have been good enough to occasionally cast a passing glance over this column you would have noticed that it has never before contained an open letter. I avoid writing them, generally, because they tend to have a preachy, pontificatory quality which I dislike. It is my humble opinion that us hacks are really in no position to give lectures to all and sundry despite the fact that it is almost an occupational hazard in our profession.

This is not a lecture, it is an appeal. An entreaty, to a man who, in my view, has the most important job in the country and a man who could, finally be the right choice for this most vital of jobs. There would have been no point in writing such a letter to your predecessor and fellow traveller from Madhya Pradesh, Shri Arjun singh because he was too disinterested in this ministry to realise its importance. He also had too many other important things on his mind like trying to get Narasimha Rao out of his job. Besides, he was too old, too much of a dinosaur, to understand that in the changed realities of the world, being India's Education Minister was almost more important tnan being Prime Minister.

Because of his incomprehension, he is likely to end up as little more than a footnote in history, a footnote in very small print. You, however, are young, Mr Scindia and, from all accounts, dynamic enough to do something that could make future generations of Indians remember you with eternal gratitude. And, all you need to do to achieve this recognition is to remember that despite your title being Minister for Human Resource Development you are primarily Minister for education. Culture, sports and all the other things that come under you can only begin to happen if we first concentrate on educating our hopelessly illiterate population.

Technically we now have over 50 per cent literacy (52.1 per cent to be exact). In fact, as you and I know, even this shameful figure is fudged because anyone who can scrawl his name legibly on a piece of paper is considered literate in our unlettered land. But, even it we accept 52.1 per cent as accurate, it not something we can consider an achievement, not even when we compare ourselves to other similarly poor countries. To give you only a few figures that your ministry staff, undoubtedly, have full knowledge of. The literacy rate in Sri Lanka is 89.1 per cent, Myanmar 81.5 per cent.

According to Asia Week's latest list of vital signs, there are only seven countries more illiterate than us, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Cambodia and Egypt. So, when we talk of our "achievements" in the field of education since Independence we are quite clearly using the wrong word. We have achieved little so far that we can be proud of.

One of the reasons for this is that, except on paper and in political speeches, we have never considered education important. In fact, so unimportant did Rajiv Gandhi consider it that he abolished the ministry altogether replacing it with Human Resource Development. It was, in my view, a silly, illiterate mistake but there is, nevertheless, something you could learn from the title of your ministry. Ask yourself if Human Resource Development is possible without literacy.

Then, ask yourself why India has been left so far behind by countries that were as illiterate as us 40 years ago. You may find that the answer to your question is that these other countries made primary education compulsory whereas we decided to reinvent the educational wheel and experiment with our own ideas. The result is that we have pursued a variety of well-meaning schemes but still have only 52.1 per cent literacy.

We have tried coming up with a series of 'new' education policies, we have urged people to reach one, teach one,we even tried, under that governmental all-rounder, Sam Pitroda, to make literacy a mission. But nothing has worked, except in the closed minds of the bureaucrats who run your ministry. Can we now try compulsory primary education?

You will say, as your predeccessors have, that there is little that you can do because elementary education is a state subject. This is nonsense, and if it isn't, change the Constitution we have often amended it for lesser reasons. If your ministry came up with a model, a plan to make primary education compulsory and helped the state Governments follow it, you know that they can be made to go along with you. In any case, those that didn't would do so at their own risk because in the near future it will become virtually impossible to get a job with-out basic literacy. whatever your bureaucrats tell you, I urge you to pay attention to the fact that we are running out of time. Even if you did decide to make primary school compulsory it would take the country at least 10 years to achieve this for even the first couple of classes.

It is a painfully gradual process which will be even more gradual in a country where inefficiency is the norm rather than the exception.

I implore you, nevertheless, to try doing it for a simple reason that basic literacy affects almost everything else in the country. We cannot dream of a successful family planning programme until women become literate enough to understand that they do not have to have babies. We cannot help mothers prevent the needless deaths of their children, from diarrhoea and other childhood diseases, until they are literate enough to read the instructions on the packets of simple medicines, until they are literate enough to know that dirt kills.

I could go on and on. Our so-called opening up of the economy is doomed to fail until we have a literate population. No matter how clever our captains of industry are, how can they increase productivity without literate workers? A figure I saw recently pointed out that Canada, with 28 million people, produces more than we do. Our industrialists also realise that all our dreams to finally make the Indian 'tiger' wake up will come to naught without basic literacy.

We have tried for nearly 50 years to redistribute our wealth so that the poorest of the poor benefit but because we have been unable to make sufficient wealth all we have done is redistribute poverty. But, that is another story, and a very long one.

All you need to concentrate on is making basic literacy a country-wide reality. Every other country has achieved this by making primary education compulsory. Please don't let your bureaucrats persuade you that there is another way. We cannot afford any more experiments. It is already too late.

Hoping you will at least consider my humble suggestion,

Yours ever,

ANNEXE - V

COMPULSORY EDUCATION AND CHILD LABOUR

Extract from a presentation made by Prof. Myron Weiner of MIT, USA at Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies on January 8, 1994

Perhaps some of you in this room have had the good fortune to live a normal life. A normal life is one in which there is no tragedy in the family, where the lives of children and adults are not cut short by diseases that can be cured, where younger members of the family outlive their elders, where the ordinary needs of the family are satisfied, where our children go to school and have opportunities to do what they are capable of doing, and where we do not suffer from the violent anger and hostility of others.

The normal life is, of course, a rarity, experienced only by a small portion of the world. The very poor are least likely to have a normal life, but even those who are rich and powerful may be struck by the anger and brutality of others. And so, both layers of society may, for different reasons and under different circumstances, be denied the life of normality.

On Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year for Jews, the day of atonement when Jews apolcgise to others for sins of omission and commission, I was touched when the rabbi of the synagogue I attended in the town of Montpelier in the bucolic region of central Vermont reminded our small congregation that we few lived the miracle-the miracle, he repeated-of a normal life.

I am grateful to you for inviting me to deliver this lecture under the auspices of the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, named in honour of a man who was unable to complete a normal life and whose family and friends live in the pain of a life cut short, for they too have not lived a normal life. I touch on this painful subject for the purpose of asking you to think about others whose lives are remote from your own, so remote that they could be living in another country in another century, but who also do not live a normal life.

Wnen I worked on my book, *The child and the State in India,* I visited the two institutions where the children of India's poor spend their daily lives-the school and the work place. The schools were where normal life transpired. Dressed in their school uniforms, slates in hand, children recited their lessons, sang songs more or less in unison, and sometimes paraded before a strange visitor from a far away land. I must be frank

in saying that the teaching was generally unimaginative, the schools I visited had no library accessible to the children (a handful of books often locked in the almirah), teachers, bored with what they did, often showed little interest in their children, and the village schools rarely had play equipment, nor even a ball. And yet for those children who had the good fortune to be there, this was a normal life.

The children I saw in the work place did not live a normal life. In the now infamous town of Sivakasi, children spent their days in small rooms putting sticks into frames, stuffing matches into boxes, and stacking boxes into cartons. In Jaipur they breathed silicon as they did gem polishing, in Lucknow they sat in damp pits working on looms, in Firozabad they carried molten glass from furnaces, in Bangalore they waited on tables and washed dishes in tea stalls, in Ahmedabad they carried heavy loads of bricks on construction sites. In villages outside of Hyderabad I saw children tending cattle, to the uninitiated a picture of tranquil normalcy, only to learn that these children were bonded labourers paying for the debts of their parents.

My intention is not to provide you with what Mahatma Gandhi once called Katherine Mayo's book, *"Mother India"*,"a drain insepctor's report". I live in a country in which a four year old child was struck down by a stray bullet in our capital city. She did not live a normal life, nor will her parents. Nor can we say of the children in Chicago and Detroit born with AIDS, or brain damaged with heroin acquired through their pregnant mothers, that they live a normal life.

How does a child come to live a normal live? For most of us the answer is simple: we send them to decent schools, feed and dress them well, provide them with playthings, take care of their health. We do what we think is best for our children. But not all parents do what is in the best interests of their children. Heeroin addicted pregnant women are not acting in the interests of their children. Parents who send their children to a match factory are not acting in the interests of their children.· Parents who use their children as collateral for loans are not acting in the interests of their children. None of this is malicious behaviour. It is not the intent of parents to do harm to their children, but they often do.

All over the world adults have often justified what later generations regarded as acts of cruelty toward children. Many revolutionaries, for example, have sent children to wage war, arguing that the martyrdom of children should be regarded by parents as noble. girls have had their sexual organs mutilated to dull their sexual senses so as to

prevent promiscuous behaviour after puberty. Girls belonging to higher social classes have had their feet bound to satisfy adult notions of female beauty. Prepuberty children have been bound in marriage to ensure conformity with rules of consanguinity. Girls have been sold into prostitution by their parents. We could go on from one culture to another, from ancient to modern times, to provide example after example of decisions made by parents for their children that most of us would not regard as in the interests of the child.

Of the great ideas that have transformed the world, none is as revolutionary as the idea that children have rights and interests independent of those of their parents. It is an idea that has no single author. It is not written in the French Declaration of Human Rights, nor in the American Declaration of Independence. It is not in the Magna Carta. it is not found in any of the sacred texts, Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu, or sikh. In my research for The Child and the State in India, I found glimmers of the idea in the writings of the early Protestant theologians, in Luther, Knox and Calvin, who insisted that children be taught to read the Bible and thereby have direct access to the word of God, without priests as intermediaries, so they could escape from the sin of birth. To the agnostic an absurd idea, no doubt, but never mind, it was the beginning of the notion that children had rights and parents had obligations.

Search as I can, I have not found the person who invented the idea that if parents failed to fulfill their obligations to children, it was the responsibility, of the state to guarantee the rights of the child. The idea is embodied in a law passed by the Colony of Massachusetts in 1647, which declared that every town had to financially provide for a public school and that all parents must either teach their children to read at home or send them to school. In Sweden, a royal decree in 1723 instructed parents and guardians to "diligently see to it that their children applied themselves to book reading and the study of leassons in the catechism." Failure to do so could lead to fines used for "the instruction of poor children in the parish." Similar laws making education compulsory were put in place in Scotland, Geneva, and Prussia. In a more secular spirit French revolutionaries advocated compulsory state-run schools to inculcate the ideas of equality and liberty and to break the hold the Catholic church had upon the rural poor. By the end of the 18th century a number of European governments insisted that schooling for the children of all social classes be obligatory, independent both of the wishes and the means of parents.

In time this revolutionary idea spread around the world. different cultures and different ideologies provided a different rationale. Adam Smith argued for compulsory education, not for religious salvation, but for creating a civil society in which men and

women were sufficiently well educated to behave rationally and morally so as not to succumb to demagogues. A half century later, John Stuart Mill argued that education was necessary for a child to "perform his part well in life." He wrote that education was necessary for the "members of the community generally who are liable to suffer seriously from the consequences of ignorance and want of education in their fellow citizen." For Mill, education for the poor was essential for self-improvement, social mobility, and citizenship, reflecting his equalitarian and democratic political philosophy.

In time the idea moved from West to East. The Meiji leadership insisted that all Japanese children attend school. "Henceforth, throughout the land," began a famous school regulation of 1872, "without distinctions of class and sex in no village shall there be a house without learning, in no house an ignorant individual. Every guardian, acting in accordance with this, shall bring up his children with tender care, never failing to have them attend school." The Meiji elite believed that compulsory mass education was necessary not only to build a modern country capable of competing with the West but principally as a way of inculcating a national spirit, love and reverence for the emperor, and loyalty to the state. From Japan the idea of state-imposed compulsory education moved to Korea and to Taiwan, both then Japanese colonies. Lenin and his fellow revolutionaries were also proponents of compulsory education. Lenin regarded mass education as essential to create individuals who would not be motivated by the desire for private gain but committed to the collective good. He saw mass education as a means of inculcating loyalty to the party and its socialist ideology. The Soviet Union, and subsequently all the communist states of eastern Europe, china, Nicaragua, Cuba, and Vietnam made education compulsory.

The idea was planted in India in 1882 when several Indian and British officials argued for introducing compulsory education before the Indian Education Commission, but the proposal was never seriously considered. Shortly before World War I, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, then president of the Indian National Congress, took up the issue in the central legislature in New Delhi. He introduced a private bill proposing that local bodies be authorised to introduce compulsory education in their areas. the bill was widely circulated and while it received some support from leaders of the Indian National congress and the Muslim league,a majority of the members of the central legislature, most officials, and respesentatives of the princely states were opposed. The government regarded the proposal as utopian on financial and administrative grounds. In 1918, Vithalbhai Patel introduced a bill in the Bombay legislative council permitting municipal areas of the state to make education compulsory. The bill was passed and thereafter other states under British rule passed similar laws. These laws remain in force today, but it should be noted that all

these laws permit but do not require local authorities to make education compulsory. The various state laws are enabling legislation, modelled after an 1871 act of the British parliament which was superseded a decade later by a parliamentary act requiring local authorities to make education compulsory. But because Indian states do have so-called compulsory education acts, and the Indian constitution, in Article 45, makes compulsory education a matter of national policy, many Indians mistakenly believe that India does have compulsory education laws, only that they are not properly enforced. In contrast with the countries of Europe, and many in Asia, the idea of compulsory education was not firmly planted in India.

Where the idea of compulsory education was firmly planted it is clear that no single motivation led governments to make education compulsory. But we can make three generalisations. The first is that education was made compulsory in many countries before the industrial revolution-when per capita incomes were low, poverty was widespread, and parents would have employed their children had they been permitted to do so. Secondly the introduction of compulsory education was not driven by changes in technology which required more skilled educated workers. More to the point, the removal of children from the labour force enabled industries to employ technologies that required higher skills.

And thirdly, it was theologians, with their vision of God-fearing, law-abiding, moral youth: educators with their vision of schools transmitting the Enlightenment Values of Secularism rationalism, cosmopolitanism, and individualism; and revolutionaries, with their romantic vision of social transformation, who provided the driving force behind the idea of compulsory mass education. Theologies and ideologies were the critical determinants. The contemporary view, put forth by the World Bank, UNICEF, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA, and by economists and demographers that mass education is needed to increase productivity, reduce fertility, and improve public health-all by now well-proven propositions-did not play a role in the early movement by governments to make education compulsory. Let me note that the 17th century law establishing compulsory education in Massachusetts was not called the Human Resource Development Act, but the Old Deluder Satan Act!

Today, most governments agree that children should be removed from the labour force and required to attend school. They believe that employers should not be permitted to employ child labour and that parents, no matter how poor, should not be allowed to keep their children out of school. Modern states regard education as a legal duty, not merely as a right: parents are required to send their children to school, children are required to attend school, and the state is obliged to enforce compulsory education. It

is a view held not only by all developed countries but by the governments of many developing countries as well. In countries of Asia as culturally and politically diverse as Indonesia, Sri Lanka, North and South Korea, China, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand,virtually all children attend primary school- invariably with an element of state compulsion.

India is a great exception, though others, especially neighbouring countries of South Asia, have also not made education compulsory or banned child labour. Indian policy makers have aruged that the Indian government lacks the financial resources for universal compulsory primary school education and that it lacks the administrative resources to enforce child labour laws. They have also argued that poor families need the labour and income of their children and therefore should not be coerced into sending their children to school. Moreover, they say, children and their parents find the schools irrelevant to meet their needs. Finally, it is argued that small scale industries need low wage child labour to survive, and that export-oriented industries needs child labour to be competitive in world markets.

None of these arguments is persuasive. The arguments against compulsory education and against the elimination of child labour do not stand up either against the international experience nor the evidence from India itself. I propose to review these arguments, but before doing so, I should first like to provide some of the basic facts about India's children.

India has a low school attendance rate. The 1981 census-the last one to give us detailed data on school attendance-reported that 52 of India's 6 to 14 age group were not attending school. Only 40 per cent who entered first grade completed four years of schooling, only 23 per cent reached the eighth standard. 82 million children ages 6 to 14 were not in school. the 1993 UNDP World Development Report notes some improvement for 1991 but still 73 million of India's children were not attending primary or secondary school.

There are two major consequences of this low school participation rate. One is that India has a high and increasing number of illiterates. While the literacy rate has improved the absolute number of illiterates has increased-in this past decade alone from 314 million in 1981 to 335 million in 1991, over two million a year. India remains the largest single producer of the world's illiterates. Female literacy is particularly low, reflecting the low female attendance in primary schools. The 1991 census reported the percentage of adult female literates to the total female population is under 40 per cent in Andhra, Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Bihar, and Rajasthan. In UP only 26 per cent of women are literate.

ANNEXE - VI

Make Education Compulsory

Interview with Prof. Myron Weiner

PROFESSOR MYRON WEINER is pleased and surprised with the impact his book, "The Child and the State in India; Child Labour and Education Policy in Comparative Perspective" (Oxford University Press), has made in India. It is a work fiercely critical of the Indian Government's unwillingness to make education compulsory and its acceptance of child labour. Since the book was published last year in India, he says, "it has been widely and favourably reviewed there. Daily newspapers, magazines and weeklies have written about it. I have been asked to talk on television and I gather it has even stirred up discussion in the education ministries. It is something I feel deeply about, so it's pleasing to realise it has been taken up as an issue by people within the country."

Weiner, an american professor, is a quiet, charming man with a philanthropic conscience that reveals itself quickly. Opening his hands wide, he talks rapidly, with emotion and despair over the face that half of India's children-some 82 million-receive scant, if any, education; that, because of this, their chances of self-improvement or getting further than their parents have in life are minimal; and that the Indian Government apparently has no intention of doing anything about it. In the 20 years up to 1981, the number of illiterates in India increased by one million and the trend continues. Weiner is distressed. "It is vital, if India is to progress in the world and reduce poverty, that it does not have millions of illiterates," he says.

But why should it concern him? Weiner is a U.S. citizen with a secure job as Ford International Professor at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was recently in Britain, doing a term's lecturing at Oxford University where this interview took place. The answer. Weiner said, gazing out over the camp green countryside bathed by a pale winter sun and at the historic grey stone buildings of the town, is simple. He has a passion for India, has been visiting and working there for the past 40 years, intends to do so again, and feels a deep involvement with its fate and fortunes. And, as a father and a humanitarian, watching his own children's development through these years, he was struck over and over again by the contrast between the West's concern with a child's right to a protected childhood and with providing education, and the situation in India where children as young as three can be found in the labour force. One estimate puts the number of children employed at 44 million.

Yet, in India, Weiner explained, "For many people there is not a conception of childhood. The notion that there is a stage of life when children are children does exist in the middle classes, but for the ` lower castes' children are a resource who can contribute to the household income, and sometimes they are seen as the bridege between poverty and absolute poverty. Nor is there the belief I fervently hold- that the state has an obligation to give children education, and that children have an obligation to go to school. Only this can ensure they have the opportunities in life which education brings. Half of India's children are denied that opportunity."

Living and travelling in Asia, Weiner saw small, frail children sitting crouched in damp pits in the ground, weaving carpets from dawn to dusk. He saw children, selected for their thin limbs and nimble movements, working in glass factories where they would carry burning loams of glass stuck to the tips of four-foot-long iron rods without handles, or blow the red-hot glass into shapes. Many meet with accidents with burning glass while others are exposed daily to dangerous chemicals. Many are the risks to children working in the match and fireworks cottage industries; in pottery factories, the airborne silica dust can cause pulmonary fibrosis. A doctor at the local clinic in Khurja, where pots are made, reports that as many as 30 children report with pulmonary complaints each week.

Many of the children work 15 or more hours a day, frequently in poor lighting; they get little or no time to be outdoors or to play and relax. Nor are many given a proper diet. As a result children, who are favoured over adults because they are compiant and work for just a few rupees, are undersized and have pallid complexions and many chronic ailments. Weiner is angered as he considers the life of these children who have no voice to protest and nobody to stand up for them and says Indian scholars have established that child labourers have stunted growth and are in poor health.

The health of children who work with their parents, as many do, may be better, says Weiner, but those working in the fields are usually busy almost all the time. He recalls stopping one morning, during a countryside drive, to talk to a boy in a field with some cattle. Asked why he was not in school, the boy looking surprised said he had never been to school; he had his work. There was no question in his mind. Weiner observes that he should have an option.

But a 10 year old boy who had been to primary school saw things differently when his father said he must leave and work. He begged to be allowed to stay and threatened

to commit suicide if he was removed from school. He was allowed to take up secondary education and he even persuaded his father to let his brothers stay. All of them went on to university and got white collar jobs.

Weiner acknowledges that such persuasion may not be possible for all children who wish to stay at school, but he was particularly pleased to come across some teenaged girls, Scheduled Castes (once considered "untouchable") all, who did household work, walked to the village to get water and firewood, tended to a cow or two and cooked for the family. Their days were long but nevertheless they attended evening classes to learn to read and write. He adds: :What was so cheering was to hear these girls say they were determined their daughters should be educated. They spoke articulately about it being the way their children could do better than they have."

Worst off are the bonded labourers such as the small boy who was contracted by his parents to work for their neighbours as a way of paying off the money borrowed for a wedding. Because his work only paid the interest and not the debt, he was unlikely to be free to return to school. Weiner recollects: "He was accepting of this though he said he wanted to go back to school. Often, bonded labourers are exploited children at school..... so little resources and have no defence."

"Sympathy and compassion alone, even if it became a national sentiment, would not get children out of the labour force".

Life is even more cruel to children injured at work. Weiner met a boy who had been scalded by boiling water while working in a silk processing factory, and had been sacked because his arm was too badly injured for him to work any more. He was paid no compensation. For some weeks he wandered the streets, begging, but being bright and inventive he found a way to make money by buying rat poison in bulk, dividing it into samll packages and selling them at a profit. But others in similar circumstances end up as prostitutes, beggars or thieves. Without education they have no skill to help them better themselves.

The plight of child labourers upsets Weiner but he does not believe that sympathy and compassion alone, even if it became a national sentiment, would get them out of the labour force. The only way to do it, he argues, is for the Government to make schooling compulsory and enfore the decision. He says: "I do not think abolishing child labour first

is doing it the right way. First you have to make education compulsory. It has to be an obligation of the state to provide education and an obligation for children to attend school. I don't think it is administratively possible to remove children from the labour force and I don't think labour officials can monitor working children. There are too many ways (in which) the labour laws can be evaded. On the other hand, I think compulsory education laws can be implemented. I've looked at this in Taiwan and Mainland China, where they introduced it relatively recently and now the vast majority of children go to school."

It was this recognition which prompted Weiner to write the book and if it (compulsory education) were to happen, he says, laughing suddenly at the simplicity of it, "the problem of child labour would be solved. If the Government enforces attendance at school, the children will be there, not working, and so you get rid of the problem of child labour at the same time that children are being given the benefit of education." But both the, Government and parents argue that it is essential for children to be allowed to work; that it is a necessary evil because families cannot cope without the children's income. That, in turn, means they have a vested interest in producing more children, adding to the country's severe population problem.

The irony, Weiner says, it that the "poverty argument" is wrong. He points to studies by contemporary development theorists which show the connection between mass education and economic growth. Knowledge gives the entire population the capacity to work towards economic growth, and studies show that the returns from primary education are the greatest.

In India, a country which relies greaty on agriculture, this is particularly relevant, Weiner suggests. In a survey of devloping countries it was found that the farmers with four or more years of primary education produced 13 per cent more crops than uneducated farmers did and that four years of schooling is a threshold for increasing productivity. Each extra year's education raises output by approximately 2 to 3 per cent. Also significant was a research in Hyderabad which showed children from agricultural families who had been to school for five or six years earned higher wages than those agricultural workers who had not. It sounds curious, Weiner agrees, but explains that agricultural wages are paid according to body weight and "children who start work younger are smaller, thinner, and less healthy than those who have been to school." It is information which should be made public, he says with a sudden ferocity.

Another irony, Weiner remarks drily, is that while policymakers shocked him with their lack of apparent concern for mass education, the middle-classes are determined to see their children educated - so much so that the vast majority pay for private education because state education is seen as poor. Their children go on to get the white-collar jobs and so the caste system is perpetuated, Weiner explains. He says: " It would be nice to think that the middle classes, recognising the value of education, would be committed to compulsory education, but the truth is education is largely an instrument for differentiation in India, and there are plenty of people who think education is right for the middle classes but not for the lower classes."

But does it make sense to insist that children spend their time in schools if the quality of education is inadequate? Weiner concedes the problem: "Those responsible for education have put in so little resources they don't feel committed to the notion of it for the lower classes. The schools I visited were often quite unsatisfactory with practically no blackboards, books, chalk and so on. Many have no playgrounds and the curriculum is often unsatisfactory. And teachers frequently do not turn up."

Weiner acknowledges that it is easy for people in affluent, developed countries to talk of the Indian Government's duty to resource its education better; but there is so much poverty and there are so many competing needs. But he points out that a good number of developing countries, including those in Africa with just as serious poverty, have found a way to resource education for all, and he feels sure they will benefit. Weiner observes:" There are a number of general benefits for the country as a whole, as well as for individuals who have education. I know of no country that has effectively modernised in this century without a literate population."

One way of at least reducing child labour would be for countries to refuse to import Indian carpets, glassware, pots- or indeed any goods - in the manufacture of which children had been used. The U.S. is currently considering this but Weiner does not see it as an answer because taking away children's employment does not mean they get to school.

He says:" I am in favour of doing someting to pressure countries not to employ child labour, and I certainly support the efforts the Government makes in India to improve the conditions for working children, but I fear some of the thinking in the U.S. and elsewhere for such legislation is less than pure and I suspect protectionism may have something to do with it."

His book, Weiner admits, has had its share of critics, but far more important, "A number of people seem to have taken up the cause and are carrying on writing and talking about it and that, of course, is the way things can be changed. I am planning now to do research and write an edition for Pakistan because the problem there is very similar." Weiner is confident that if the Central Government were to insist education be made compulsory rather than allow the States to do so, agencies such as the United Nations Children's Fund would provide a great deal of support and would "pay an important role."

But until then, children will go on passing their formative years in dark, airless rooms, crouched and hunched into positions which may distort their bodies for life; they will work hours that make playtime impossible; some will spend their early years inhaling a cocktail of dangerous chemicals, the effects of which may show up years later; others will be maimed in accidents with the red-hot glass or explosive materials used to make matches and fireworks.

That is the side which may attract attention and cause some public anxiety about the fate of children, as happened when a bus carrying load of very young children to a match factory in Sivakasi (Tamil Nadu) overturned, killing all of them. But the daily picture of children toiling is widely accepted and barely noticed. For instance, when Weiner was interviewing two researchers from Islamabad University who had collected impressive data on child labour, a small boy walked into the room carrying tea for them. Weiner questioned the child and learnt that he worked as a servant at the University and slept at the back of the building along with other children employed there!

Weiner spreads his hands, inadvertently gesturing towards a group of children who had just finished their afternoon school and were making their way home, backpacks laden with books, through the Oxford streets, and says, "The two academics I was talking to had never stopped to think about the boy as they compiled their statistics on child labour. It is so much a part of the scene it has become invisible. I feel a kind of missionary zeal about the fact that India should give its kids a better chance than that."

LOAD OF SCHOOL BAG

LOAD OF SCHOOL BAG (YASHPAL COMMITTEE REPORT)

A curriculum proves heavy for children when (a) it is too lengthy to be completed in time by an average teacher under normal conditions; (b) there is mismatch between the difficulty level of the concepts of course content with the mental level of the pupils; (c) the language used in the textbooks is incomprehensible and the style of presentation is verbose and rhetorical rather than simple and straight forward; (d) the basic assumptions underlying curriculum development are not fulfilled.

Yash Pal Committee

A National Advisory Committee was set up by the Government in March 1992 under the chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal, former Chairman of the UGC to suggest ways and means to reduce academic burden on school students. The Committee popularly known as Yash Pal Committee, submitted its report in July 1993 (Annexe - I). On receipt of the Committee's report, a Group was set up on 25.8.1993 under the chairmanship of Shri Y.N. Chaturvedi, Additional Secretary, Department of Education to examine the feasibility of implementing the recommendations made in the report of Yash Pal Committee. The Group submitted its report on 5.10.1993 (Annexe - II).

After studying the problem of curriculum load in detail, Yash Pal Committee identified the following as manifestation of the existence of the problem:

1. Starting Early

It has been observed during the last few years that admission age to nursery classes has been progressively lowered down to the age of 2½ years at some places. It appears that the perception has taken a deep root that if a child has to succeed in life, he or she must start education early in life.

2. Size of school bag

So far as physical load of the school bag is concerned, the situation has become worse over the past few years. However, the weight of the school bag represents one dimension of the problem, another dimension can be seen in the child's daily routine which includes completion of homework and attendance at tuitions and coaching classes of different kinds.

3. Examination system

The major, well understood defect of the examination system is that it focuses on children's ability to reproduce information to the exclusion of the ability to apply concepts and information on unfamiliar, new problems or simply to think. Both the teachers and the parents constantly reinforce the fear of examination and the need to prepare for it by memorising a whole lot of information from the textbook and guide books. This sort of perception about the examination makes things difficult for children.

4. Joyless learning

Majority of our school going children view learning at school as a boring, even unpleasant and bitter experience. The limited purpose of preparing for examination is indeed a very important factor for the unpleasantness of learning. The child centred education and activity based teaching learning method are talked about but are seldom practised in our school.

5. Syllabi and textbook

The syllabi and textbooks if not prepared properly lead to the problem of curriculum load. It has been observed that most of the textbooks have high density of concepts and the style of writing is very terse. The language used in the books in some cases is beyond the comprehension of many students.

The Committee concluded that the problem of curriculum load was not an urban phenomenon. In rural areas, where the students have not to carry heavy bags, the problem of non-comprehension makes things extremely difficult for majority of children. The feeling of academic burden arising out of non-comprehension of subject matter included in the syllabus is indeed a serious problem as it is a major hurdle in the achievement of the target of universalisation of elementary education.

After discussing the indicators or manifestations of the problem of curriculum load, the committee identified the following as the roots of the problem:

1. Knowledge vs. information

The committee has questioned the assumption underlying most curriculum renewal exercises that some sort of knowledge explosion has taken place, therefore, there is a valid reason to add more and more to the existing syllabi. By equating information with knowledge, more things are added to the syllabus making it heavier for children.

2. **Experts commissioned to write textbooks for school students are isolated from classroom realities**

Since they are not familiar with learning process of children, the textbooks prepared by them prove too difficult for majority of children.

3. **Centralised character of curriculum**

Curriculum development centrally is not relevant to the local needs of different parts of the country. There is need for increasing participation of teachers in the process of curriculum development.

4. **Convention of teaching the 'text'**

Majority of teachers perceive the content of the textbook as a rigid boundary or a definer of their work in the classroom. Boredom is the inevitable outcome when a tersely written textbook is taught in a rigid and mechanical manner.

5. **Competition based social ethos**

Our social ethos, particularly in urban areas is now fully entrenched in the competitive spirit which is fast becoming our way of life. Rising aspiration of people in all sections of the society and the growing realisation that education is an important instrument to fulfil their aspirations have resulted in a craze for admission to English medium schools which start imparting formal education too early in the child's life.

6. **Absence of academic ethos**

Adequate time, staff, accommodation and its maintenance, funds, pedagogical equipment, playgrounds are essential pre-requisites for effective curriculum transaction but unfortunately, an overwhelming majority of schools do not have even the minimum essential facilities. The method of teaching used in majority of teachers are devoid of any type of challenge for the students. Children are hardly provided an opportunity to observe and explore natural phenomenon. The concept of library as a readily available source for learning simply does not exist in most schools. Similarly, science laboratories are not equally equipped and are not used for experimentation and discovery.

While forwarding the report of the Committee, Prof. Yash Pal, the chairman of the Committee advised that wide-ranging debates on the report are necessary. In the 49th

meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) held on 15.10.1993, both the reports of Yash Pal Committee and MHRD Group were discussed and the CABE decided to generate a country-wide debate in composite groups of teachers, parents and other interest groups. In December 1993, the State/UT Governments were urged to conduct workshops on these composite groups.

In the 50th meeting of the CABE held on 2.3.1994, the Education Ministers of a number of States/UTs expressed their broad agreement with the recommendations of Yash Pal Committee read with suggestions of MHRD Group and the CABE advised effective dialogue and follow up action with the State/UT Governments in the matter.

Based on the consensus of State/UT views, 2 sets of action-points, one for states/ UTs and other for central agencies like NCERT, CBSE, KVS, NVS were circulated in June and July 1994 respectively. The main recommendations of the Committee which have been included in the broad framework suggested to State/UT Governments in June 1994 are:

i) Greater involvement of teachers in framing curriculum and preparation of textbooks at State/UT level.

ii) Amendment of School Education Acts or Rules of State/UTs for laying down norms for pre-school.

iii) Abolition of tests/interviews for admission in pre- schools and discontinuance of textbooks and homework at pre-school stage.

iv) Abolition of home work and project work at primary stage.

v) Extensive use of audio-visual material and enforcing teacher-pupil ratio of 1:40.

A monitoring Committee for making periodical review of the pace of the implementation process has been set up in the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

The whole question of curriculum load is a complex question and there are no simple solutions. It has to be tackled in a comprehensive way, and not through isolated steps. It may not be possible to enhance overnight the level of competence, motivation and commitment of teachers, provide the facilities required to all the schools, check the growth of commercialisation in education, channelise the parental ambitions and aspirations, and minimise the importance of annual examinations. But this should not mean that we are altogether helpless and can do nothing in this

regard. A package of suitable measures, both short term and long term, needs to be initiated urgently to tackle the problem. The measures will naturally include attempts to reform curriculum, raise the level of teachers' competence, motivation and commitment, strengthen the system of supervision to make teachers responsible for non-performance, provide minimum essential infrastructural facilities to schools and to regulate the system of homework assignment.

ANNEXE - I

LEARNING WITHOUT BURDEN

REPORT

OF

THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(YASHPAL COMMITTEE)

LEARNING WITHOUT BURDEN

Report of the National Advisory Committee
Appointed by the
Ministry of Human Resource Development

PROF. YASH PAL
Chairman

15 July 1993

To
Shri Arjun Singh
Minister for Human Resource Development
Shastri Bhawan
New Delhi 110001

Dear Arjun Singhji,

I have great pleasure in forwarding the report of the National Advisory Committee, you had set up quite a few months ago.

We have applied our mind to the fundamental question posed in our terms of reference : To advise on improving the quality of the learning while reducing the burden on school children. We have had wide-ranging consultations, all over the country. We have talked to teachers, curriculum designers, textbook writers, various School Boards, scientists and academics, book publishers, headmasters and principals— and several others. We have analysed the textbooks in different parts of the country. We have looked at the letters received from a number of people in response to our newspaper and TV requests. And after much discussion, and a fair amount of drafting, We have produced an analysis of the problem and some recommendations.

On a personal note I would like to add that this has been a difficult report to write. Not because we had a great deal of trouble understanding the problem, or that we had lot of differences amongst ourselves, or even developing a conviction that something has to be done. The difficulty for me personally has come from my inability to persuade myself that the "state" of our school education is an independent variable - that it could be altered without altering lot of things in our social set-up! Indeed, it is not only the set-up in the country, but also the defective interpretation of the external scenario, that finally impacts out young students, robbing them of a wholesome growth and depriving the

country of what they could contribute. Nevertheless we have made a number of recommendations which should help.

In regard to the burden on children, the gravitational load of the school bag has been discussed widely in media, even in Parliament. After this study I and most of my colleagues on the committee convinced that the more pernicious burden is that of non-comprehension. In fact the mechanical load on many of our students in Government and Municipal schools may not be too heavy, but the load of non-comprehension is equally cruel. In fact, the suggestion has been made to us that a significant fraction of children who drop out may be those who refuse to compromise with non-comprehension— they are potentially superior to those who just memorise and do well in examination, without comprehending very much! I personally do believe that "very little, fully comprehended, is far better than a great deal, poorly comprehended".

I suggest that the analysis of this report and its general recommendations should be exposed and discussed as widely as possible. Without claiming revolutionary, new insights, or things which may not have been said before, I do believe a concerned discourse on some of the fundamental points made in this report would be good for our future. The report should certainly be published, not only in English and Hindi, but also in all the regional languages. It should be widely circulated, so that a large number of teachers, parents and students can begin to discuss these matters.

Finally, I would like to thank you for bearing with us while we struggled to draft what to us appears to be a reasonable set of recommendations.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

YASH PAL

I

Introduction

Concern regarding academic burden on students and unsatisfactory quality of learning has been voiced time and again in our country during the past two decades. The question has been discussed extensively by several committee and groups. The Ishwarbhai Patel Review Committee (1977), National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) Working Group (1984) and National Policy on Education (NPE) Review Committees (1990) made several recommendations to reduce the academic burden on students. The curriculum development agencies are generally in agreement with the recommendations of the committee and assure the public that these would be kept in view at the time of the forthcoming revision of curricula. But the problem, instead of being mitigated, becomes more acute when a new curriculum is introduced. This has happened in the case of new curriculum introduced in the wake of implementation of NPE (1986). With a view to have a fresh look on the problems of education, particularly with regard to the problem of academic burden on students, the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, set up a National Advisory Committee in March 1992 with the following terms of reference :

> To advise on the ways and means to reduce the load on school students at all levels particularly the young students, while improving quality of learning including capability for life-long self-learning and skill formulation.

Before starting its work, the Committee decided the parameters of its work and also the methodology for completing the task entrusted to it. With a view to keeping a national perspective in view, the Committee decided not to confine its work to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) or NCERT syllabi and textbooks but to take into account the textbooks used in different states and union territories also. Secondly, the Committee decided to base its recommendations on the data obtained through perception surveys, wide-ranging consultations with teachers and analysis of textbooks and other instructional materials. Thirdly, the Committee decided to look at the work of agencies/organisations doing innovative programmes.

The process of consultation was initiated with a meeting with a few faculty members of NCERT followed by meeting with teachers and principals working in different states at four places in the country, namely Delhi, Thiruvananthapuram, Pune and Calcutta. The consultation meetings were also held with voluntary organisations engaged in innovative programmes, syllabus and textbook writers, private publishers, and Chairpersons of Boards

of Secondary Education. Some members of the Committee organised meetings with parents, teachers and students at Bombay, Nasik Baroda and Calcutta. Surveys to ascertain the opinions of teachers and parents were conducted with the help of questionnaires at Bombay and Delhi.

To involve the whole country in this exercise of looking at the problems of school education from the perspective of mechanical load of studies on children, views and suggestions were invited from the students, teachers, parents and general public through advertisements in the newspapers and special announcements by All India Radio and Doordarshan. The Committee received more than 600 memoranda, letters and write-ups from students, teachers, parents and professionals interested in children's educations.

The wide-ranging consultations with knowledgeable people, analysis of the existing instructional materials and reactions of the teachers and students have enabled the Committee to understand the functioning of the present educational system which forms the basis of its recommendations.

In its work, the committee received cooperation from a large number of teachers, principals, syllabus and textbook writers, organisations, associations and departments. We gratefully acknowledge their contribution in our work. Particularly, we are grateful acknowledge their contribution in our work. Particularly, we are grateful to the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), Delhi, where the Committee's office was located, for providing all types of administrative support which tremendously facilitated our work. We are also thankful to NCERT and its Department of Social Sciences and Humanities for providing finances and other facilities for holding meetings of the Committee. The education departments of the states of Kerala, Maharashtra and West Bengal, and the NCERT Field Advisors in these states deserve appreciation for hosting the regional consultation meetings held at Thiruvananthapuram, Pune and Calcutta. Special thanks are due to voluntary organisations, Alla Rippu, Digantar and Eklavya for sharing their experiences with the members of the Committee. We express our sense of gratitude to the authorities of Doordarshan and Akashvani for making special announcement requesting the audience to send their views and suggestions to the Committee. Above all, we are extremely grateful to hundreds of parents, students and teachers who responded to our invitation and sent their views in writing, in many a times after holding meetings/workshops at their places.

Smt. Meenu Taneja, stenographer, SCERT, Delhi deserves a part for providing all sorts of secretarial assistance and for typing minutes, discussion papers and finally the report.

II

The Problem of Curriculum Load

1. Preamble

Our Committee was concerned with one major flaw of our system of education. This flaw can be identified briefly by saying that "a lot is taught, but little is learnt or understood". The problem manifests itself in a variety of ways. The most common and striking manifestation is the size of the school bag that children can be seen carrying from home to school and back to home everyday. A survey conducted in Delhi revealed that the weight of school bag, on an average, in primary classes in public schools is more than 4 kg while it is around 1 kg in MCD schools. Nevertheless the load we want to discuss is not only the physical load but the load of learning which is there for all children irrespective of the category or type of schools where they study. Eminent writer R.K. Narayan had drawn the country's attention to this daily sight by making a moving speech in the Rajya Sabha a few years ago. The situation has become worse over these yeas, with even pre-school children carrying a bag of books and notebooks. And the sight is not confined to metropolitan cities alone; it can be seen in small towns and the bigger villages too.

The weight of the school bag represents one dimension of the problem; another dimension can be seen in the child's daily routine. Right from early childhood, many children specially those belonging to middle classes, are made to slog through home work, tuitions and coaching classes of different kinds. Leisure has become a highly scarce commodity in the child's, especially the urban child's life. The child's innate nature and capacities have no opportunity to find expression in a daily routine which permits no time to play, to enjoy simple pleasures, and to explore the world.

2. Joyless Learning

It is hard to reconcile the rigorous 'academic' regime that is imposed on children from an early age with the widespread complaint made about the declining norms and performance of the formal system of education. Teachers routinely complain that they do not have enough time to explain anything in detail, or to organise activities in the classroom. 'Covering' the syllabus seems to have become an end in itself, unrelated to the philosophical and social aims of education. The manner in which the syllabus is 'covered' in the average classroom is by means of reading the prescribed textbook aloud, with occasional noting of salient points on the blackboard. Opportunities for children to carry out experiments,

excursions, or any kind of observations are scarce even in the best of schools. In the average schools especially the school located in a rural area, even routine teaching of the kind described above does not take place in many cases. In several states, school teachers encourage children to attend after-school tuition given for a fee while regular classroom teaching has become a tenuous ritual.

One message of this situation is that both the teacher and the child have lost the sense of joy in being involved in an educational process. Teaching and learning have both become a chore for a great number of teachers and children. Barring those studying in reputed or exceptional institutions, the majority of our school-going children are made to view learning at school as a boring, even unpleasant and bitter experience. They are daily socialised to look upon education as mainly a process of preparing for examinations. No other motivation seems to have any legitimacy.

The contribution that teachers make towards this kind of socialisation is especially worrisome. Trained teachers are expected to be aware of the wider aims of education; indeed, aims like development of the "child's total personality" are the shibboleths of teacher training institutions everywhere in the country. It appears that teachers feel they can do little to pursue such lofty aims in any realistic sense under the harsh circumstances created by factors like excessively large classes, a heavy syllabus, difficult textbooks, and so on. Moreover, majority of them neither know nor have the necessary skills to realise the goals of education. The recommended pupil-teacher ratio of forty to one is now more an exception than a norm, and in many parts of the country it is customary to have sixty to eighty students in one class. The Committee learnt that in many states senior secondary classes often have one hundred or more students, many of them spilling into the corridor. In the national capital, many 'model' secondary schools, Central Schools, and several elite 'public' schools have classes, including primary classes, with more than sixty students.

This kind of class-size understandably generates a feeling of helplessness among teachers, but why must teachers feel helpless in the face of curriculum-related problems such as heavy syllabi, poorly produced textbooks, etc.? Why don't they act in more vocal ways and involve themselves in curriculum reform? Apart from the fact that there are very few forums encouraging curriculum inquiry and reform in any systematic manner, it seems to be an entrenched attitude among teachers to regard all decisions about curriculum and textbooks as the responsibility of 'authorities'. The fact is that while the teachers' involvement in the preparation of syllabi and textbooks is verbalised as a matter of principle, in practice it takes the shape of token involvement of a handful of teachers. Most teachers have

reason. therefore, to think that they have little to say about the changes made from time to time in syllabi and textbooks. Even in such extreme cases where a textbook has a factual mistake, no complaints are made by teachers asking for correction of error. There is no established procedure or official forum to mobilise teacher vigilance and participation in curriculum improvement. On the contrary, there are cases where an individual teacher who complained about an error in a State-published textbook, was taken to task. Even if such cases can be described as rare or exceptionally unfortunate, they explain why the majority of teachers intuitively feel that it is not their business to critically examine the syllabus and texts they teach.

3. Examination System

Much has been written by various official committees on the ills of our examination system. The major, well-understood defect of the examination system is that it focuses on children's ability to reproduce information to the exclusion of the ability to apply concepts and information on unfamiliar, new problems, or simply to think. The public examinations taken after Classes X and XII have assumed the importance of major events which have a set character or culture of their own. The awe they generate, the responses they trigger, and the kind of preparation they demand have all got so entrenched into the social lore that minor improvements in the style of question papers do not make difference to the dominant influence that the examination system has on the processes of learning and teaching. The influence is so strong that schools start holding a formal written examination several years prior to Class X indeed, in the primary classes in many parts of the country. And children receive the message almost as soon as they start attending school that the only thing which matters here is one's performance in the examination.

Both the teacher and the parents constantly reinforce the fear of examination and the need to prepare for it in the only manner that seems practical, namely, by memorising a whole lot of information from the textbooks and guidebooks. Educated parents, who have themselves gone through examinations, and the uneducated parents, whose knowledge of the examination system is based on social lore, share the belief that what really matters in education is the score one gets in the final examination. This belief is undoubtedly rooted in social or market reality. Percentage of marks obtained in the high school, higher secondary, or BA/B.Sc examinations is what ultimately matters in determining a student's chance of being called for an interview for admission to a university or for employment. Since the examination score is what a candidate carries with him or her as the key authoritative record of school or college performance, higher level institutions or employing agencies

understandable rely on it. It is a process in which no beginning or end can be meaningfully established. Changing the system of examination in a structural or even in a merely procedural sense does not require that a source outcome or cause-effect relationship be established; yet, the examination system goes on, apparently with the help of energies or rationales located in the system of education itself.

4. Textbook as the 'Truth'

The pervasive effects of the examination system can be seen in the style and content of textbooks and not just guidebooks which are specifically manufactured to help children pass an examination. If 'facts' or 'information' constitute the main burden of an examination, the same is true of textbooks. Barring exceptions, our textbooks appear to have been written primarily to convey information or 'facts', rather than to make children think and explore. Over the years some attempts have been made to incorporate a certain amount of reflective writing in textbooks. Such writing is so exceptional that its examples can be spotted and named without difficulty. 'How leaves are designed' in a Class VIII textbook is one such piece of writing*. It stands out from among the thousands of pages of textbooks in different subjects that our teachers and children have to go through painstakingly so that they can retain the information recorded in those pages in a highly compressed, usually abstruse manner. The more common style used in the textbooks is exemplified by passages of the following kind:**

> The term pH is defined as the negative logarithm to the base 10 of the hydrogen ion concentration expressed in gram ions per litre or moles per litre. (Class X)
>
> Fatty acids are slowly hydrolysed during digestion in the small intestine to form glycero and fatty acids through the enzyme action of lipase which is secreted by the pancreas. (Class X)
>
> We find that while dividing a decimal by a multiple of 10,000 or 1,000, we first move the decimal point to the left as many places as there are zeros in the number and then divide the resulting decimal by the second factor of the divisor. (Class V)

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* Class VIII science textbook prepared by NCERT

** We have decided to cite such examples without giving a reference in order to avoid the impression that we are criticising certain specific titles, authors, publishers or organisations. Our aim is to highlight certain common tendencies in the style of textbook writing.

The problem of readability in textbooks becomes grim in the context of a system which often leaves the child with no resource other than the prescribed textbook. The extent to which the child can rely on a teacher to elucidate tersely written text material is dependent on the quality of teachers, their training, and their accountability. From what impression the Committee could form about these aspects of the system, it seems valid to say that the child is very often helpless in the face of a style of teaching that is far from being interactive, let alone the absence or irregular presence of teachers. (And we are not saying that the teachers alone are responsible for the kind of teaching that takes place daily in lakhs of classrooms that have hardly any equipment and often not even a proper means of ventilation or lighting.) Under the circumstances that are widely prevalent in our country, a child is more likely than not to mug up the definition of 'pH'quoted above without grasping it. And mugging does get the child through the examination!

Textbooks and guidebooks form a tight nexus. In some parts of the country children are compelled to buy the guidebook (or 'key') along with the textbook. The economic and business aspects of this pairing apart, the academic function of the textbook has become quite dubious indeed. It is *not* perceived as one of the resources for learning about a subject, but as the *only* authoritative resource. This kind of sanctity distorts what useful purpose the textbook could serve Teachers see it as a body of 'truths' which children must learn by heart. This perception and urge to 'cover' the chapters of the prescribed textbook, turn all knowledge into a load to be borne by the child's memory.

The distance between the child's everyday life and the content of the textbook further accentuates the transformation of knowledge into a load. We are not talking here about advanced science or mathematics, but about elementary science, social studies, language and arithmetic. Textbooks treat these subjects in a manner that leads to alienation of knowledge from the child's world. This tragic phenomenon takes different forms in different subjects in natural sciences, it takes the form of esotericisation of the subject. In the social sciences it becomes manifest in the coating of every inquiry in didacticism, suggestive of one preferred answer to every question. A common source of alienation of subject-matter from the children's perspective and life is the presentation of the life-style and world view of the urban well-off class. This life-style is characterised by access to concrete housing, modern kitchens, electrical gadgets, and so on. Of course there is nothing 'wrong' with this life-style; but the symbolisation of this life-style in every illustration and description that concerns a child's home life alienates millions of children who live in houses with traditional kitchens, or with no separate kitchens. Objects of daily use in common Indian homes, such as a broom or clay pitcher, are seldom seen in textbooks.

One wonders whether the common Indian broom, which could be a versatile resource for learning about the social and physical environment, is perceived by our textbook writers and illustrators with a sense of stigma or as a symbol of backwardness. Or could it be that it is simply too common to be seen as being of any use in an educational material? Neither of the two guesses is totally irrelevant in view of the complete absence of common objects of ordinary Indian life in the world depicted in textbooks.

The most common message that children get from the textbooks is that the life ordinary people live is 'wrong' or irrational. And this kind of didactic rejection does not apply to non-middle class life alone. All simple joys of childhood are also criticised. No better example of this can be given than the message conveyed in a Class V exercise which asks children to decide whether the statement 'Road is also a playground' is correct or wrong. The right response is that this statement is 'wrong', the message of the lesson being that playing on the street can be dangerous. This message is of course true in a normative sense, but it ignores the reality of the overwhelming majority of urban children who have no other space except the street to play. The moot point is not the scarcity of space, but rather the need to accept the universally valid fact that children enjoy playing on the street. This joy must be respected in a text written from a child-centred point of view. To argue that a respectful acknowledgment of this joy will amount to sanctioning carelessness, or to say that children must be warned about the risks of playing on the street is to trivialise the issue. Every child who plays on the street fully knows the dangers involved in it. Science textbooks need not waste valuable pages on such trivial preaching which is precisely what they do throughout the elementary classes in place of using these golden years of childhood to arouse curiosity about things and ideas.

5. Language Textbooks

We hardly need to assert that our textbooks are not written from the child's viewpoint. Neither the mode of communication, nor the selection of objects depicted, nor the language conveys the centrality of the child in the world constructed by the text. This last dimension of language deserves some elaboration. The vocabulary and syntax used in the textbooks in the Hindi region were critically referred to by a number of individuals and groups whom the Committee met during the course of its deliberations. Not just the textbooks used for the teaching of the natural and th e social sciences, but even the textbook used for the teaching of the mother tongue are written in such stylised diction and sentence-structure, that children cannot be expected to see the language used in them in their own. Words, expressions and nuances commonly used by children and others in their milieu are all

absent from textbooks. So is humour. An artificial, sophisticated style dominates textbook lessons, reinforcing the tradition of distancing knowledge from life. The language used in textbooks, thus, deepens the sense of 'burden' attached to all school-related knowledge.

6. Observation Discouraged

A highly disturbing tendency we discovered in text writing, which exacerbates the problem we are discussing, is that of treating pictures as substitutes for experience. We found textbooks asking children to observe a picture of the object under study rather than asking children and the teacher to go out and observe the object itself in nature. For example, a Class V science text says : 'Look at the picture of a cactus plant. Observe the thick green structure....' Such an instruction pre-empts what motivation there may be in a teacher or child to bring an actual cactus plant to the class or to grow one. The most painful example of this phenomenon brought to our attention was one in which a private publisher claimed that he had made the teacher's task 'easier' by turning an official 'Teacher's Guide', which suggests that the teacher should take children outside the school and identify some common birds, into a text where the pictures of all the common birds with with their names were provided for ready use. This case is especially painful as it shows how even a specific instruction given in a Teacher's Guide (Teacher's Guides are themselves rare; and in subjects in which they have been prepared in certain states, circulation has not been satisfactorily looked after) to encourage teachers to extend the lesson beyond the four walls of the classroom is co-opted within the dominant, traditional approach of teaching everything verbally from a textbook. Over the recent years, some textbooks have adopted the vocabulary of observation and exploration or discovery as a necessary part of science teaching, but even here, virtually all commands for observation conclude with statements about what will be seen if an observation is actually made, thereby making it unnecessary for the teacher and children to find an object and actually observe it.

7. Structure of Syllabus

The absence of the child's viewpoint is also reflected in the organisation of syllabi in different subjects. We received a large number of complaints from parents as well as teachers that the content of syllabi lacks an overall organisation or coherence. Gaps in the syllabi between the lower and the Higher Secondary stages are as common as repetitions of the same content. These weaknesses of organisation apparently lead to memorisation and poor comprehension, both exacerbating the sense of curriculum load. Gaps between the secondary and the senior secondary stages seem to be glaring in the science syllabi. When students come to Class XI, they often find themselves without a clue even if they

have done well in Class X. The level of abstraction attempted in the senior secondary stage science syllabi and textbooks,especially the physics textbooks, represents a jump in many topics. Apparently, those preparing the senior secondary syllabi and texts lacked adequate familiarity with the syllabi and text used in the earlier classes. In fact, they had no occasion to interact with the persons involved in the preparation of syllabi and textbooks for secondary classes (IX and X).

Repetitions of concepts and information also leads to boredom and a sense of load. The need to repeat is rooted in the flawed structure of syllabi. In the primary classes, ideas and information are presented in a synoptic manner, making the text look deceptively simple. In the later classes, the same ideas are repeated, with some elaboration which does not prevent the child from viewing the ideas as trivialised by repetition. In the study of nutrition and health, for example, virtually the same ideas and information are given in the syllabi and texts of Classes III, IV, V, VII and X. Even the questions given at the end of the lessons in the texts are almost of the same kind. Apparently, the structure of syllabi is not carefully thought out. Indeed, our Committee was told by senior experts, who have been involved in syllabus and textbook preparation, that experts working on the syllabus of different levels (secondary and senior secondary) had no contact with each other. Reference to such procedural lapses,however, is not necessary to explain the tendency towards repetition that is embedded in the structure of the syllabus and has been reinforced by tradition.

History is the most clear case in point. Although it forms one part of the subject called social sciences, it offers a prime example of curriculum load. Despite many changes that have come about in the style of history texts, the history syllabus continues to be a frustrating and meaningless experience for children. The aim of teaching history is defeated because children are not enabled to relate to their own heritage. Traditionally, it requires children to form an overall picture of the 'whole' if India's known history, from ancient to modern times, during the three years from Classes VI to VIII. Since the texts for these classes are required to cover such a vast span, the density of these texts becomes extremely high which means that historical time is greatly compressed, i.e. a few sentences are deemed to 'cover' several decades. The synoptic style forces the child into 'accepting' whatever is narrated. There aren't enough details that a child could use to work out some kind of argument or interpretation, but the sheer volume of text (which is suppose to 'cover' 'all' of India's history in three years) forces the child (and the teacher) to 'take in' as much text as possible without 'wasting' time in studying or constructing an argument.

This common problem of the history syllabus apart, we found that the content of the history syllabus in certain states was conceived as a densely packed box of informations. The syllabus of history in West Bengal illustrates this tendency in tragically exaggerated proportions. For example in Class VIII, children are required to learn 17 topics in all which are :

> 1. Modern age; 2. Renaissance in Europe; 3. Europeans widen the world; 4. Reformation in Europe; 5. The English Revolution in the 17th century; 6. India; 7. Foundation and growth of the British power in India till 1857 in short narrative form; 8. World in the 18th century; 9. Europe since 1815; 10. (a) Developments in China till 1911; (b) Rise of Japan as a great power till 1914; 11. India under the crown 1858-1914; 12. The First World War; 13. The Bolshevik Revolution; 14. Europe 1919-1939; 15. The Second World War; 16. India 1919-1947; 17. (a) Revolution in China 1911-1949 (b) Revolution in South East Asia after 1945; (c) Spread of nationalism and unrest in subject countries during the Second World War.

The entire syllabus is to be covered in 135 pages of a text, according to the instruction given in the syllabus itself. Apparently, the syllabus makers believe that compression of information in terms of page-space does not affect the readability, let alone comprehensibility, of a text.

8. Teaching Everything

The problem of densely packed syllabi like this one cuts across disciplines. In geography, it takes the form of all the continents being 'covered' under regional geography between Classes VI and VIII. In mathematics and the natural sciences, the packing of details makes any kind of learning with understanding, leave alone enjoyment, virtually impossible. Numerous examples could be given from these disciplines to illustrate the problem. In one page of a Class VII science textbook we find all these items 'covered' : definition of time period, how to find the number of oscillations per second, definition of frequency, 'Hertz' unit of frequency, the ideas that vibrations have amplitude and frequency, definitions of these, the concept of sound as vibration, loudness and pitch, and finally frequency/pitch and its relation to speed of rotation and tension. We are not citing this example as a specific case to be looked into, but as evidence of a deeply rooted tendency, rather an ideology, which impels syllabus and textbook planners to include 'everything' without any regard for children's ability at different ages to learn and the time available in an average school for teaching a subject. Class XI and XII textbooks of science, prepared recently with a view apparently to implement the National Education Policy, have been widely criticised

on these scores. Children studying science subjects have been asked by their teachers to look for private tutors, the rationale being that there may not be enough time in the class to cover the syllabus, and some of the syllabus being beyond the capacities of the teacher. The terse content of these texts was apparently edited and reviewed in some haste, we were informed, due to constraints of time while sending the manuscripts for publication. Perhaps it can be argued that these textbooks are liked by the highly motivated and the brightest among the students and teachers. If this indeed in the case, it gives all the more reason to worry about the fate of the overwhelming majority of children studying in ordinary schools.

In mathematics, the situation seems to be grim right from the start of the child's school carrier. Far too many abstractions are introduced all at once with scant attention paid to well-known facts about development of mathematical thinking in children. To begin with,children are expected to handle arithmetical operations on a very large numbers early. In Class I, they are supposed to go up to 100 (compared to this a British child in this class spends the whole year working with numbers up to 20), in Class II up to 1000, in Class III, up to 10,000, in Class IV up to a million, and in class V up to a crore. Even though the conservation of volume and weight are known to emerge in the child's mind after the conservation of length is fully established, all three are introduced simultaneously (usually in one unit of study) at the young age of seven or eight years, with the expectation that children will compute with standard units. Concrete operational thought, which is characteristic of elementary school children, demands manipulation of objects and activities using a variety of materials (to enable 'elaboration' of a concept, i.e. its dislocation from any one material or object). Such activities become impossible to organise under a curriculum which 'progresses' so swiftly from concept to concept. Also, children of this stage find proportional reasoning difficult yet percentage and ratio are introduced in Classes IV and V. In the middle and higher classes, the tendency to follow the logic of the discipline of mathematics rather than psychology of learning as the basic of the curriculum becomes even more dominant. Mathematics, thus, acquires the image of an esoteric discipline which has little application in the real life of the child.

9. Starting Early

The general problems of curriculum conceptualisation that we have discussed in this part of our report can all be seen reflected in the emerging pre-school sector of the education system. Despite official stipulations that no textbooks be used at this stage, pre-school teachers and parents in the urban centre are feeling 'compelled' to burden the

young child with textbooks and the formal learning they represent. The sense of compulsion comes from a widespread feeling that unless academic training of a child starts early, he or she cannot cope with the fast-paced pedagogy and the competitive ethos of the later school years. The pernicious grip of this false argument manifests itself in absurd, and of course deeply harmful, practices in pre-schools and primary schools, such as early emphasis on shapely drawing, writing, and memorising information. Intrinsic motivation and the child's natural abilities are being smothered at a scale so vast that it cannot be correctly estimated. Our national commitment to the development of human resource is daily challenged in our nurseries and primary schools.

10. Not Just an Urban Problem

The problem we have tried to identify in this part of the report is not confined to urban areas as some people think. It is deeply relevant to children's education in rural India although their, more basic problems - such as abysmally pure condition of schools, absenteeism among teachers etc. may cloud the problem curriculum load. In our view, the problem of high drop-out rate, which has rightly pre-occupied our policy-makers for a long time, has one of its origins in the curriculum scenario we have portrayed. A curriculum policy that takes away the elements of joy and inquiry from learning obviously contributes to the rate at which children leave school in early years, undoubtedly under the force of economic and social circumstances. As we have indicated earlier, symbolic tilt towards an urban, middle class way of life in text books can also be expected to make the rural child's association with his or her experience at school thin and brittle. Quality of teachers and the equipment available to them also make an impact on the tenuous and fragile link that the first-generation learner in many parts of rural India tries to establish with the system of education.

III

Roots of the Problem

1. Knowledge vs. Information

In our discussion with people directly involved in syllabi and textbook preparation all over the country, we found one argument repeated over and over again as the main justification for the phenomenon we have described in Chapter II. The argument was that

India has to catch up with the developed countries where an explosion of knowledge has occurred; therefore, our children must learn a lot more than they used to, which means that new topics, new concepts and information have to be added to the syllabi and textbooks. This argument seems to be so widespread and tenacious that those who believe in it use it as an undebatable 'given'. When it is pointed out to them that children of the so-called developed countries learn certain concepts a lot later than our children do (for example, in chemistry, the concept of valency is now taught in our schools in Class VII whereas European children do not hear about it till they are in Class IX), supporters of the 'explosion of knowledge' argument simply say that the European societies are already way ahead of us, so they can afford to instruct their children at a relaxed pace. In geography, when it is pointed out that European and North American children do not have to study every continent (only selected countries are intensively studied instead), the answer given is that in Western societies children have access to many resources of learning outside the school whereas the majority of our children are dependent on the school for getting to know about the world. The idea entrenched in the ` explosion of knowledge' theory finds similar justifications for the present state of syllabi and texts in other school subjects.

The notion that there has been an explosion of knowledge apparently treats knowledge and information as synonymous. It is true that the twentieth century has been a period of massive expansion in human capacity to find new facts and to store them, but the concepts and theories that assist in the generation and organisation of information can hardly be said to have multiplied at an 'explosive' rate. (It is another matter that in an ex-colonial society it often looks as if all new 'knowledge' is being produced by 'others' and our job is simply to 'learn' and consume this knowledge.) Also, the important thing in children's education ought to be concept-formation and growth of capacity for theory-building, rather than possession of vast amounts of information. The 'explosion of knowledge' idea prevents us from appreciating that learning in childhood is not the same thing as storing information about different subjects. If we say that a child has knowledge of phenomenon 'x', we can anticipate three possible ways in which this statement will be interpreted:

i) the child has been given information about phenomenon 'x';

ii) the child can reproduce information about phenomenon 'x';

iii) the child has understood phenomenon 'x' and he or she can apply this understanding on other phenomena.

It is mostly the first two meanings that hold in the context of formal education in our cou ntry, the first being used as a basis for the second. 'Understanding' is often confused with 'acquisition of facts'.

Such a confusion leads to the neglect of 'understanding' as an aim of education. It would be correct to say that this neglect of understanding has gone so far and deep in our education system that a child can pass almost any examination without any understanding of the phenomena he or she has been told about in books or in the classroom. To a great extend, this paradoxical situation can be attributed to the excessive emphasis placed in our syllabi and textbooks on information or 'names' of things. Children have no choice but to memorise all 'names' in order to 'prove' at an examination that they have 'understood' a phenomenon. Despite all kinds of claims that examinations have been reformed, they continue to focus on testing the possession of 'correct information' (i.e. the names of things, definitions, examples etc.). Recall-type questions outnumber the questions that test the child's capacity to speculate, evaluate or judge, and to apply an idea in an unfamiliar context. Board examinations, taken at the end of Class X and Class XII have remained rigid, bureaucratic and essentially uneducative (as the child never sees why he or she was marked in a certain way), and mainly a sources of awe because of the amount of information they demand in a manner ready for instant recall. Such a system obviously influences the test and annual examinations taken by schools in earlier classes as well as the daily pedagogy practiced in classrooms. The fact that entrance test of prestigious institutions like Indian Institute of Technology have less focus on recall (although they put a premium on speed) is ignored, and even these tests are cited for justifying the excessively large syllabi in certain subjects in the senior secondary classes.

2. Isolation of Experts from Classroom realities:

The new topics and information put into the syllabus and textbooks at the time of each successive revisions are usually added at the behest of experts of different subjects. These experts are university-level teachers sometimes including individuals of high stature in the research world. Their involvement in the writing or revision of textbooks is indeed appreciable but they have little exposure to children in classroom situations. Their exposure to school teachers is also confined to interaction with the few teachers who are selected as members of syllabus and textbook committees. Several factors, such as the difference of social and official status, make it difficult for school teachers serving on these committees to freely put across their feelings and experiences regarding the teachability of a syllabus or the style of a textbook.

Teachability can be defined as the quotient of content that an average teacher can put across at a comfortable pace in a thirty five minute school period. If our textbooks were to be judged in the light of this criterion, most of them, espectially in the sciences, mathematics, and the social sciences, would appear as unteachable. The amount of information and concept-load they present are far in excess of the amount that can be put across in any meaningful way in thirty-five minute period allotted for a school subject in one academic session. It appears that no rigorous count, using the thirty-five minute as a unit, of the total teaching time available for a subject in any year is used as a basis for determining syllabus and text content. Indeed, the syllabi and textbooks are evidence to say that the experts involved in preparing them have little knowledge of school and classroom realities. This limitation of the experts extends to their possible ignorance of children and of the processes that children use for learning new ideas. Textbooks simply do not reflect the versatile search of the ordinary child for clues to make sense of natural or social phenomena. Typically school texts proceed in a linear fashioin, adding bits of information in, and concepts as they go along. The linear fashion they follow often spill across school years, i.e. something left of in Class VII is picked up again in Class IX, and so on. Very seldom is an effort made to construct knowledge-patterns in a non-linear ways.

We feel that if experts involve in the preparation of syllabi and textbooks have the opportunity to work with children and their teachers, they would have a chance to develop some insight into children's learning strategies. This would have helped them to develop the ability to emulate such strategies in script-writing for textbooks. Interaction with children might enable experts to develop a certain amount of sensitivity towards the living and versatile approaches used by children. Also, in the course of such interaction, the experts might also perceive the need to equip themselves with knowledge of children's psychology, particularly the psychology of learning, before venturing out on the task of textbook preparation. This, of course, implies that the job of syllabus and textbook preparation be perceived as a serious professional activity, not as a part-time obligation.

3. Centralised Character

In the specific context of the curriculum planning and textbook production, we feel, the system invites a number of problems upon itself on account of being unnecessarily centralised. It seems there is a widespread misconception which justifies centralisation in these matters. This misconception treats the content of syllabuys and textbook as synonymous with learning and testing norms. On the basis of this confusion, it is argued that syllabi and textbooks should be the same all over a state, even all over the country,

in order to ensure uniformity of standards. This kind of argument completely overlooks the lopsided manner in which standards are set under the present system by an examination system which focuses on information rather than on skills and capacity to apply skills. Indeed, there is a 'catch 22' situation; the examination system ignores skills, concentrating on memorised information, definitions and descriptions; therefore, syllabus and textbooks, which cannot do justice to diversify milieux, varying needs and facilities, become necessary to ensure that all children 'know' the same 'facts'.

The circular argument has created a situation in which curriculum and textbook preparation is confined to the state capitals and New Delhi. At regional and local levels, teachers do not perceive curriculum development and preparation of educational materials as part of their job. And indeed, the way these tasks have been defined and traditionally carried out in our country, they are not the teacher's job. The teacher sees his or her role as one of elucidating whatever content of knowledge is prescribed in the syllabus. At the primary and lower and secondary stages, teachers come to know the syllabus through the textbooks which acts as the *de facto* syllabus. 'Covering' the syllabus means 'covering' or finishing the textbook. This kind of perception results in the confinement of classroom life a narrow orbit. Classroom knowledge assumes totall independence from the child's own experience and knowledge of the world. *As a consequence of this de-coupling, children begin to compartmentalise knowledge into two categories; that which has currency in school and classroom, and the other which has uses and relevance outside the school.* Necessarily, the knowledge in the first category ceases to have any 'life' and becomes increasingly ritualistic and burdensome. Teachers also carry the same kind of categorisation in their mind; very few of them are able to help the child make bridges between what is learnt at school and what is required to face real-life situations. One teacher who tried to make such a bridge in a lesson about letter-writing was asked by a Class VI child: "Madam, shall we write it the way we write at home or in the school way?"

While several factors, including those related to the training of teachers, can be held responsible for this aspect of situation, we feel that the centralised structures of syllabus and textbook preparation set the tone. Howsoever 'good' a textbook produced at central level may be of professional standard, it can not reflect the subtler nuances of life in a village of Kashmir or Assam. Adaptation to local conditions is indeed officially carried out to match the content of textbooks with local conditions, but it does not change the basic character of a textbook. Adaptation of syllabi to local conditions is even less effectively possible.

4. Convention of 'Teaching the Text'

Lack of adequate opportunities for teachers to participate in the prcesses of syllabus and textbook preparation is a major factor indirectly responsible for the problem of unrealistic syllabi or curriculum load. Teachers perform a more direct role in the context of this problem by perceiving the context of the textbook as a rigid boundary or definer of their work in the classroom. Boredom is the inevitable outcome when a tersely written textbook is taught in a rigid, mechanical manner. Poor grasp among teachers of their role as translators of the curriculum into classroom activity is a widely prevalent characteristic of our system. We are citing this as a relevant aspect of the phenomenon of curriculum load *without* suggesting that there is a vicious circle here, i.e. teaching cannot improve unless there are better textbooks, etc. We feel that strategies to improve textbook writing and production must work parallel to strategies for improvement in teacher training and for creating an ethos in which teachers would feel motivated to take an academic interest in their work. The perception that a teacher can do little in the classroom that is different from what the textbook says is part of historical legacy. This legacy must be transcended and the self-perception rooted in it must be changed. Teacher training institutions and the mass media, both can assist in making this change possible.

In the context of constructing a new self-image of the teacher pre-service training is a key but elusive area of reform. Past attempts to improve teacher training programmes and institutions have met with rather limited success. By and large, teacher training continues to be isolated from mainstream academic areas related to education. Inservice training too in most places, has assumed the character of a ritual devoid of academic substance or the capacity to stimulate. The current effort to provide statutory status to the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) (As envisaged in the National Education Policy) may perhaps make some impact on the weak training that is generally available in the country to people who want to work with children especially young children.

Administrative and legal concern needs to be applied to several training programmes running as commercial success stories, such as those offering a degree by correspondance. Similarly, there is need to examine existing policies with regard to nursery teacher training courses and institutions. Indeed, what is required is a review of the overall training policy which permits the traditional bifurcation of degree programme from non-degree programmes and their application to different stages of school education. We hope that after acquiring statutory status, the NCTE will work out a comprehensive training programme to cover all stages of schooling, ending the bifurcation we have mentioned above. Such a programme

will have to be radically different from the present one which are anchored in the culture of late nineteenth century normal schools, and are sadly lacking both in perspective and means to equip teachers with the capacity to understand children and their learning processes in a professional manner.

5. Competition-based Social Ethos

Our social ethos, particularly in the urban areas, are now fully entrenched in the competitive spirit which is fast becoming our way of life. The desire to catch up with the industrially developed countries has given it further impetus. Rising aspirations of people in all sections of the society and the growing realisation that education is an important instrument to fulfil their aspirations have resulted in a craze for admission to English-medium schools which start imparting formal education too early in the child's life.

The educated sections of the society believe that command over English is the key to upward mobility in social life. This has led to unprecedented growth in the number of private schools where English is not only taught as a subject but is also used as a medium of education in all subjects right from Class I. It is a well-known fact that young children studying in English-medium schools mug up the content of science and social sciences without understanding. It is an accepted principle or pedagogy that whatever is memorised without understanding proves burdensome for children. Any language other than the mother tongue of the child, if used as medium of instruction, is a big source of academic burden on children. Most of the parents in urban and semi-urban areas do not realise it, in fact they try to promote the use of English as medium of education. Unfortunately, instead of resisting pressure of the competitive spirit prevalent in the society or directing in appropriate channels, our educational system has succumbed to it. The most conspicious manifestations of this phenomenon in education area upgradation of content of syllabus by advancing introduction of many topics and subjects in utter disregard of the process of maturation. The entrance test for admission to professional courses like engineering and medicine have influence in the objectives, content and methodology of education in many ways. The 'quiz culture' which has taken roots in education, can be attributed to these tests.

With a view to provide incentives to 'high achievers' and 'talented' in different fields, high profile competitions are organised by different departments and institutions in the name of 'talent search', which at the most provide moments of brief glory to the winners but damage the 'ego-strength' of numerous others who participate in the contests at the cost of lesuirely pursuit of knowledge at their own pace and in their own ways. The

experience of the ignominy of failure on the part of millions of children have long term deleterious effect on the personality of the individual and the matrix of society. It would be better to reward group performance so as to convey the message to everyone that excellence in group work rather than individual effort should be the target.

6. Absence of Academic Ethos

Adequate time, staff, accommodation, and its maintenance funds, pedagogical equipment, playground are essential pre-requisites for effective curriculum transactions but, unfortunately, an overwhelming majority of schools do not have even the minimum essential facilities. It is a matter of great concern that the number of teachers with a sense of commitment is gradually shrinking while cynicism, feelings of helplessness and hopelessness are on the rise. Lack of adequate infrastructural facilities, rigid administrative structures and growing cynicism are responsible for the absence of academic ethos in majority of schools.

The methods of teaching used by majority of teachers are devoid of any type of challenge for the students. Transmission of information rather than experimentation or exploration or observation characterises the teaching-learning process in most of the classrooms. We have no reason to believe that there is something wrong with our children, rural or urban. Luckily they have not compartmentalised knowledge; they are interested in seeking understanding rather than mere information. As they are educated by us while they grow older, freshness goes away as does romance and curiosity. Before anything is learnt they want to find out why they need to know. Must we, in the name of so-called 'proper education' go on committing the murder of their innate desire to discover to learn on their own?

Children are not allowed to observe and explore natural phenomena, but at the same time they are also not provided opportunity to explore the world of books. The concept of a library as a readily available resource for learning simply does not exist in most schools. Even those rare schools that do happen to have a library stock little more than copies of prescribed textbooks, often stored behind locked doors. If children are to be prepared for experiencing the beauty and nature and the fascination of ideas without feeling the curricular load, priority has to be given to developing school libraries and their adequate and appropriate utilisation.

Similarly science laboratory even in the few cases where they are adequately equipped are not used for experimentation and discovery. A laboratory is not perceived as a place where children can conduct even those experiments which are not prescribed in their

syllabi and come out with novel observations that need exploratory fameworks. The main purpose of a laboratory programme is to visualise children's natual talents and develop their ability to learn to observation and exploration. Over-regimentation of prescribed experiments with the entire emphasis on getting the final result, is contrary to this spirit. Laboratories should be conceived as exploratories and school should have the freedom to structure experiments to suit the needs of their children.

IV

Recommendations

We have come tlo the conclusion that the problem of the load on school children does not arise only from over-enthusiastic curriculum designers, or poorly equipped teachers, or school administators, or book publishers, or district, state or central educational authorities. Yes, what all these groups, agencies and administrators do can exacerbate or alleviate the problem. But, there is a deeper malaise in our society, which impacts our young children. If we continue to value a few elite qualifications far more than real competence for doing useful things in life, and if the economic distance, between those who can manage to cross some academic hurdles and those who can't, continues to widen, we will probably continue to spend our effort in designing hurdles instead of opportunities for children to learn with joy. As the body of the Report analyses, a major problem is connected with the notions of ` knowledge explosion' and the ` catching up' syndrome. We believe that these problems cannot be fully addressed through easily manageable administrative actions. They need wider discussions because they are centrally connected with images of our civilization, self-esteem and societal goals. Such a wide discussion can come about through publication of this Report, and through a set of seminars, meetings and media discussions. Academics, thinkers, need to pour over this basic problem.

The question of medium of instruction, particularly in early life, will not be fully resolved till the time our dominant and externally connected sections of society continue to give more importance to elementary graces in a foreign language, than to intimate connections with the 'vernacular' knowledge which our children gain during every week of their growing up before they go to school. It is because of this reason that we have restrained ourselves from repeating the recommendation that mother tongue alone should be the medium of instruction at the primary stage.

1. A number of organisations and departments organise competitions at district, state and national level for students in various fields such as school subjects, exhibitions, essay writing, elocution, etc. Perhaps the spirit behind these activities is to recognise and reward the talent in diverse fields. But, unfortunately this tends to produce somewhat unhealthy singling out of people for their brief moment of glory. Competitions where individual achievement is rewarded need to be discouraged since they deprive children of joyful learning. However, group activities and group achievements must be encouraged and rewarded to give a boost to cooperative learning in schools.

2.(a) The process of curriculum-framing and preparation of textbooks of decentralised so as to increase teachers' involvement in these tasks. Decentralisation should mean greater autonomy, within state-level apparatus, to district-level boards or other relevant authority, and to heads of schools and classroom teachers to deve' op curricular materials on their own, best suited to the needs of local environment. All the schools be encouraged to innovate in all aspects of curriculum, including choice of textbooks and other materials.

(b) Voluntary organisations with a specific commitment to pedagogical innovations within the formal or non-formal system be provided greater freedom and support in development of curriculum, textbooks and teacher training. A suitable and adequate mechanism be evolved for wider dissemination of the experiences of such organisations.

(c) We endorse the idea of setting up education committees at village, block and district level to undertake kplanning and supervision of schools under their jurisdiction.

(d) Sufficient contingency amount (not less than 10 per cent of the total salary bill of the school) be placed at the disposal of heads of schools for purchase, repair and replacement of pedagogical equipment.

3. The culture of writing textbooks be changed so as to involve a much large number of teachers in the preparation of textbooks. The scientists and experts in various disciplines may be associated with the preparation of textboooks as consulstants and not as writers of the books. Initiative in this regard should rest with groups of enlightened and innovative teachers who should be provided training in book writing.

4. At least three parallel systems of school education (syllabus, textbooks and examination) are running concurrently in different states. In each state majority of schools are affiliated to the State Board of Education while a few are affiliated to either CBSE or Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE). The schools affiliated to CBSE in the states other than Delhi enjoy the prestige of being elite schools. The CBSE

curriculum becomes a trend-setter for the State Boards leading to heavier curriculum for majority of children. Therefore, the committee recommends that jurisdiction of CBSE be restricted to Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas and all other schools be affiliated to the respective State Boards.

5.(a) Appropriate legislative and administrative measures be adopted to regulate the opening and functioning of early childhood education institutions (pre-schools). Norms regarding accommodation, staff, apparatuses, play material be laid down for the recognitioin of these schools. It should be ensured that these institutions do not perpetrate violence on young children by inflicting a heavy dose of 'over-education' in the form of formal teaching of Reading, Writing and Numbers. The practice of holding tests and interviews for admission to nursery class be abolished.

(b) Norms for granting recognition to private schools be made more stringent. This will prove conducive for improving the quality of learning on the one hand and arrest growing commercialisation on the other. The norms, thus developed, be made uniformly applicable to all schools including the state-run institutions.

6. There is no jurisdiction for torturing the young children by compelling them to carry very heavy bags of books everyday to schools. Textbooks should be treated as school property and thus, there should be no need for children to purchase the books individually and carry them daily to homes. A separate time-table for the assignment of home work and for the use of textbooks and notebooks be prepared by the school and be made known to the children in advance.

7. The nature and character of homework needs a radical change. In the primary classes, children should not be given by homework, save for extensioin of explorations in the home environment. In the upper primary and secondary classes, homework, where necessary, should be non-textual, and textbooks, when needed for work at home should be made available on a rotation basis.

8. The existing norm for teacher-pupil ratio (i.e. 1:40) should be enforced and an attempt should be made to reduce this to 1:30, at least in the primary classes, as a basis for future educational planning.

9. Greater use of the electronic media be made for the creation of a child-centred social ethos in the country. A regular television programme addressed to students, teachers and parents and possibly called 'Shiksha Darshan' be launched, along the lines of the 'Krishi Darshan' programme.

10.(a) Inadequate programme of teacher preparation leads to unsatisfactory quality of learning in schools. The B.Ed. programme should offer the possibility of specialisation in secondary or elementary or nursery education. The duration of the programme should either be one year after gradua tion or three-four years after higher secondary. The content of the programme should be restructured to ensure its relevance to the changing needs of school education and to make it more practicum-centred. The emphasis in these programmes should be on enabling the trainees to acquire the ability for self learning and independent thinking. Pre-service teacher education programme, being a professional course, has to be a rigorous, thorough and intensive programme. Therefore, B.Ed. degree courses by correspondence be derecognised.

(b) The continuing education of teachers must be institutionalised. The organisation of inservice education programmes and other activities aimed at professional growth of teachers be systematically designed and conducted imaginatively.

11. The public examinations taken at the end of Class X and XII be reviewed with a view to ensure replacement of thew prevailing text-based and 'quiz type' questioning by the concept-based questioning. This single reform is sufficient to improve the quality of learning and save the children from the tyranny of memorisation.

12.(a) A project team with a number of sub-groups be set up in each state to examine the syllabi and textbooks for all school classes. The sub-groups be required to decide the following:

i) The minimum number of topics required to be taught.

ii) The minimum number of concepts to be introduced within each topic,

iii) The total time needed for teaching this minimum number of concepts com fortably by a teacher in the total working days realistically available in a year.

(b) Mathematics curriculum for primary classes in all parts of the country be reviewed with a view to slowing down the pace at which children are required to learn basic mathematical concepts, and broadening the scope of primary mathematics to include areas other than number work (e.g. space and shape-related concepts and problem solving). the tendency embedded in the syllabi and textbooks of primary mathematics to accelerate children's mathematical skills by teaching them mechanical rules at the expense of understanding and intelligent application ought to be discouraged in future syllabi and texts.

(c) Language textbooks should adequately reflect the spoken idiom. An attempt should be made in future textbooks to give adequate representation to children's life experiences, imaginary stories and poems, and stories reflecting the lives of ordinary people in different parts of the country. Pedantic language and excessive didacticism ought to be avoided.

(d) Science syllabi and textbooks in the primary classes should provide greater room and necessity for experimentation than they do at present. In place of didacticism in areas like health and sanitation, the texts should emphasise analytical reflection on real-life situations. A great deal of trivial materials included in primary-level science texts should be dropped.

(e) The syllabi of natural sciences throughout the secondary and senior secondary classes be revised in a manner so as to ensure that most of the topics included are actively linked to experiments or activities that can be performed by children and teachers.

(f) Besides imparting knowledge of history and geography, the social sciences curriculum for Classes VI-VIII and IX-X should convey the philosophy and methodology of the functions of our socio-political and economic system enable the students to analyse, understand and reflect on the problems and the priorities of socio-economic development. The repetitious nature of history syllabus should be changed. The history of ancient times should be introduced for systematic study in secondary classes (IX and X). The history syllabus for classes VI-VIII should focus on the freedom struggle and post-independence developments. The civics, as it is taught today, puts a great load on children's capacity to memorise. Therefore, it may be dropped in its present form and be replaced by `contemporary studies'. The study of geography be related to contemporary reality.

APPENDIX

F.No.11-20/91-Sch.4
Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Department of Education

New Delhi, dated 1.3.1992

ORDER

Subject : Constitution of a National Advisory Committee to suggest ways to reduce the academic burden on school students

The ever-increasing burden of academics, particularly at junior classes in schools, is assuming alarming proportions. The growing tendency of overloading the young children in turning the process of learning into a drudgery. The measures such as, formal recognition and weightage to sports and games and co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, more of outdoor and more mutually beneficial interaction of students with the community, etc. could be the broad directions that need to be pursued. The Minister for Human Resource Development has, therefore, decided to set up a National Advisory Committee which will suggest the ways to reduce the academic burden on school students.

2. The terms of reference of this Committee will be :

To advise on the ways and means to reduce the load on school students at all levels, particularly the young students, while improving quality of learning including capability for life-long self-learning and skill formulation.

In doing this, the Committee may

i) examine all aspects related to curricula, entrance criteria and exit attainments at various levels and also

ii) to look at the impact of examinations, admissions to higher education, institution including professional courses.

3. The Committee shall consist of the following :

i)	Prof. Yash Pal Former Chairman University Grants Commission	Chairman
ii)	Prof. Krishna Kumar Central Institute of Education Delhi University, Delhi	Member

iii)	Prof. T.S. Saraswathi Head Department of Child Development M.S. University of Baroda, Baroda	Member
iv)	Ms. Dina Guha Psychologist E-4/9, Ben Nevis Bulabhai Desai Road Bombay	Member
v)	Smt. Vibha Parthasarathi Principal Sardar Patel Vidyalaya, New Delhi	Member
vi)	Dr. V.G. Kulkarni Director Homi Bhabha Science Centre Tata Institute of Fundamental Research Bombay	Member
vii)	Prof. Poromesh Acharya Indian Institute of Management Calcutta	Member
viii)	Dr. G.L. Arora Director, SCERT Varun Marg, Defence Colony New Delhi	Member-Secretary

4. The Committee shall devise its own procedures and methodology of work.

5. The Committee will submit its report within six months.

6. TA/DA to the members of the Committee as per usual rates will be paid by the NCERT.

7. The secretarial assistance and other services to the committee will be provided by the NCERT.

Sd/-

D.M. de REBELLO
Joint Secretary to the Govt. of India

ANNEXE - II

REPORT OF THE GROUP TO EXAMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

(CHATURVEDI COMMITTEE REPORT)

REPORT OF THE GROUP TO EXAMINE THE FEASIBILITY OF IMPLEMENTING THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE SET UP TO SUGGEST WAYS TO REDUCE ACADEMIC BURDEN ON SCHOOL STUDENTS

A National Advisory Committee was set up on 1 March 1992 by the Ministry of Human Resource Development under the Chairmanship of Prof. Yash Pal, former Chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC), to advise on the ways and means to reduce the academic burden on school students. The Committee submitted its Report to the Ministry on 15 July 1993.

2. On receipt of the Report of the National Advisory Committee, a decision was taken by the Ministry of set up a Group under the Chairmanship of Shri Y.N. Chaturvedi, Additional Secretary, Department of Education of the Ministry, to examine the recommendation of the Committee, give its views on the feasibility of implementing them and a time schedule of implementation. The Group was set up on 25 August 1993 and a copy of the Government Order giving the composition and terms of reference of the Group is given in Annex A.

3. The Group held two meetings on 23 and 24 September 1993 in which it examined the recommendations made in the Yash Pal Committee Report. The Group had the benefit of advice of Shri R.C. Tripathi, Adviser (Education), Planning Commission also. The list of members who participated in the deliberations is given in Annexe - B. In addition to participation by two senior functionaries of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), the Group had the benefit of a detailed critique of the Yash Pal Committee Report prepared by the NCERT. This was a particularly useful input in view of the role the NCERT plays in curriculum development, textbook preparation and other aspects of school education.

4. **General Observations**

The Group has observed with considerable appreciation the participative nature of the Yash Pal Committee Report about the load of curriculum on school students. While discussion on curriculum load has been extensive over the years in the mass media, it has been largely confined to the physical load of the school bag which a student has to carry. Many have felt that there has been a lot of generalisation in such discussions on the basis of the size of the school bag seen in metropolitan cities and particularly in regard to students studying in public schools even at the pre-school stage. The Report has taken note in the beginning itself that "a survey conducted in Delhi revealed that the weight of school bag, on an average, in primary classes in public schools is more than 4 kg, while

it is around 1 kg in MCD schools". This finding of the Yash Pal Committee is in tune with the information with the educational managers that firstly, the load of the school bag is not a forbidding one in schools in villages and in small towns and secondly, even in big towns, the problem is in its most aggravated form in regard to students of public schools and children of pre-school classes. Luckily, there are signs recently of the more enlightened public schools de-emphasising subject matter learning at pre-school stage as also de-emphasising the need to prescribe a lot of books and exercise books at pre-school stage. Since such schools are pace-setters, it is hoped that this example will soon influence other pre-primary schools. This Group is recommending subsequently some specific measures in pursuance of one of the recommendations of the Yash Pal Committee to accelerate this process.

This Yash Pal Committee has instead taken the problem at a more elevated plane by observing that in the present schools "a lot is taught but little is learnt or understood". It has, therefore, inferred that the load of non-learning or non-comprehension is the real load one should be concerned about. This approach of looking at the problem of academic burden has imparted to the Report of the Yash Pal Committee a great deal of significance.

Simultaneously, the Group noted that there are a few things to which the Yash Pal committee could have given specific attention. The National Policy on Education (NPE) and the Programme of Action (POA) enunciate the need to have a national core curriculum and have spelt out some of the features of this. The policy also strongly enunciates a child-centred approach to education. It is in pursuance of this that the NCERT framed a curriculum framework for the school stage which has been accepted by all the states. The NCERT has also developed the levels of competencies to be attained at the end of primary stage. These exercises with a lot of validity in them have been the basis of developing syllabi and textbooks for different stages of school education. While there may be some flaws in the syllabi and the textbooks prepared by the NCERT, it does not seem that they can be accused of being grossly unsuitable or overloaded. In regard to curriculum load, the NCERT had curried out a study in mid-eighties which identified the physical overload of curriculum at some stages of school education and also pointed out that inadequate teacher competency, insufficient teaching days, and inadequate classroom facilities, transfer the curriculum load to the students as well as indirectly to parents. The Yash Pal Committee has not referred to this work and the facts stated in the preceding statements. While the main argument forming the basis of the Yash Pal Committee Report is eminently sound, with regard to the main thrust of its recommendation, some of the statements in the Report do not indicate the data or basis on which the Committee has relied. Similarly,

some of the recommendations like the one concerning affiliation of schools to the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) are not accompanied by corresponding consideration in the main body of the Report. In a few cases like in regard to medium of instruction in schools, the Committee has noted in the main body of its Report: " the educated sections of the society believe that command over English is key to upward mobility in social life... It is a well-known fact that young children studying in English medium schools mug the content of science and social sciences without understanding. It is an accepted principle of pedagogy that whatever is memorised without understanding proves burdensome on children. Any language other than the mother tongue of the child, if used as medium of instruction, is a big source of academic burden on children". However, such strong statements do not have a corresponding recommendation. The Report also ignores the fact that for most of our students, medium of instruction is the mother tongue or regional language at all stages of school education. Overall it is an important Report which has brought to the fore an understanding about curriculum load which one does not frequently come across. For this it is bound to raise the level of debate about the curriculum load to a qualitatively higher level. It is expected that this Report would lead to meaningful and adequate reform in curriculum formulation, textbook preparation, teacher training, etc. The Group feels that the nature of the problem is different for each stage of school education but the Committee has not specifically referred to the distinct problems of each stage and ways of dealing with them. The views of the Group in regard to individual recommendations made by the Yash Pal Committee are given below.

RECOMMENDATION No. 1

A number of organisations and departments organise competitions at district, state and national level for students in various fields such as school subjects, exhibitions, essay writing, elocution, etc. Perhaps, the spirit behind these activities is to recognise and reward the talent in diverse fields. But unfortunately this tends to produce somewhat unhealthy singling out of people for their brief moment of glory. Competitions where individual achievement is rewarded need to be discouraged since they deprive children of joyful learning. However, group activities and group achievements must be encouraged and rewarded to give a boost to cooperative learning in schools.

Comments

The Group is of the view that group activity and individual effort are not mutually exclusive or antagonistic. Rewarding individual achievement does not take away the joy of learning and is also a means to motivate towards higher achievement. In the view of

the Group, the educational system should promote performance of the students both as an individual and as a member of the group.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2 (a)

The process of curriculum framing and preparation of textbooks be decentralised so as to increase teachers' involvement in these tasks. Decentralisation should mean greater autonomy, within state-level apparatus, to district-level boards or other relevant authority, and to heads of schools and classroom teachers to develop curricular materials on their own, best suited to needs of local environment. All the schools be encouraged to innovate in all aspects of curriculum, including choice of textbooks and other materials.

Comments

The Group noted that the curriculum and syllabi are designed by the NCERT/CBSE at national level and by the State Boards of Secondary Education/SCERTs at state level by involving teachers and through teachers. However, the number of teachers associated with this exercise is limited to the number of members of the Committee or the Board. The Yash Pal Committee has rightly underlined the need to increase teachers' participation in curriculum development. The Group feels that while the size of committees at national or state level cannot be increased beyond a limit, a meaningful way of improving teachers' participation would be for either the NCERT/CBSE/State Boards/SCERTs to prepare the draft syllabus and finalise it after subjecting it to regional or district level consideration by a large body of teachers or, in the alternative, to get multiple syllabi developed at regional and district level on the basis of which the final syllabi could be prepared at the state/national level. The Group, however, does not recommend decentralisation in the preparation of syllabus or textbooks at the district or school level because it will be difficult to ensure adequate projection of national identity and of composite culture of India. Also, in such a situation, the adherence to even minimum standards in all parts of the country may become difficult.

In regard to textbooks, the Group agrees with the Yash Pal Committee that the primary responsibility for preparing textbooks, particularly for the lower classes should be that of teachers. It may, however, be remembered that the involvement of experts since the early 1960s led to qualitative improvement in school textbooks. They helped in weeding out dead wood, brought in new perspectives in tune with contemporary knowledge. The Group, however, shares the concern of the Yash Pal Committee that many textbook presently tend to project predominantly the urban middle class life style. Therefore, the Group recommends that :

(a) The writing of textbooks as far as possible, should be assigned to school teachers and to those who have developed professional expertise in the area. Subject-matter specialists should be engaged as consultants or advisers to vet the content and presentation of the subject-matter to ensure its accuracy.

(b) In states which have distinct socio-cultural geographical zones, different and parallel sets of textbooks with the same learning objectives should be prepared and used in schools for each such distinct socio-cultural geographical region.

(c) A conscious effort should be made by the textbook preparation agencies to take examples from rural areas for illustrating various points because a large majority of students are in rural areas.

(d) The textbook preparation agencies should undertake systematic review of all textbooks in a time-bound manner to ensure that any trivial matter which may have got included in the textbooks is weeded out. Similarly, such a review should also try to eliminate elements of repetitions of the topics covered in previous classes.

(e) The Group noted that, in some cases, the textbooks for subjects other than languages in some classes are written in a language which is considerably more complex and difficult than the language used in textbooks for that class. It, therefore, recommends that the group which writes a textbook should include one language teacher who should vet the manuscript to ensure that the degree of difficulty of the language used in the subject-matter is not more than the degree of difficulty designed for language competency for that class. In regard to curriculum transaction and teaching materials, the Group noted that there are no restrictions on schools and teachers to innovate. Indeed the teacher training courses have consistently advocated this and many organisations have introduced special programmes to promote this. Needless to say that schools and teachers should be motivated to innovate to the fullest extent in regard to teaching methods and use of teaching materials.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2 (b)

Voluntary organisations with a specific commitment to pedagogical innovations within the formal or non-formal system be provided greater freedom and support in development of curriculum, textbooks and teacher training. A suitable and adequate mechanism be evolved for wider dissemination of the experiences of such organisations.

Comments

The Group fully agrees that voluntary organisations with a commitment to education

should be encouraged in all possible manners. The Group also noted that the governments, both at the national and the state levels have, in recent past, made a substantial move to expand such cooperation. The process needs to be continued. However, for reasons mentioned in 2 (a), the Group does not favour decentralisation in curriculum development and textbooks preparation to the extent of entrusting it to voluntary organisations because of the sensitivity of the matter.

RECOMMENDATION No. 2 (c)

We endorse the idea of setting up education committees at village, block and district levels to undertake planning and supervision of schools under their jurisdiction.

Comments

This is acceptable in principle. This has been strongly advocated in para 10.8 of the NPE, 1986. Following the constitutional Amendment for decentralisation at Panchayat level, the Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE) has already constituted a Committee on Decentralised Management of Education to examine and recommend measures for effectively carrying out the desired involvement of the local committees. Therefore, this recommendation should be implemented in the light of the recommendations of the CABE Committee.

RECOMMENDATION No.2 (d)

Sufficient contingency amount (not less than 10 per cent of the total salary bill of the school) be placed at the disposal of heads of schools for purchase, repair and replacement of pedagogical equipment.

Comments

This is acceptable. The State /UT Governments and autonomous bodies of the Central Government controlling their respective chain of schools (Kendriya Vidyalayas, Navodaya Vidyalayas, Central Tibetan Schools, Railway Schools and Sainik Schools and other schools run by the Defence establishments) should be urged to give this authority to the Principals/ Headmasters of the schools to make repairs to school buildings, purchase, repair and replace pedagogical equipment and books and also to carry out innovative projects, subject to the control of the local education committees. The organisations controlling the schools and the State Governments should categorically specify that the Head of the school does not require approval of any higher educational authority and the School Management/ Advisory Committee for using the available money for these purposes.

RECOMMENDATION No. 3

The culture of writing textbooks be changed so as to involve a much larger number of teachers in the preparation of textbooks. The scientists and experts in various disciplines may be associated with the preparation of textbooks as consultants and not as writers of the books. Initiative in this regard should rest with groups of enlightened and innovative teachers who should be provided training in book writing.

Comments

The group agrees with the purport of this recommendation greater involvement of teachers and the view of the Group on this recommendation is included in the comments on 2 (a).

RECOMMENDATION No. 4

At least three parallel systems of school education (syllabus, textbooks and *examination) are running concurrently in different states. In each state majority of schools are affiliated to the State Board of Education while a few are affiliated to either CBSE or ICSE. The schools affiliated to CBSE in the states other than Delhi enjoy the prestige of being elite schools. The CBSE curriculum becomes a trend-setter for the State Boards leading to heavier curriculum for majority of children. Therefore, the Committee recommends that jurisdiction of CBSE be restricted to Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas and all other schools be affiliated to the respective State Boards.*

Comments

The Group has been unable to appreciate the arguments put forth by the Yash Pal Committee in this recommendation. The choice of education boards that the schools have is already very limited—there is no free choice— and it can be exercised only with the approval of the State Government. Therefore, if a school in any part of the country has the choice of affiliating with one Board or the other, it should be generally good for education. As for CBSE, it relies heavily on the NCERT for developing syllabi and preparing textbooks. The NCERT, in turn, operates within the national policy framework and on the basis of guidelines contained in the National Curriculum Framework. Rightly the NCERT keeps in view the existing standards in the country, the capability of students, and standards in developed countries because the syllabus and textbook must take note of all these. If there is unnecessary material in some of the NCERT books, it should be eliminated as the Group has suggested in the preceding recommendations. However, there is not adequate material on record to substantiate that CBSE syllabi or NCERT books per se are overloaded.

Also, the Yash Pal Committee has recommended that affiliation to CBSE should be restricted to Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas with all other schools being affiliated to respective State Boards. If affiliation to the CBSE is good for Kendriya and Navodaya Vidyalayas it cannot be bad for other schools.

RECOMMENDATION No. 5 (b)

Appropriate legislative and administrative measures be adopted to regulate the opening and functioning of early childhood education institutions (pre-schools). Norms regarding accommodation, staff, apparatuses, play materials be laid down for the recognition of these schools. It should be ensured that these institutions do not perpetrate violence on young children by inflicting a heavy dose of "over education" in the form of formal teaching of Reading, Writing and Numbers. The practice of holding tests and interviews for admission to nursery class be abolished.

RECOMMENDATION No. 5 (b)

Norms for granting recognition to private schools be made more stringent. This will prove conducive for improving the quality of learning on the one hand and arrest growing commercialisation on the other. The norms, thus developed, be made uniformly applicable to all schools including the state-run institutions.

Comments [5 (a) and 5 (b)]

The Group is in agreement with the recommendations. While the NCERT has prepared some norms for the staff, nature of curriculum and educational material for pre-primary stage, this sector of education in the country is largely unsupervised and unregulated. It is also a known fact that most of these schools are loading the students with the burden of formal teaching of various subjects. The Group advised that an appropriate regulatory mechanism should be urgently set up in the country to ensure that learning at this stage is by playway method and formal teaching of subjects is scrupulously prevented. Similarly, the Group agrees that recognition and affiliation of both private and government schools should be made more stringent so that schools lacking in minimum essential facilities are not allowed to function because it really means punishment to the students. Although there is a well set arrangement for recognition and affiliation of schools but due to extraneous pressures the standards sometimes are not observed. The Group would like to suggest that the possibility of having a legislation to specify norms of facilities in schools and providing for powers to prevent opening of schools which do not have facilities should be seriously considered.

RECOMMENDATION No. 6

There is no justification for torturing the young children by compelling them to carry heavy bags of books everyday to schools. Textbooks should be treated as school property and thus, there should be no need for children to purchase the books individually and carry them daily to homes. A separate time-table for the assignment of homework and for the use of textbooks and notebooks be prepared by the school and be made known to the children in advance.

RECOMMENDATION No. 7

The nature and character of homework needs a radical change. In the primary classes, children should not be given any homework, save for extension of explorations in the home environment. In the upper primary and secondary classes, homework, where necessary, should be non-textual, and textbooks, when needed for work at home should be made available on a rotation basis.

Comments (6 and 7)

The Group has already agreed that there should be no formal teaching of subjects in the pre-schools stage. The Group also feels that there should be no homework and project work at the primary stage (Classes I-V). However, it is an extreme point of observation that textbooks should be treated as school property. Besides the financial implications arising out of the burden on schools to purchase the textbooks and the concomitant responsibility on the schools to store the books when most of the schools of the country do not have either the financial resources or storage capacities, the children would be devoid of the opportunity to refer to the textbooks in their homes. For an overwhelming majority of school students of the country, the textbooks remain as the only source of reading material. The Group recommends that the class routine for the upper primary, secondary and higher secondary stages should be drawn up in such a way that every subject is not required to be taught everyday. This should be included in the norms for compliance by every school which the Group has suggested in para 5 (a) and 5 (b) above.

RECOMMENDATION No. 8

The existing norm for teacher-pupil ratio (i.e. 1:40) should be enforced and an attempt should be made to reduce this to 1:30, at least in the primary classes, as a basis for future educational planning.

Comments

The Group agrees with a higher teacher-pupil ratio with improved teaching and standards of education. It understands that in reality the existing teacher-pupil ratio is around 1:40 in most part of the country. Attempts should be made to bring it to 1:30 over a period of time. Such change in ratio would have a very large financial implication because of the need to induct a large number of extra teachers and, therefore, this can be done only over a period of time. Efforts should be made to ensure that the class size does not exceed 40.

RECOMMENDATION No. 9

Greater use of the electronic media be made for the creation of a child-centred social ethos in the country. A regular television programme addressed to students, teachers and parents and possibly called 'Shiksha Darshan' be launched, along the lines of the 'Krishi Darshan' programme.

Comments

Greater use of electronic media for education is an essential part of modernising the educational system. A regular programme on TV addressed to students, teachers and parents would be very welcome. The Group took note of the fact that the Ministry of Human Resource Development, Department of Education, has already made a request for allocating one channel for education our of 15 or 16 channels which have recently become available with the commissioning of INSAT 2-A. The Group strongly suggests that an educational channel should be operationalised at the earliest and this channel should include a programme of the nature suggested by the Yash Pal Committee.

RECOMMENDATION No. 10 (a)

Inadequate programme of teacher preparation leads to unsatisfactory quality of learning in schools. The B.Ed. programme should offer the possibility of specialisation in secondary or elementary or nursery education. The duration of the programme should either be one year after graduation or three-four years after higher secondary. The content of the programme should be restructured to ensure its relevance to the changing needs of school education and to make it more practicum-centred. The emphasis in these programmes should be on enabling the trainees to acquire the ability for self-learning and independent thinking. Pre-service teacher education programme, being a professional course, has to be a rigorous, thorough and intensive programme. Therefore, B.Ed. degree courses by correspondence be derecognised.

Comments

There is a lot of merit in the argument advanced by the Yash Pal Committee for having a programme of B.Ed. aimed at elementary or secondary education. In metropolitan cities, a large number of teachers are actually getting recruited for pre-school and elementary schools with B.Ed. qualifications. Recruitment in KVS and NVS is also, in practice, based on B.Ed. qualifications. Therefore, this reality needs to be taken cognizance of and the present practice of focussing on secondary education in B.Ed. needs to be given up by enabling B.Ed. to be pursued with either specialisation in secondary or in elementary or in pre-school education. In any case the existing arrangements, including the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs) for preparing primary school teachers need to be continues and strengthened.

The recommendation of the Yash Pal Committee for derecognising B.Ed. degree by correspondence course is more problematic, while the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has earlier made recommendations on these lines and the UGC has been interacting with the concerned universities during the last ten years on that basis, such courses are continuing. A recent expert committee of the UGC has expressed that for women candidates and for people from rural areas, B.Ed. correspondence course opens up valuable career opportunities. Also, in a large number of countries, B.Ed. throughrough correspondence course is one of the prominent courses in distance mode. These arguments cannot be totally ignored. The Group understands that the matter is at an advanced stage of consideration in the UGC. Also the NCTE as a statutory body is expected to become operational in the near future. The Group recommends that this matter should be referred to the UGC and NCTE for appropriate decision.

RECOMMENDATION No. 10 (b)

The continuing education of teachers must be institutionalised. The organisation of inservice education programmes and other activities aimed at professional growth of teachers be systematically designed and conducted imaginatively.

Comments

The emphasis given by the Yash Pal Committee to continuing education of teachers is totally unexceptionable. Thus DIETs are being set up in the country primarily to meet this need. Distance education system also is coming up in the country which can be used to meet the needs of inservice education. However, the progress in this regard has been slow. The Group fully endorses the need to set up arrangements for regular and periodic

inservice training of teachers and recommends that the DIETs should be operationalised as early as possible and the distance mode of education should be used extensively to strengthen inservice training of teachers.

RECOMMENDATION No. 11

The public examinations taken at end of Class X and XII be reviewed with a view to ensure replacement of the prevailing text-based and 'quiz type' questioning by the concept-based questioning. This single reform is sufficient to improve the quality of learning and save the children from the tyranny of rote memorisation.

Comments

The Group feels that the Yash Pal Committee's reference to the concept-based questioning perhaps advocates greater importance to questions of higher ability. The Group agrees with this but it should be remembered that assessment should test various kinds of abilities and not just of one kind. The Group also feels that the Boards of School Education should emphasise Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) that incorporates both scholastic and non-scholastic aspects of education, spread over the total span of instructional time as stipulated in para 8.24 (iii) of the NPE, 1986.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (a)

A project team with a number of sub-groups be set up in each state to examine the syllabi and textbooks for all school classes. The sub-groups be required to decide the following:

(i) The minimum number of topics required to be taught.

(ii) The minimum number of concepts to be introduced within each topic.

(iii) The total time needed for teaching this minimum number of concepts comfortably by a teacher in the total working days realistically available in a year.

Comments

The Minimum Levels of Learning (MLLs) for language (mother tongue) mathematics and environmental studies for Classes I-V have already been prepared at the national level in 1990 and the NCERT, the Boards of School Education and the SCERTs have developed their resources to introduce the MLLs at the primary stage. Therefore, setting up another Project Team for the same purpose would amount to avoidable duplication. The Group feels that though in para 5.4.5 (vii) and para 21.3.1 (a), the POA, has called for laying down

MLLs at the upper primary stage and in para 21.3.1 (b), the POA, 1992 has urged the Boards to lay down expected levels of attainment at Classes IX-XII, the reasonableness of laying down MLLs at the upper primary stage and above deserves a careful reconsideration since knowledge base is supposed to grow at a fast pace after the primary stage. Moreover, with emphasis shifting to subject-matter learning at the upper primary stage and above, the idea of laying down uniform MLLs after primary stage does not seem to be a viable proposition. However, at the time of curriculum renewal and preparation of textbooks, the curriculum/ textbook designers should systematically check that those can be covered within the instructional time available to teachers. The NCERT at the national level and the State Boards/SCERTs/SIEs at the state level may consider the desirability of reviewing the school curricula/ textbooks to ensure that non-essential matter and repetitive treatment of concepts in subjects in different classes is minimised as far as possible without sacrificing the requirements of cognitive development.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (b)

Mathematics curriculum for primary classes in all parts of the country be reviewed with a view to slowing down the pace at which children are required to learn basic mathematical concepts, and broadening the scope of primary mathematics to include areas other than number work (e.g. space-and shape-related concept and problem solving). The tendency embedded in the syllabi and textbooks of primary mathematics to accelerate children's mathematical skills by teaching them mechanical rules at the expense of understanding and intelligent application ought to be discouraged in future syllabi and texts.

Comments

The Group endorses the recommendation that mathematics and syllabi for other subjects should be reviewed to assess whether they are overloaded. But it would not like to state at this stage that they indeed are overloaded. The MLLs adopted by the MHRD are now being tried out and the question of review should be considered only on the basis of the feedback. As has been referred to in the preceding recommendations, syllabi have to be designed keeping in view the existing standards, and capacity of students and standards in developed countries. However, the Group endorses the statement of the Yash Pal Committee that the syllabus should emphasise understanding and intelligent application rather than memorising without understanding.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (c)

Language textbooks should adequately reflect the spoken idiom. An attempt should be made in future textbooks to give adequate representation to children's life experiences, imaginary stories and poems, and stories reflecting the lives of ordinary people in different parts of the country. Pedantic language and excessive didacticism ought to be avoided.

Comments

These recommendations are acceptable. The NCERT and the Boards including CBSE and Council for the Indian School Certificate Examination (CISCE) should review their respective language textbooks from these angles.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (d)

Science syllabi and textbooks in the primary classes should provide greater room and necessity for experimentation than they do at present. In place of didacticism in areas like health and sanitation, the texts should emphasise analytical reflection on real-life situations. A great deal of trivial material included in primary-level science texts should be dropped.

Comments

The Group has already given its views that all the existing textbooks should be screened in a time-bound manner for eliminating trivial matter and repetition. The Group endorses the recommendation that there should be greater scope for experimentation at the primary stage. This should be systematically promoted through a large programme of inservice education of teachers.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (e)

The syllabi of natural sciences throughout the secondary and senior secondary classes be revised in a manner so as to ensure that most of the topics included are actively linked to experiments or activities that can be performed by children and teachers.

Comments

The Group is of the view that while experiments and activities at all levels are important, the selection of topics in science curriculum at higher stages cannot be determined by the criterion that they are linked to experiment, etc. Every effort should, however, be made to see that experiments and activities, as much as possible, depending on the nature of the topic, are made a part of science teaching even at higher levels.

RECOMMENDATION No. 12 (f)

Besides imparting knowledge of history and geography the social sciences curriculum for classes VI-VIII and IX-X should convey the philosophy and methodology of the functions of our socio-political and economic system and enable the students to analyse, understand and reflect on the problems and priorities of socio-economic development. The repetitious nature of history syllabus should be changed. The history of ancient times should be introduced for systematic study in secondary classes (IX and X). The history syllabus for Classes VI-VIII should focus on the freedom struggle and post-independence developments. The civics, as it is taught today, puts a great load on children's capacity to memorise. Therefore, it may be dropped in its present form and be replaced by 'contemporary studies'. The study of geography be related to contemporary reality.

Comments

As regards the Committee's suggestion that history syllabus for Classes VI-VIII should focus on freedom struggle and post-independence developments, the Group holds the view that a large majority of children drop out at the end of class VIII, which is also the last year of compulsory education and, therefore, it would not be educationally sound to allow such a big section of our children to remain oblivious of the entire heritage of India before the freedom struggle. The Committee seems to have linked spiral approach (which is based on a well-established principle of curriculum construction) with repetition which 'leads to boredom and load and trivialisation of ideas'. The Group feels that in geography greater importance should be given to study of contemporary problems. The context or implications of the Committee's recommendation for replacing 'Civics' by 'Contemporary Studies' are not clear.

Additional Suggestions of the Group

The Yash Pal Committee has made many thought-provoking recommendations which the Group has tried to recommend for implementation in a more specific manner. If these are implemented efficiently, the standards of school education will undoubtedly improve and as the Yash Pal Committee has envisaged alienation of students from education and the burden of 'non-understanding' on them could effectively diminish. However, in addition to the recommendations made by the Yash Pal Committee, there are a few more issues which immediately present themselves for consideration while considering any exercises for reducing the load of curriculum. The Group would like to suggest these also for implementation.

1. Age of Entry

It is a known fact that in India children join school at a rather early age than their counterparts do in most of the developed countries. At the age of 4 and 5, difference of one year in age makes a lot of difference in the mental capability of a child. A more mature child can easily cope with the learning requirements. The effect of early admissions of children in schools, particularly at the pre-primary stage, is that she/he is unable to cope with the demands that the syllabus makes and consequently she/he starts in a situation of personal inadequacy. This contributed significantly to the load of non-learning. It is, therefore, desirable that the minimum age of admission to pre-primary classes and in primary classes should be reconsidered for being raised by one year.

2. Teaching Days

Kothari commission recommended 210 teaching days but the actual number of school days are 125-150. Since the syllabi are framed on the basis that 210 days will be available, this only means that either a part of syllabus is not covered by the teacher of that she/he covers the syllabus is a hurried manner which creates difficulty for students for being able to cope with a lot of content in a limited time. Effective action to increase the number of teaching days to 210 in a year would undoubtedly very substantially reduce the daily learning load and would also improve standards.

3. Classroom Facilities

In large number of schools in the country not only the facilities in the classroom but the classroom themselves are grossly deficient. This inevitably affects the quality of teaching and, therefore, of learning. The Yash Pal Committee has recommended and we have endorsed that recommendation earlier in this Report that norms for school facilities should be effectively and strictly enforced for recognition/affiliation. However, since government is the major funding agency for most schools, there should be a positive movement for improving availability of classrooms and improving availability of educational aids in schools. For primary schools, the Government of India is implementing a large programme of Operation Blackboard and in the Eighth Plan it is being extended to cover upper primary classes also. At secondary level, the Government of India is implementing a scheme for assisting schools for improving science equipment. However, a much large effort needs to be made. It would be imperative that the effort of the government is supplemented by individuals and philanthropic bodies because the requirement is large. It would be appropriate that the governments and the schools systems consider how best they can encourage such individuals and philanthropic bodies to help schools to develop.

4. Strengthening of the Professional Support System

An area which needs to be looked into is the qualitative improvement of professional bodies like the SCERTs, Textbook Bureau and Boards of Schools Education who are primarily responsible for curriculum. textbooks and examinations. It is these bodies which will ultimately have to reckon with the problem of load. Under the centrally sponsored scheme of teacher education, there is a component of strengthening of SCERTs which should be take up on a priority basis.

5. "....impact of examinations, admissions to higher education institutions, including professional courses"

This was one of the terms of reference of the Committee which has not been dealt with in the Report. The CABE may consider to refer this matter to a committee drawn from school and higher education. Another term of reference of the Committee related to "the measures such as formal; recognition and weightage to sports and games and co-curricular and extra curricular activities..." A CABE Committee is looking into this matter and its report is expected to be presented to the CABE shortly.

Time Schedule for Implementation

As regards laying down a time schedule for implementation of the recommendations found feasible, the Group felt that the recommendations are of long-term nature. Moreover, the report of the National Advisory Committee as well as this report of the Group would be placed before the CABE in its meeting scheduled to be held on 15.10.1993. As such, it would be advisable to wait for the CABE's approval to Committee's recommendations and then draw up a time schedule for implementation of the recommendations accepted by the CABE.

ANNEX A

No. F. 11-30/93-Sch.4
Government of India
Ministry of Human Resource Development
Department of Education

New Delhi, dated 25.8.93

O R D E R

Subject : Constitution of a Group to examine recommendations made in the report of the National Advisory Committee set up on 1.3.92 to suggest ways to reduce academic burden on school students.

A National Advisory Committee was set up on 1.3.92 under the Chairmanship of Prof.Yash Pal, former Chairman of UGC to advise on the ways and means to reduce the academic burden on school students. The Committee has submitted its report on 15 July 1993. It has been decided to constitute a Group to examine the feasibility and implementation schedule of the recommendations made in the Report.

2. The Group shall consist of the following :

(i)	Shri Y.N. Chaturvedi Additional Secretary	Chairman
(ii)	Joint Secretary (School)	Member
(iii)	Dr. J.S. Rajput Joint Educational Adviser (EE)	Member
(iv)	Prof. A.K. Sharma Joint Director, NCERT	Member
(v)	Dr (Smt.) R. Muralidharan Professor and Head Department of Pre-School and Elementary Education, NCERT	Member
(vi)	Shri V. Sankarasubbaiyan Education Secretary Tamil Nadu	Member
(vii)	Shri Abhimanyu Singh Education Secretary Rajasthan	Member
(viii)	Shri H.R. Sharma Director (Academic), CBSE	Member

(ix)	Shri D.V. Sharma Secretary, Council of Boards of School Education of India (COBSE)	Member
(x)	Shri A. Banerji Deputy Secretary (School)	Member-Secretary

3. The Group will analyse the recommendations made by the National Advisory Committee and give its views on the feasibility of implementing the recommendations and a time schedule in respect of the recommendations found feasible. The Group will give the views and the implementation schedule within a period of one month from the date of issue of order.

4. The Group shall devise its own procedures and methodology of work.

A. BANERJI
Deputy Secretary

1. PS to AS
2. PS to JS(S)
3. PS to JEA (EE)
4. Prof. A.K. Sharma, Joint Director, NCERT
5. Dr. (Smt.) R. Muralidharan, Professor and Head, Department of Pre-School and Elementary Education, NCERT
6. Shri V. Sankarasubbaiyan, Education Secretary, Tamil Nadu
7. Shri Abhimanyu Singh, Education Secretary, Rajasthan
8. Shri H.R. Sharma, Director (Academic), CBSE
9. Shri D.V. Sharma, Secretary, Council of Boards of School Education in India (COBSE)
10. Shri A. Banerji, Deputy Secretary (S)

ANNEX B

List of Participants in the Meetings of the Group Held on 23.9.93 and 24.9.93

1.	Shri Y.N. Chaturvedi Additional Secretary Department of Education	Chairman
2.	Shri R.C. Tripathi Adviser (Education) Planning Commission	
3.	Shri Priyadarshi Thakur Joint Secretary (School) Department of Education	
4.	Prof. A.K. Sharma Joint Director, NCERT	
5.	Dr (Smt.) R. Muralidharan Professor and Head Department of Pre-School and Elementary Education, NCERT	
6.	Shri Abhimanyu Singh Education Secretary Rajasthan	
7.	Shri U.K. Sinha Director (Teacher Education) Department of Education	
8.	Shri H.R. Sharma Director (Academic) CBSE	
9.	Shri D.V. Sharma Secretary, Council of Boards of School Education of India (COBSE)	
10.	Shri A. Banerji Deputy Secretary (School) Department of Education	

EXAMINATION REFORMS

EXAMINATION REFORMS

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 postulated that the examination system should be recast so as to ensure a metnod of assessment that is a valid and reliable measure of student development and a powerful instrument for improving teaching and learning. Whether we need the present form of examination or we need some other forms of examination is an issue which calls for an immediate debate.

Pertinent Issues

Memorisation

The over increasing practice of asking questions which demand only the recall of information rather than higher mental level operations has resulted in over emphasis on cramming or memorisation. As a consequence there is a noticeable tardiness in the development of higher mental abilities.

Scholarship Oriented Nature

The present system lays emphasis on the growth and development of scholastic aspects while the non-scholastic aspects are almost ignored. This results in frustrating the efforts of bringing about all round development of the students.

Quality of Question Paper

The question paper is the most vital component of any examination system. though considerable improvements have taken place in its design, blue print and content coverage, there is still lot more to be done to make this tool more reliable and valid. The preparation of the scoring key and marking scheme requires more attention in order to reduce the element of subjectivity in marking the script.

Prevalence of Essay Type Questions

The examination does not remain a valid measure of student achievement because essay type questions lead to limited sampling of the course content and prompts the students to do selective study.

Subjectivity of Marking

There is a lot of inter-examiner and intra-examiner variability in marking and as a result of that the reliability of the examination suffers.

Limited Application of Assessment Techniques

The system as such takes recourse to only restricted techniques of assessment thereby leaving no room for the application of multiple techniques of assessment. This affects both the validity and the reliability of the examination.

Validity of Single-stroke Examination

At the secondary and senior secondary stage of school education, the students have put in 10-12 years of studies behind them and appear for the terminal examination where they are subjected to three hour testing based on a limited course content. Not only this, their sustained efforts of so many years are evaluated by the examiners in a short span of a few minutes. this raises a question mark on the entire system of examination because it does not take into cognisance the work done throughout the years in terms of projects, assignments, tests and class work, etc.

Creation of Fear & Tension

The examination create psychological fear and tensions amongst the students. The students resort to all kinds of malpractices to pass the examination.

Mis-management of Examinations

We often come across the startling news about the leakage of question paper, mishandling of answers scripts, mismatch of roll number, errors in marking and totaling, awarding of grace marks, wrong declaration of results and many more. Most of the examining agencies still appear to be "technology-shy" and are hesitant in adopting the latest techniques of computerisation and optical scanning.

Introduction of the Semester System

The greatest advantage of this system is that it reduces the load of the students and inculcates regular study habits in time. Since the academic year is divided into two semesters, it also has the advantage of providing upward mobility, the students can clear the backlog even after moving to the next semester. It also enables the students to learn at their own pace.

Implementation of CCE

The present mode of assessment does not take into account the assessment of cognitive and non-cognitive learning outcomes and this encourage lop-sided personality development. The oneshot written examination is not an effective measure for gauging

all the abilities nor does it promote the application of multiple techniques of assessment. The scheme of CCE is inspired by the age-old adage that it is the teacher who knows the pupil best, and it is through this teacher that we would get to know how the learner is progressing with reference to his own earlier achievements, with reference to his peer group as also with reference to the expected levels of attainments set by the teacher.

Setting up of Question Banks

In order to improve the quality of the question paper, there is a need to generate quality questions of different types measuring various objectives, of varying difficulty levels and for all this question banks need to be developed in each curricular areas for all stages of education. The facilities of the question banks should be made accessible to the teachers who can use them for making various tests and to students who can use them for their own drill and practice.

Inappropriate Interpretation of Raw Scores

Raw scores do not reflect the true ability of the student, yet they are used for the purposes of classifying them. Moreover, the marks of one subject are added to the marks of the other subject on the basis of the myth that 60 marks in English and 60 marks in Mathematics are alike. This is not technically true.

Non-application of Scaling Technique

The marks secured by candidate in an examination do not truly reflect the acquisition of ability because they suffer from lot of errors some of which are identifiable and many more which are unidentifiable. This does not allow us to ensure the comparison of scores within the subject and across the subject.

Numerical Marking System Vs. Grading

The current practice of awarding numerical marks suffers from lot of discrepancies caused because of variety of errors. Besides, spread of scores in different subjects being different further compounds the problem. In view of this numerical marking does not give right picture as it gives unrealistic assessment of human potential. This can be overcome if the students are placed in an ability band which represents a range of marks.

Awarding of Grace Marks

The awarding of grace marks is not based on any scientific rationale. In

almost all the cases they are arbitrary, unscientific, adhoc and comic. The practice currently followed is not to consider the passing probabilities for deciding the award of grace marks.

Re-evaluation

It is the right of every student to be evaluated as accurately as possible. With a view to ensuring objectivity and transparency, most of the Boards prepare and supply the detailed marking scheme for the guidance of the examiners. If the answer scripts are marked conscientiously and the Boards ensure the adherence of the examiners to the marking scheme, the need for re-evaluation should not arise. However, in some cases lapses may occur and the request for re-evaluation of those students should be acceded to not only to provide for natural justice but to make it all the more transparent and tangible. In this, it may be understood that the re-evaluation is not to be confused with retotalling. It is reassessment of the answer script.

Returning of Marked Answer Script

There has been an appreciable movement in the direction of returning the marked answer script to the examinees in the interest of accountability, credibility and transparency in evaluation process. The greatest dilemma is whether such a scheme would be administratively feasible especially in the Boards which handle and process the results of hundreds of thousands of students.

Examination and its Backwash Effect

When examinations determine a child's advancement through school and his later life's opportunities, parents understandably put pressure on teachers to ensure that their child succeeds. The backwash effect of this public expectation from teachers is that teachers adjust their teaching to what the examination will cover to ensure that their students score the highest marks. This restricts the teaching-learning process to what is taught and learnt in school and thus it does not promote "mastery learning". So efforts are to be directed to usher in the healthy practice of examining what is taught rather than teaching what is generally examined.

Implementation of Multiple Sets of Question Paper

In order to combat the menace of mass copying of all the Boards the CBSE introduced multiple sets of question paper in the year 1992. The wisdom of this move has been questioned by the cross-section of the society because it has led to many

apprehensions in the minds of the examinees in particular and the society in general. Though the CBSE based its experiment in conformity with the recommendations of the Madan Mohan Committee, it did not carry out any proper study prior to its implementation. Therefore, it is desirable to undertake a study to compare the parallelism of the multiple sets of question papers.

Treating Public Examination Optional

The modus operandi of a terminal examination is a public examination conducted by a Board at class X and class XII stage for the purposes of certification and promotion. However, with all the drawbacks of these examinations, there has been a recession in the credibility. As a consequence, the institutions of higher and professional learning have started conducting their entrance examinations. The ultimate victim is the student, who ever since his entry into schooling, is constantly subjected to an examination galore. He suffers from the examination syndrome all through his education careet. In view of the above, there is a need to debate on the significance of the public examination being made optional.

Feasibility of a Common National Test

A student passing class XII is plagued by the trauma of appearing for a number of entrance examinations for admission to institutions of higher and professional learning. This not only results in financial burden on the parents but also turns the student into a nervous wreck. Examinations have no emotions. This prompts us to do some loud thinking for replacing separate entrance examination by a common national test.

CONCLUSIONS

If the aforesaid reforms are introduced in isolation, they may fail to produce desired results. Since they are inter linked, they need to be implemented simultaneously. The changes that they are supposed to bring about will be very gradual and imperceptible but in the long run these will help in improving the learners' achievement and thereby promote the development of human resource. Not only all this, they will also go a long way in promoting the teachers' potential and institutions' capabilities and thus will have a far reaching effect on the quality of school education in the country.

ANNEXE

RETURN OF ANSWER SCRIPTS BY EXAM BOARDS

Issues at large

- Returning a zerox copy to satisfy the examinee on fairness of evaluation and bring greater transparency.
- This issue concerns School Boards, Universities and service recruitment agencies.

Current Provision

CBSE has the provision to allow the candidates to apply for verification of marks within one month from the declaration of results. This includes evaluation of unmarked portions missed inadvertently by evaluators, transference of marks at various stages such as:

i) from inside the answer books to the title cover of the answer book;

ii) sub-total from inside the answer books; and

iii) total of the title cover of the answer books, transference of the marks to the award list and finally from the award list to the gazette.

Administrative aspects

- CBSE spread over all the states and 20 countries with 4200 schools.
- The number of examinees is 5.3 lacs in secondary and senior secondary examination involving more than 27 lacs answer books.
- Large number of applications make it unfeasible to handle zeroxing/maintenance of time schedule, involvement of larger number of evaluators, office management in tracing and decoding the answer scripts and other allied managerial aspects will put heavy constraints on the Board with respect to time of response.
- It shall add uncertainty in results, delay in admissions and adversely affect the interest of the mass of student community. It may lead to large number of litigations.
- It may even invite criticism and denigrate the system.

Legal Aspects

- Revaluation was discussed in a case of Maharashtra Secondary Board Vs.

Paritosh, Bhupesh, etc. (Civil Appeals Nos.1653 to 1691 of 1980). The Hon'ble Supreme Court discussed the petition. The Court held -

"Every candidate who has appeared for any such examination and who is dissatisfied with the result would as an inherent part of his right to 'fair play be entitled to demand a disclosure and personal inspection of his answer scripts and would have a further right to ask for revaluation of his answer papers. The inevitable consequences would be that there will be no certainty at all regarding the results of the competitive examination for an indefinite period of time ..."

- CBSE contested a case filed by Parents' Forum for meaningful education on revaluation and return of answer scripts. The hon'ble Supreme Court in its judgement dated 5.11.1993 observed that "in view of the law laid down by this Court, no direction can be given to the Board..."
- The Delhi High Court deliberated upon the issue of return of answer sheets. It observed in its judgement of 10.9.1993 - "No particular advantage to the students by return of their answer sheets, specially in the context of the examination under consideration. Therefore, we find no substance in this grievance of the petitioners."

Experiences

Madhya Pradesh

- Only in selective model degree colleges in Bhopal.
- Only for degree classes. Applications invited, Fee Rs.200/-.
- Limited applications received (about 10). One of them pressed hard even to the level of appointment of a committee.
- Challenging the wisdom of teachers; subjectivity, always challengable.

Kerala

- Pre-degree Examination.
- In 1994 Examination, about 73000 candidates appeared; fee Rs.500/-.
- Experience not happy, so discontinued w.e.f. 1994.

VALUE EDUCATION

VALUE EDUCATION : SOME BASIC ISSUES

I There are certain age old traditions such as preference for the male child, notional advantages of a large family, religion as the sole guiding principle in personal and social life, caste as identity, etc. There is another set of values relating to attitudes and behaviour such as caring and sharing in the family and society, obedience to and respect for elders, respect for argument and reasoning, non-violence and personal hygiene. In contemporary society some of these values may need to be reinterpreted or replaced while some others may require reinforcement. In the context of these concerns, what values will reflect a national ethos?

II Very often value education and moral education are considered synonymous. In many cases, it has been observed, moral education serves as a gateway to religious instruction and reinforcement of caste models. Will this contradict the social desirability of secularism and removal of social barriers?

III How should education and school practices be kept apart from myths and beliefs?

IV How should value education be done? Can it be done through preaching, sermonizing and pontificating or is it reasonable to assume that values education is best imparted through process itself?

V Should we consider a separate time slot for value education or integrate values in education through teaching learning methods, instructional materials, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities?

VI Very often there is a basic contradiction between what is school and family as value education and what children actually observe in society and through the media. This contradiction leads to confusion and vagueness and teaching of values is reduced to ritual. How should this question be answered to make value education meaningful and effective?

VALUE EDUCATION IN THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The National Policy on Education (NPE), 1986 envisages a national system of education based on a National Curricular Framework containing a common core alongwith other components that are flexible. As per para 3.4 of the NPE, the common core includes the history of India's freedom movement, the constitutional obligations and other content essential to nurture national identity. These elements will cut across subject areas and will be designed to promote values such as India's common cultural

heritage, etiquette, egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes, protection of the environment, removal of social barriers, observance of the small family norm and inculcation of the scientific temper.

Implementing the above in the school systems under the Central control.

On the basis of the guidelines given in the National Curricular Framework for Elementary and Secondary Education, brought out by NCERT in 1988 after adoption of NPE, 1986, the NCERT revised the entire school syllabi and brought out revised textbooks for classes I to XII. The main focus of the revised syllabi of the NCERT for different stages of school is on development of knowledge, values and attitudes conducive to actualising the student's potential, for enabling effective participation in the national development endeavour.

Keeping in view the NCERT textbooks and curricular guidelines, the State Governments are expected to undertake measures to revise their school syllabi/ textbooks for introduction in their school system in a phased manner.

Initiatives from the Planning Commission

As recommended by the Planning Commission's Core Group on Value Orientation of Education, a Standing Committee was set up for promotion and co-ordination of value orientation of education at the school and higher education stages. This standing committee further constituted sub-groups, one of them for schools and education, to formulate plans of action to implement various recommendations made in the core group report.

The plan of action of the school sub-group broadly covers the following areas i.e., integration of elements of value education into:

i) textbooks/textual material

ii) (a) non-textual educational materials such as audio-visual materials, posters, charts, stories, picture books, etc.

(b) extra-curricular activities.

iii) In-service and pre-service training of teachers.

Scheme for strengthening of culture and value in education

A central sector scheme, 'Scheme of Assistance for Strengthening Culture and Values in Education' designed for providing assistance to government agencies, educational institutions, Panchayati Raj institutions and NGOs was launched in 1987. This scheme now extends to the non-formal sector also and provides for in-service training to art, craft, music and dance teachers.

Under this scheme, assistance is given to the organisations/agencies for:

a) Strengthening cultural input in the educational content and process, both formal and non-formal; and

b) Strengthening of value education in the school and non-formal education system.

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Vocational education and training is presently being offered in the country primarily through the following categories of institutions:-

i) Polytechnics;

ii) Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs);

iii) Specialised institutions/schools like Technical/ Industrial/Arts and Craft schools, agriculture schools, forestry schools, nursing and ANM schools, commercial training schools etc.;

iv) Vocational education at the +2 level within the school system.

2. Polytechnics and ITIs have, for long, been recognised as the main institutions conducting vocational training programmes outside the school system. The Craftsman Training Scheme was introduced way back in 1950 for imparting skill training in various vocational trades to meet the skilled manpower requirement of the industry on the one hand and to reduce unemployment among educated youth by equipping them with employable skills on the other. Currently there are 2721 Government and private ITIs having a seating capacity of 4.07 lakh students, imparting training in 42 engineering and 22 non-engineering designated trades. The period of training various normally from 1 year to 3 years while entry qualification vary from 8th standard to 12th standard or equivalent depending upon the trades. The National Trade Certificates awarded to the successful candidates is a recognised qualification for recruitment to relevant subordinate posts and services in Central/State Government establishments.

3. The Polytechnics are also offering diploma level courses in a number of trades which are well received in the job market. There are at present 1011 polytechnics with an intake of 1.64 lakh.

4. The total intake capacity of Polytechnics and ITIs is thus 5.7 lakhs. There would also be a small percentage of specialised institutions/schools offering specific vocational courses.

5. However, the total population in school going age group in 1993-94 has been estimated at 16.24 crores. Although it can be presumed that about 80% would have joined school

at some stage, almost 35% of children who enter class I drop out before reaching class V and 60% drop out before reaching class VIII. It is, therefore, open for discussion whether the Vocational Education Programme in the country has to cater to the needs of not only of school children but also drop outs at various levels. Those who reach Class X and XII form another important category for whom opportunities for diversion are to be provided if the aimless rush to university is to be avoided. Seen against this background, the capacity of polytechnics, ITIs, etc. is quite limited. Is a Vocational Education Programme on a much wider scale required to meet the needs of various target groups?

6. Considering the secondary and higher secondary education are important terminal stages in the system of general education system, various Commissions/Committees examining the question of educational reforms like the Radhakrishnan Commission (1948), Mudaliar Commission (1952), the Education Commission (1961-66) etc. underlined the need for vocationalisation of secondary education. The erstwhile National Policy on Education, 1968 also emphasised the importance of vocational education. A Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocational Education was thus launched by the Government of India in 1977 in 11 States and 4 UTs with the target of covering 2.5% of students at the higher secondary level. The scheme was, however, dis-continued in April 1979 pursuant to the decision of the National Development Council and outlays earmarked were merged with the State plans.

7. The National Policy on Education, 1986 accords high priority to vocationalisation at secondary stage and set up a target of diverting 10% students at +2 level to the vocational stream by 1995 and 25% by 2000 A.D. In pursuance of the above, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocationalisation of Secondary Education was launched in February 1988 with the following objectives.

- enhancing individual employability;
- reducing mis-match between demand and supply of skilled manpower;
- providing an alternative to those pursuing higher education without any aim or purpose.

8. For proper implementation, the scheme envisages setting up of separate management structure at various levels in each State i.e. Directorate, SCERT, Districts and schools. Substantial financial assistance is provided by the Central Government to

States/UTs including 100% assistance for construction of worksheds, procurement of equipment, district vocational surveys, workshops for development of curriculum/instructional material/text books and 50% for raw-material, field visits of students, stipend for Apprenticeship training and towards salary to the staff at all levels (75% in case of teaching posts). Already the Central Government has released an amount of Rs.488.82 crores under the Scheme. For the 8th Plan period, an amount of Rs.410.00 crores has been earmarked and an average 70-80 crores of rupees are being spent on the scheme per annum.

9. The programme has been started by all States/UTs (except Lakshadweep) and 18055 vocational sections have been sanctioned in 6280 schools all over the country, creating a capacity for vocational education for 9.02 lakh students at the +2 level. 151 courses are presently being offered under the scheme. The courses are to be selected on the basis of assessment of local demand through district vocational surveys to ensure training as per the needs of the job market.

10. Considering that about 80% of the student population does not go beyond class X forming a large pool of unskilled labour force, a Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Pre-Vocational Education at Lower Secondary stage was launched in 1993-94 with the following objectives:

- to impart training in simple marketable skills to students in Class IX & X:
- to develop vocational interests and aptitudes and to allow for self-exploration of vocational preferences;
- to prepare students for participation in work as a desired dimension of academic education; and
- to facilitate the students in making choice of vocational courses at higher secondary level.

11. A large infrastructure has thus been created for vocationalisation of education. A Central Institute of Vocational Education has also been set up at Bhopal as a constituent unit of NCERT, in July 1993 to provide technical and academic support to the Programme. However, although a lot has been achieved in physical terms, a number of problems have been witnessed at the field level resulting in under utilisation of capacity created. The management structure in many States has been weak/non-existent depriving the Programme of micro level attention, linkages with industry have

also been weak, district vocational surveys, teachers training has not been conducted, etc. All this has resulted in:

- Irrelevance of courses leading to a mis-match between labour market needs and the training skills
- Lack of focus on emerging areas of industrial development
- Inadequate syllabi being followed in schools and use of obsolete equipment
- Inadequate practical training skills acquired by the students with no real life shop level experience
- Lack of social acceptability
- Lack of employment opportunities
- Overall poor enrolment in vocational stream in such schools.

There have also been inadequate facilities for upgradation of skills acquired by the vocational graduates for improving their status in the professional market.

12. Initiative is, however, being taken to strengthen the programme to utilise effectively the vast infrastructure created under the Scheme. The focus in the recent years has been on consolidation and qualitative improvement of the Programme. Management structure in States is being strengthened, linkages with industry are being sought, apprenticeship training programme is being revamped and the gap in the area of curriculum/text books is being gradually filled up by the CIVE. A Synergy Group is also proposed to be set up involving representatives from Government institutions/industry/ experts. This would focus on all aspect of implementation of the current Vocational Education Programme including ways and means of involving the industry in a more meaningful manner.

ISSUE FOR DISCUSSION:

Keeping in view the above background, the following issues are for discussion:-

- Whether the school based system of vocational education being followed in the country is suitable to meet the current requirements.
- Whether separate vocational institutions should be set up at each block level. These could offer regular two year courses equivalent to +2 level, as well as courses of flexible duration for school drop outs at various levels.

- Whether the institutions like polytechnics and ITIs should be preferred to the school based vocational education programme being run currently.
- Whether the presently existing vocational institutes including polytechnics/ ITIs should be 'adopted' by industry
- Whether the 'academic stature' of vocational courses should be raised to degree level instead of diplomas being awarded now.