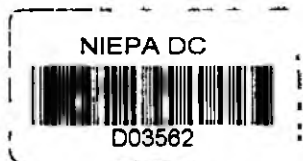


**Freedom to Learn  
Freedom to Grow**  
through  
**SAHODAYA SCHOOLS COMPLEX**

*An Exploratory Statement*



**CENTRAL BOARD OF SECONDARY EDUCATION  
NEW DELHI**

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## **Role of the Educational Process**

The document, "Challenge of Education" was a refreshingly candid and awakening call to examine the status quo in education and to look for meaningful and relevant initiatives. Except for a small percentage of the people, far too few to offer real to comfort, education has entered into a state of freeze for the past several years and represents for many today, a static reality. The challenge of education is to bring about a thawing, and ensure, once again, that the educational process remains basically and fundamentally a human resource developmental process.

Education has traditionally, been seen as a conservative activity, in the sense that its concern lies mainly with the past, conforms to the expectations and demands of the society and thus remains totally or mostly subservient and a sub-system. Another view, that has been gaining prominence in recent years, is that education has and should play a more aggressive, a more active and even a 'subversive' role, by making the people critically aware of their lives, both as individuals and also as members of society. This will make them personally aware and socially aware; personally accountable to themselves and socially accountable to society. We find in the education that exists in our country, both models operating, namely the conservative and the creative, though the conservative seems to be gaining ground over the creative. When

we look at the processes of history and the progress of change, we find that in spite of its conservative character, the educational process has produced leaders of change and of revolution in society. In other words, even within the several restraints of a traditional curriculum, conventions and prescriptions, individuals have been able to find cracks in the monolith, areas of freedom within a largely rule-bound structure and a hidden agenda to work on, within the bounds of the formal agenda. These brave men and women, though few in number, have shown that even within existing restraints, it is possible to open many windows and respond to a myriad of possibilities for progress, both personal and social. By retaining hope within what looked like a hopeless situation, they have not only themselves remained alive but have awakened hope in many others.

### **Responses from within Structures**

Gandhiji's personal character and background when confronted with the brutalized and dehumanized conditions of people, black, brown and white in South Africa, did not acquiesce in submissive retreat but touched and awakened the deepest core of his being and made him dream a dream when he returned and experienced the condition of his people in India. This dream was borne out of his personal experience of indignity and through sharing in the deep pathos of other human beings. This gave rise to his utopia, namely to make the Indian people free from what looked like the impossibly strong clutches of a foreign power. South Africa did not make Gandhi. But his South African experience and other experiences on his return to India provoked him, catalyzed him and awakened his own inner resources for resolute action. Standing on the ashes of a hopeless yesterday, he offered a vibrant and hope-filled tomorrow to his people. The response and the result we know today.

We can say something very similar about Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. Panditji brought with him tremendous personal

resources, but these got focus, sharpness and a sense of urgency on his contact with Gandhiji. So Nehru also, in the ultimate analysis, found himself, his deepest self, which enabled him to become the leader of modern India.

We can cite a host of others who have similarly been able to function effectively within a rigid system. They did not wait till the restraints, even when they looked irrational or impassable, were removed and a proper climate established for action. They worked within the structures, and within the irrationalities of the system. Each one of the us can point to several who have been able to find ways of remaining alive and remaining creative in spite of the system and through the system. And by doing so and by creating a space within the system to enable the system to gradually change as well. We can think of many heads of institutions, who have done this, whether in a school or university or in public and service institutions, or business houses, or industries etc. The challenge of education is an invitation to all to use the personal and collective resources to begin to work within the system and effect change in the system itself.

It has been a fairly common experience in the past that even those institutions which are very well endowed with excellent physical facilities, good and competent staff and a dynamic team leader as Principal, do not always find it possible to continue to remain open and innovative but having achieved a certain degree of excellence, tend to maintain status quo and remain in a state of freeze, not unlike frozen food, preserving indeed some of the original goodness, but unable to effect any real change thereafter. They have become prisoners and remained within the bars that they have created and attribute the creation of these bars and prisons to the system.

Who can release them from the bondage in which they are held captive? An external agency, a catalyst is often required to enable them to come alive again. Since schools,

remaining alone, behind the isolation of their own walls have not always found it possible to remain open and creative. Is'nt it possible, even likely, that schools coming together in collaborative partnership would be able to generate the kind of synergy, which will produce the miracle and disprove the long-held mathematical equation of  $1+1=2$  and produce instead the new equation, through synergy, of  $1+1=3, 4$  or more? Such coming together of schools, for the purpose of finding oneself and finding others, of rising not only alone but with others is the subject that we are exploring through this statement. Is it possible, through synergic alliance of schools to initiate a Sahodaya Movement? Can we establish a cluster of schools coming together to share dreams and purposes, to develop strategies and action plans and thus become a mutually supporting and inter-dependent school complex?

### **Why Sahodaya?**

Why not do it alone? It would be apropos to refer to the success story of the ONGC in discovering and extracting oil. One of the former Chairmen of ONGC had made this significant remark that "oil is found in the mind of man". Of course we know that oil is found, off-shore in the continental shell of Bombay High and on-shore in Gujerat, Assam, Cauvery Basin and else where. But what the Chairman meant was that unless man brings to this difficult task, special qualities of mind and heart, unless there is willingness and courage to explore under very inhospitable conditions, unless there is ability to create, to improvise, to change and to take appropriate decisions, unless there is the inner strength not to quit in the face of repeated failures, oil will remain largely undiscovered or at best under-discovered. Besides, such a big task is not possible without a team of committed persons working closely together, since the task is of an extremely complex nature and requires the coordinated competences of many to work in harmony.

We, therefore, believe that the extremely challenging and difficult task of education can best be done not alone but

together. We believe that the energising influence that would come from friendly interaction between schools will provide the catalyst and bring to the fore the dormant, creative energies existing in the different schools today. We believe that the biggest concentration of real resources and competences lie within the schools themselves and not outside them, in special agencies and experts. We believe that no amount of external support and much less no amount of regulations and directions will give life and substance to the educational process but it is in the discovery and development of the resources within that educational renewal must start. Those outside cannot initiate change that will last, though they can certainly provide facilitation, encouragement and support.

### **School Complex as Catalyst**

The Education Commission Report (1964-66), clearly saw the need for establishing School Complexes and strongly recommended that a collaborative approach to educational improvement should be tried out in the field. It is a sad commentary on our inability to move from idea to action that even today, School Complexes remain largely a good idea. The new National Policy on Education (1986) proposes an overhaul of the system of planning and the management of education, and gives this aspect high priority. In the Policy Document (10.1), the guiding considerations are listed as follows :-

- (a) "Evolving a long-term planning and management perspective of education and its integration with the country's developmental and manpower need;
- (b) Decentralisation and the creation of a spirit of autonomy for educational institutions;
- (c) Giving pre-eminence to people's movement, including association of non-governmental agencies and voluntary effort;
- (d) Inducting more women in the planning and management of education; and
- (e) Establishing the principle of accountability in relation to given objectives and norms."

While talking of ways and means of operationalising the above guiding principles, at the district and local levels, the Policy document states :

“A very important role must be assigned to the Head of an institution. Heads will be specially selected and trained. School complexes will be promoted on a flexible pattern so as to serve as networks of institutions and synergic alliances to encourage professionalism among teachers, to ensure observance of norms of conduct and to enable the sharing of experiences and facilities. It is expected that a developed system of school complexes will take over much of the inspection functions, in due course” (10.7).

### **National Conference Recommends**

Hence the National Conference of Principals of CBSE affiliated Schools, which met in New Delhi on October 4-6, 1986, resolved that the Board should invite schools to come together and form Sahodaya Schools Complexes. To quote the relevant recommendation :

“We accept the necessity for establishing School Complexes, which we have named ‘Sahodaya School Complexes’ so that the isolation that exists today between schools will give way to a spirit of partnership, and schools within the complex will work together and rise together.

Among the major responsibilities of the complex are :

- Professional orientation and updating of the teachers so as to enable them to transact the curriculum effectively;
- Development of suitable support materials and teaching aids;
- Mutual and on-going supervision of schools within the complex;



—Resource mobilisation both from within the complex and from those located outside, and for their optimal use.”

It is in pursuance of that recommendation and in order to make the recommendations move from idea to action, that this exploratory statement has been prepared and is being made available to all our constituent schools.

### **Beginning to Begin**

We believe that forced choices, through a prescription by the Board, designating specific schools to come together to form a cluster, will remain a non-starter. *Hence we envisage Sahodaya Schools Complex (SSC) as a voluntary association of schools within an area, who through mutual choices, have agreed to come together for a systematic and system-wide renewal of the total educational process.* Accordingly, the number of the schools within a complex may vary according to the location, and the density of schools in the area. It is up to the schools themselves to see what number of schools will make a viable proposition without making the complex too big and therefore unwieldy, which will also take away the sense of belonging to a reasonably small group of schools. Whether 5 or 10 or 20 schools will be a suitable number for the complex in an area is, therefore, a matter to be decided at the location itself, rather than from the Board. However, it may be mentioned that, as in certain chemical reactions, a critical mass of a particular substance is required for the action to begin. Accordingly the number of schools coming together should provide resources for mutual enrichment and which will also facilitate obtaining external resources when found necessary. It would be normal to expect that schools within a reasonably close area, bounded by the closeness of geography will want to come together. If SSC has to produce synergy, this is more likely to happen when the schools that come together are not narrowly of the same type. In other

words, if different schools under the same management and which have basically the same perspective come together, this is good, but in our context, this is not good enough. Such a complex would be merely perpetuating what already exists, but would find it difficult to go beyond it. On the other hand there are strong emotional barriers that exist between certain different categories of schools, such as government schools, aided schools and unaided schools. If we are to consider schools from another system, namely affiliated to another Board, the difficulty level rises appreciably. We would respect the freedom of choice of the concerned schools and let them choose what is *feasible operationally*, rather than give in to the temptation, at least in the first instance, of reaching for an ideal and remaining without any action. While we would very much like to see the narrow domestic walls that exist between different categories of schools to be dismantled sooner rather than later, the Board which wants to hurry, is willing to hurry slowly so as to make sure that definite movements begin to take place.

### **Role Definitions of SSC**

It must be stated clearly and strongly that when schools come together to form a Sahodaya Schools Complex, individual schools will continue to retain their own identity and character as a separate and distinct entity, while remaining open to giving and receiving from the members of the complex. In other words, SSC is not an instrument for merging of schools into a large and faceless collectivity, but rather a strengthening of individual institutions, not only through activities within, but through a certain amount of shared activities among the members of the complex.

If SSC has to make a real contribution for educational renewal, the areas of collaboration and mutual support should be of a substantive nature. Hence the role and functions of SSC will have to go, necessarily, beyond the holding of inter-school competitions in sports and other cultural activities and pro-

grammes, to identify which is the best of the lot. Specific areas for collaboration have to be decided by the complex itself. What is given below is a broad indication of some areas where such collaboration would have a telling effect on the member-schools, on the system and on its re-creation.

### **(a) Human Resource Mobilisation**

We believe that educational renewal of any lasting quality will not take place unless resources are readily available at the local level. The system of education, as it obtains today is highly passive keeping the student a receiver, an object rather than a subject of one's own education and thus making the person dependent and consequently non-creative. The malaise has spread also to the teachers and to the head of the institution, so that they have learnt to work within over-prescribed and over-defined boundaries. They wait for directions and orders in order to move. Conformity leading to uniformity is set up as the desired goal. The SSC provides an excellent medium for teachers to rediscover themselves and to identify those with special talents and abilities to unfold themselves into creative and competent persons. They will bring these resources not only to their own classrooms but to the large number of teachers within the complex. Not a slogan but a firm faith that the teachers are our most precious resources and with a little encouragement, facilitation and orientation, these can be the instruments of a real sea change in the educational process. This would seem the most fundamental and basic role of the SSC. Once the process of discovery and utilization of these resources are begun, it would become possible to bring together members from the different school complexes and through the coordination provided by the Board to widen the horizons further.

### **(b) Keeping the Teachers Professional**

The teachers hold the key to educational renewal. A major role and responsibility of the complex would be to find ways and means to improve, in practice, the teaching-learning

process. Hence, a systematic orientation has to be given to every teacher of every subject from the beginning class to the top class, in everyone of the member schools of the complex. This will remain a major task and will present a great challenge to the complex. Remaining professional means that the knowledge has not gone out of date. It would also mean that new technologies that are available in the teaching-learning process, have been accepted and are used effectively in the classroom. Even more than knowledge and competences, the professional is defined by a set of attitudes, by a set of values or by the quality of commitment of the person to a pattern of behaviour. Once a firm beginning is made in this direction and materials, teaching aids, training packages etc. are developed, the Board could act as the coordinator between different school complexes so as to make these available to all.

### **(c) Value-Oriented School Climate**

This is another area that could be positively and creatively explored by the complex. The National Policy lays much stress on making education value-oriented. We are currently all too aware of the drastic consequences of a value-free or a neutral education. We are becoming more and more anxious in our forebodings, of the future of our country, if the present trends were to continue. Moving away from stereotypes and making provision for a certain number of segregated units of instruction on value education, the search should be to find ways of fully integrating key values as contained in the Preamble to the Constitution and the Directive Principles and from the culture and ethos of our country as well as from the demands of a modern secular state into appropriate places in the actual curriculum both scholastic and non-scholastic. This will help facilitate internalization of values rather than keep them separate and therefore once again an item for purposes of examination and for obtaining marks. An area of urgent imperative for action.

## **(d) Evaluation**

Evaluation is another major area in need of urgent reform. The over-stress placed on external examinations conducted by the Board, has to a great extent, distorted the priorities in the school system. As a result, schools have become largely places for preparation of students for examinations. Examinations have, in turn, been equated with obtaining marks. Reducing education to examination and examination, in turn, to obtaining marks has grossly distorted the face and nature of education. Thus the educational process has become the biggest casualty. The complex can devise better approaches to internal assessment and could also be the moderating agency for common examinations, at certain levels, if so decided by the complex members.

## **(e) Educational Management**

The Policy correctly stresses the important role that must be assigned to the head of an educational institution and the selection and training of that person. Modern educational management theory and practices still lie largely outside the knowledge and acceptance of many heads of institutions. Many tend to remain over-lords in their own small kingdom, in the case of schools under private management, or in the case of Government school heads, languish under the burden of rules and procedures, set and remotely controlled by the Departments. Effective decentralisation cannot be done, along with the consequent grant of needed freedom or autonomy, unless the heads of institutions are sufficiently prepared and oriented to accept responsibility. Responsible freedom is quite a hot item to handle. The major role of the complex would seem to lie, therefore, in making the heads of institutions within the complex modern educational managers.

—A manager dreams.

—A manager plans and sets out purposes and objectives in consultation with one's colleagues.

- A manager looks for effective ways of ensuring that objectives are converted into strategies and action plans.
- A manager implements what has been decided upon.
- A manager reviews the process of implementation, makes modifications, where necessary, so that the process represents more of a spiral, an ever widening spiral.

Modern management is a participative process and hence the manager must have the ability to communicate, and have the strength to become a team leader, building on the strengths of each of the members. He produces the magic of creating a whole that is much larger than the sum of its parts. The SSC can creatively explore ways in which the head can become a resource, develop oneself and develop others. Another area for exploration by the complex.

### **(f) School Supervision**

Distant control, highly elaborate set of rules and regulations and narrow pre-occupations with the fulfilment of norms and conditions is the existing model of school inspections whether by the Board or by the Department of Education. The larger the size of the Board or of the State, the less effective such supervision and the less frequent. Even with the mounting of a huge inspectorate staff, and maintaining it at such a high cost, inspections have often deteriorated into formal and administrative routines, which rather than release the schools from its stereotypes, has often helped to maintain the status quo and with official approval. Hence it is proposed that the schools within the complex may be supervised by a team, selected by the complex itself. Supervision will then become mutual, friendly and on-going. It is not that the Board or the Department will have nothing to do with the affiliated/recognised schools or that it will cease to lay down norms and conditions, rules and regulations.

In fact the Board, in consultation with schools, may come up with guidelines for the total supervision of the school, both administrative and even more so, academic. But the actual supervision will be passed on to the complex itself, for the most part, in the firm belief that it will be done better. Some schools may have certain fears or qualms about one school supervising another. It is entirely possible that this may prove to be a passing fear, since even at present, schools are inspected by heads of other institutions, though at the direction and with the authority of the Board. The only change will be that the direction will come from within the complex itself. Being members of the same complex, such supervision will tend to become more supportive, more understanding and hence these visits will become developmental in character. It will replace the present summative inspection with the more desirable formative supervision. The Board will then have only to visit affiliated schools occasionally and more to learn from and about them, since the responsibility for most of the administrative and academic supervision will have passed on to the school complex.

### **(g) Vocationalisation**

The process of introducing relevant vocational courses in our schools has been painfully slow throughout the country. Our Board is no exception. In order to reach and go beyond the target of a minimum of 10% of our schools and its students opting for vocation-oriented courses by 1990 and moving to the higher target of 25% by 1995, a major effort will be required by the schools and school complexes to identify appropriate vocational courses, make the needed linkages with industries and potential employers in the area, so that the courses are tailor-made, training inputs are made a part of the course design and placements, after training, become easier. Sharing of facilities will have to be done.

### **The Pay Offs of SSC**

There is a great deal of insulation and looking inward by schools. Linkage with other schools in friendly colla-

boration, will make it possible for these schools to reach out and experience growth. Psychologically and spiritually, the unifying self remains the unfulfilled self. Schools, through sharing, will discover their own resources of richness and will be in a position to share even more. Such sharing will take place without the schools losing their own specific character and identity. There is no intention on the part of the Board to make a 'commune' out of the different schools in an area. This is why even choice of partners is being left to the discretion of the schools themselves.

Such coming together of schools of different categories will effectively battle the danger of elitism in education. It will break down many existing barriers and build many new bridges and open many new avenues for exploration.

Energized by one another, the schools can become much more purposeful, more goal-oriented and engage in relevant institutional planning for development of students and staff. The constant encouragement and support from other schools will provide motivation to continue this effort. Visibility has its threats but it also has its rewards.

Once the school complexes are established in different parts of the country, it would be possible for these complexes to come together for mutual sharing of experiences and learning from one another for wider action and bolder ventures.

The School Complex could serve as a very natural and effective medium for sharing in the national effort for universalisation of education upto the age of 14. The commitment of the Nation to provide education for all could also become the shared commitment of the school complex and for the geographical area covering the complex. The number of illiterates, semi-literates etc. would become known through a survey of the area covering the whole complex and concrete action plans can be developed so that the



students and the teachers of the complex will have a share in the national task of assisting everyone in the complex to reach and then pass class V or VIII or even class X. This could be done either through the Open School of the CBSE or Open Schools being planned in different States.

Sharing and out-reach will also mean frequent likeages with the Department of Education/NCERT/SCERT and the Board, not in a superior-inferior relationship, but as partners in progress and who have shared commitments for the same goals. While the latter may have specific administrative jurisdiction, their academic relationship would be very different. It will also provide a ground and a grass root base for national institutions as well as the Board to make their own work more relevant and effective.

### **From Theory to Practice**

Through the cluster idea had been proposed more than two decades ago, it has yet to receive a firm and sustained try-out. The CBSE offers a national base for this innovation, since we have affiliated schools spread all over the country in all the States and Union Territories as also in several countries abroad. Under the same umbrella of CBSE, several categories of schools are affiliated:

- All the schools of Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan;
- Schools established directly by the concerned Service Wings of the Defence Ministry to provide education for children of the Defence Personnel, and administered by the Army, Air Force, the Navy, the Border Security or the schools under the management of Sainik School Society;
- Schools of the Tibetan School Society;
- Those established by the Public Sector Undertakings of the Government of India;
- Schools in the U.T, of Delhi, Chandigarh, Arunachal Pradesh, A & N Islands, either directly run by the Department of Education or aided by the Department;

- All the schools in the State of Sikkim;
- A large number of schools under Private Management including those which are members of the Indian Public Schools Conference; and
- Schools in foreign countries, run either by the Indian Missions abroad or by Private groups to serve the needs of the Indian community there.

In phase one, it is important that a good beginning is made than that it should conform to ideal expectations. That is why the selection of schools, which would come together to form as complex, should be through mutual choices. While geographical contiguity will play a factor in the choice, the schools are being asked to make choices on their own. If at this time, we look for an ideal and impose conditions on schools, that are beyond them, we will be left with the ideal and no practice.

A question may be raised by some schools whether the Board imposes an obligation on every school to be part of one or the other complex. The present answer is that the schools are expected to but are not obliged to do so. Once the complex idea gets underway and becomes operational in many parts of the country, a time will have come to take a further decision whether all schools should belong to one or the other complex. However, since this is a decision that lies in the future, no directions are being given in this regard for the time being. For the present, our norm is : hurry but hurry slowly so as to ensure that we reach somewhere.

Again the roles and functions mentioned above are given merely as some basic and urgent areas for exploration by the school complexes. If a question is asked whether every complex is expected to begin to work, in every one of those areas, the answer is that this is left to the wise choices of the concerned complexes. Staff development and staff orientation to enable them to transact the curriculum more effectively, the optimum utilization of resources within the complex itself and friendly

and continuing supervision of schools from within the complex etc. are some major areas, in which we expect the complex to initiate action sooner rather than later. However, for the moment, no firm prescriptions are imposed on the school complex, but are to run at their own pace.

It is expected, though, that the complex, once it becomes operational will keep on exploring more and more avenues as it begins to discover more and more talent within the members of the complex. And with increasing productivity and accountability to the members, it is envisaged that the cluster will enjoy a greater and greater degree of autonomy in various ways. Several of the decisions that today are taken by the Board may then be transferred to the complex itself. It is also possible to think of those clusters, that have attained certain breadth and length and depth in its functioning becoming accredited institutions of the Board, even while the individual institutions remain affiliated with the Board.

In order to make the school complex work in the true spirit of Sahodaya, it is extremely important that a suitable Director of the Complex be chosen. The person chosen should have the needed qualities of being a democratic team leader, and possess necessary qualities of mind and heart to bring people to work at the goals that the group has set for itself. What would be term for the Director of the Complex, the conditions of appointment of the Director and other such details are at best decided by the complex members at this stage. If the number of schools forming a complex is large, whether to function through direct meeting of all the participating schools or through the intermediary of an Advisory Committee or an Executive Committee, is again a matter to be considered by the complex itself. Obviously, all the heads of the institutions will have to meet from time to time for purposes of planning, for finding ways and means of effective implementation and for review.

There is much meaninglessness in education today. There is also boredom and a great deal of repetition of yesterday

into today. The school complex can appreciably take steps to ensure that learning becomes

- more functional
- more joyful, and
- more lasting.

## Epilogue

The National Policy wants us to face the problem of educational reconstruction, by seeing it in the perspective of a series of challenges. These challenges can become even more attractive, by seeing them as opportunities. Fighting problems has got many of us down and battle-weary. Facing challenges is a more interesting task, but responding to an opportunity has its own built-in attraction and motivation. If schools affiliated with CBSE can meaningfully and firmly initiate the Sahodaya movement, we will have created something revolutionary in the process of education. For the schools it will mean a voyage of discovery, discovering oneself and discovering others.

We invite everyone of our schools to meet with the schools in the neighbourhood and discuss the possibilities of coming together as a complex. It is heartening that in the wake of the National Conference of CBSE School Principals, the beginning initiatives for Sahodaya School Complexes have already been taken in different parts of the country, by Heads of our Schools and by the Regional Officers. The SSC offers freedom to learn and even greater freedom to grow. That is why we extend the invitation to every school to join this movement, the Sahodaya movement. We await your response

2. 1. 1987

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