

GOVERNMENT OF SIKKIM
Report on Challenge of Education
- A policy perspective -



Prepared by the Ministry of Education
Government of Sikkim

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MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE NEW EDUCATION POLICY

(A) Aims and Values :

- (1) Greater emphasis on character development and social values with emphasis on integration of the nation through a balanced curriculum.
- (2) The perspectives of Culture evolved through regional traditions to be emphasised in the National perspective.
- (3) Curriculum to be activity/experience based in the relevant socio-economic context.

(B) Co-curricular Activities :

- (1) Emphasis on environment related educational programmes through 'outward bound' education.
- (2) Treks, Excursions and Adventure activities to be made an important part of the child's educational process.
- (3) Facilities for specific indoor and outdoor games to be made available in all schools.
- (4) Centres for hobbies, skill development and cultural programmes to be developed with emphasis on regional music, folk-lore, dance and drama.

(C) Pre-Primary Education :

- (1) Instruction in English and mother tongue.
- (2) Integration of the I.C.D.S (Anganvadi) educational programme with Pre-Primary schools for children 4+ years of age. (The Health and Nutrition programmes to be with I.C.D.S centres)
- (3) Emphasis on basic skills and values of social systems.

(D) Primary Education :

- (1) Emphasis on English and mother tongue as mediums of instruction.
- (2) Social Studies to incorporate culture and regional ethos within the social system prevalent.
- (3) Educational content to be focussed on local environment.

(E) Secondary Education :

- (1) Use of Hindi to be strengthened according to the three-language formula.
- (2) Education to be "thought" and "ideas" oriented.
- (3) Social Studies to incorporate Indian History & Culture and Regional Geography.
- (4) Emphasis on National Perspective for evolution of a democratic socialistic pattern of society.
- (5) Development of Skills for leisure utilisation.

(F) Senior Secondary Education :

- (1) Social Service and adventure programmes to be taken up by children during vacation in various parts of the country.
- (2) Awareness of issues confronting the country to be discussed and opportunities provided for exchange of ideas on issues.

- (3) Vocational education facilities to be available as per aptitude.
- (4) Education should provide international perspective and be broad based.

(G) Higher Education :

- (1) Greater emphasis on research, original ideas and experimentation in various courses.
- (2) Social service camps to be made compulsory for completing graduate courses.
- (3) Colleges should have sufficient freedom to develop teaching and research programmes.
- (4) Delinking of degrees from specific job requirements to be taken up after vocational centres are available to all seeking admission.

(H) Miscellaneous :

- (1) In States where there has not been a growth of quality educational institutions, Model Schools to be opened with financial assistance of the Central Government managed by *autonomous* boards established by the States.
- (2) The growth of schools providing Sectarian/Class based education should be curbed.
- (3) Established Sectarian/denominational schools should follow the national pattern and policy of education.
- (4) Central financing for specific educational programmes to be made available to all schools at centres in districts.
- (5) The growth of schools providing for upper class orientation should be curtailed. All schools to be provided equal opportunities for growth within a specific framework of programmes and goals.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF ETHNIC AND ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE IN THE STATE

While the country debates a new challenge in education, keeping pace with the rapid progress in science, technology, economic growth and social values, it is important to keep in mind that progress in these spheres, in some States, has been far below the levels prevalent, particularly in metropolitan cities, where schools have had privileges to a certain degree.

Sikkim has ethnic groups which have vital requirements of their own. While the majority community speaks Nepali a sizable number speak Bhutia, Lepcha and Limboo languages :

It has therefore been the practice in the State to provide education through English - so that there is a common link in the national perspective.

English as the major language provides harmony within the communities and allows for a sense of freedom from imposition of ideology within diverse social systems.

Ethnic groups have cultural affiliations specific to the region which need to be strengthened and propagated through the education system prevalent, avoiding anglicised attitudes.

It is also important to bear in mind that the economic growth of Sikkim has been at least two decades behind that of most States. Economic opportunities for growth of industrial units utilising modern technology has to be stepped up to ensure equal opportunities to all in the national perspective.

While change in education policy is meant to improve the quality of life in all regions it should therefore be important to infuse sufficient economic growth in the region to absorb the manpower developed.

Changes in structure of education must blend within the economic perspective projected in the national context keeping in mind a balanced growth in co-related spheres.

REPORT OF THE DISCUSSIONS ON CHALLENGE OF EDUCATION
- A new Education Policy -

Introduction

Education is the most important sub system of any society. Any system to function properly and efficiently requires regular feedback and must remain dynamic. This is more so in the case of the educational system which must be relevant to the needs of society. It is hoped that the new educational policy will be instrumental in rejuvenating and updating the existing system; and for this, the views and suggestions of a cross-section of society must be taken into account. Priorities have to be identified, deliberated upon, finalized and implemented, only then we can hope to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. To elicit the views of the cross-section of society the following steps were taken :

- (i) Seminars at school, college, district and state level were held.
- (ii) Expert committees were formed; they gave their suggestions/recommendations on various key issues.
- (iii) Retired civil servants, politicians, educationists, social workers, professionals outside education, eminent persons, journalists, businessmen, students and others.
- (iv) Essay competitions for students and teachers were organized.
- (v) Debates, panel discussions and radio talks were organized.

POLICY PRIORITIES

Universalisation of elementary education :

In keeping with issues of access, equity and minimum there should be available good quality elementary education to all children irrespective of their caste, sex, creed, economic status and region -- a commitment enshrined in the Constitution. As discussed at length earlier, this commitment was to be fulfilled by 1960. A section of educational planners have, however, been arguing that this will stand fulfilled as soon as the enrolment reaches a particular participation ratio. This view is difficult to accept. Education is not a ritual. It cannot be taken as having been delivered till a child has reached the level of attainment envisaged as a norm for a 14 years old boy or girl, with drop-out rates ranging around 77% of enrolment.

Free and compulsory education of children in age group 6-14 is a constitutional imperative. Enrolment of children in this age group has not posed much of a problem, for a school exists within the walking distance of a child. It is the retention of the enrolled that is a serious threat to this national imperative. It is time to consider the problem on two fronts.

PRIMARY STAGE

(Age group 6-11)

During the last decade the number of primary schools has increased by 109%, the number of primary school going children has increased from 18,057 to 62,810, i.e. about 247%; the number of teachers has increased by 308% from 811 to 3310. Despite these encouraging figures we have not achieved universalization of education. In the light of these facts it was suggested that :

- (i) All possible help of the community should be taken. In case, it is not forthcoming voluntarily, an educational cess may be levied. The revenue from this cess may be used to improve physical facilities in the school.
- (ii) It is not possible to cover everyone through Formal system, thus more stress should be laid on Non-Formal and Adult Education. It was the general consensus that Non-Formal system of education was the only solution for those who had either missed or had dropped out of the formal system of education.
- (iii) Taking into account the scarcity of resources, it may not be possible to equip the existing schools with physical facilities and staff. 'School Clusters' and 'School Complexes' was considered the only answer to this gigantic problem of providing funds.
- (iv) It was suggested that an elaborate and realistic scheme of rewarding the 'Enrolment & Retention Achievers' be practised.
- (v) One of the major reasons for the heavy dropout rate (60%) was the large percentage of detainees in Annual promotional examination. It was recommended that promotion policy up to class III (Lower primary) be reviewed. The view that up to class III general promotion be given was not carried through but it was generally opined that promotion policy should be moderated.

MIDDLE STAGE

(Age group 12-14)

It has been argued that, under Indian conditions, no single approach is likely to make much headway in the near future in imparting education beyond the age of 11, particularly among the poor, in the rural areas. A holistic model has, therefore, been proposed in which, with the help of Anganwadis under the Integrated Child Development Scheme health, hygiene and nutrition would be provided. Pre-primary education would be provided for two years and thereafter, in continuation and conjunction, at the same location, primary education would be organised, by the education department. This would be evaluated by public examination on the basis of which admissions would be made for further continuation of education from class VI to VII.

The major problem at this stage still remains retention, especially of girl students from economically weaker sections of society, SC and ST. The main recommendations at this stage were :

- (i) More hostel facilities and free boarderships should be provided so that pupils living far away from Junior Secondary Schools can remain in schools and complete their education at least up to class VIII.

- (ii) After a lot of deliberation, it was generally accepted that it would not be desirable to start vocational education at this level. The starting of vocational guidance and counselling cells at Middle level was stressed to guide children as per their talents.
- (iii) Physical facilities/opportunities for sports and games, nature rambles; should be improved, thereby making the schools more attractive.
- (iv) Work in schools is to be activity-oriented so that children do not cram from text book to gain promotion.
- (v) Promotion policy should be rationalized, i.e. it should be based on subject, wise evaluation and grading instead of the present group-wise pass classification.

2. Pre- Primary Education :

Some studies have shown that the children who are involved in pre-primary education through Angan-vadis under the Integrated Child Development Scheme tend to participate in education to a much greater extent at later stages. Based upon this experience and also keeping in view the compulsion of girls to look after their domestic chores, a wholly different approach to elementary education has also been suggested integrating the system within the education department.

There are 328 ICDS centres in the State having an estimated enrolment of 10,000 children. Integrated services combining education, health, nutrition and welfare are essential for the development of a child, especially in the rural areas, where these must get highest priority. It is an accepted medical fact that lack of proper food in the pre-school age can cause irreparable damage to the brain of a child. In the light of this, it was recommended :

- (i) That there should be at least two years of pre-primary schooling before the child is admitted to class I. Two years in the pre-primary would prepare the child for class I, thereby helping a great deal in better performance.
- (ii) The issue of combining pre-primary and Integrated Child Development Centres was well debated upon leading to the concensus that in the best interest of the child both these should remain as separate entities with education under competent teachers and health and nutrition under the prevalent scheme.
With a view to streamlining the enrolment to both these Centres it was suggested to have children from 2 1/2 + to 4 years in the ICDS and 4 + in Pre-primary. Age of entry to class I was to be 6 +.
- (iii) It was stressed that each of the 405 revenue blocks in the State should have an I.C.D.S. Centre and each of the primary schools should have a pre-primary Centre.
- (iv) As the medium of instruction in the State schools was English, efforts should be made to improve standard of English for school Mothers.
- (v) That an integrated two years content-cum-methodology course leading to trained school mothers should be started by the Education Department to integrate them with the I.C.D.S programmes.

Quality of Education :

It is difficult to define quality, particularly with reference to educational processes. However, it could be stated that a quality conscious system would produce people who have the attributes of functional and social relevance, mental and agility physical dexterity, efficiency and reliability and, above all, the confidence and the capability to communicate effectively and exercise initiative, be innovative and experiment with new situations. To these personal attributes, one could add the dimension of value system conducive to harmony, integration and the welfare of the weak and the disadvantaged. Regarding this matter, there is universal disenchantment, where learning is mainly by rote and the pupils do not get training in how to learn to think, how to evaluate, where content is irrelevant and does not prepare for employment. The education leading to mere certification, over politicised and in the clutches of bureaucrats and having only semblance of inspection and supervision, parents and students, teachers and administrators have to set themselves re-thinking. After long debates and deliberations the following recommendations were finalised :

- (i) It was the general consensus that class VIII should be the first Terminal point. Students leaving schooling at this point and entering the world of work should not be stigmatised as 'Drop-outs'. It was also recommended that instead of group pass system, as was the practice, it should be subject-wise grading. The *raison-d, etre* for this was that if a student does well in Science subjects at class VIII, why should he/she not be considered for selection for a vocation requiring knowledge only of Science subjects.
- (ii) It was also recommended that there should be no Pass/Fail at class VIII, instead the certificate should mention about the student having completed eight(8) years of schooling successfully.
- (iii) There was a general disenchantment about quality of teachers. It was strongly felt that selection and training of teachers (especially periodic in-service training and orientation) should be made more rigorous.
- (iv) Much depended upon inspection and supervision of schools. Instead of being fault-finding missions, the visits by inspecting officers/officials should facilitate better quality education.

Teacher Training :

In the case of teacher training, the problem is not of equity or access but of relatively low standard of candidates. Considering the role assigned to education and the crucial position of teachers in it, it is necessary that recruitment and training of teachers should be regulated through stringent aptitude and attainment tests, giving special consideration to SCIENCE students, sportsmen and people with manual dexterity and wider interests.

There is general acceptance regarding the need for improvement in pre-service training of teachers. A teacher has to keep himself abreast of new horizons of knowledge and technology, thus the need for regular in-service training and orientation of trained teachers which unfortunately is not possible for us. We have, at present, no way out except to recruit freshers and subject them

to in-service training. In order to improve quality of education in the State, we have to :

- (i) Enlist class X Board pass candidates and subject them to a two-year integrated content-cum-methodology course leading to class XII plus training certificate.
- (ii) Sikkim has a large backlog of un-trained teachers. This can be cleared only through a crash teachers training programme during the period of vacations.
- (iii) It was strongly felt that a full-fledged B.Ed training college should be established in the State. A 4 year integrated course leading to B.A./B.Sc. B.Ed. should be started for class XII pass students.
- (iv) Requirement of Primary teachers in the State was around 100 teachers per year. In the light of this, it was suggested that either we open one more Teachers Training Institute or we start vocational programmes in some selected schools for teachers training.
- (v) It was suggested that in-service training programmes should be made mandatory for every teacher once every 5 years.
- (vi) As we do not have much infrastructure in our State as yet, we should take advantage of agencies like N.C.E.R.T., N.I.E.P.A., British Council in India, Regional Colleges of education, C.C.R.T. and C.I.H, Agra. etc. etc.

Vocationalisation of Education :

It needs to be clearly stated that vocational courses are not confined to +2 stage (i.e. classes XI to XII) only. Depending on interest of the pupils, such courses can and should be made available even after class V (along with middle level scholastic course) or after class VIII or even after class XII of academic stream, for those who would not pursue higher education. Most of courses would, however, be for post-10th stage. Another point about which clarity is necessary is vocations that include courses in agriculture, business and commerce, health and para-medical services, home science, etc. These courses are not ment to duplicate the work of such institutions as ITIs and Polytechnics - which train manpower primarily for the organised secondary sector. Instead, these are identified in response to the felt training needs on the basis of socio-economic surveys and would mainly respond to self-employment and service sector needs of the community.

Reverting to an earlier line of reasoning regarding the place of vocational education, it is still to be decided as to whether one of the streams of vocationalization would be an integral part of the +2 stream or the entire system of vocational education would constitute an entirely independent institutional arrangement or an altogether new model should be evolved in which vocational training would be imparted in conjunction with technical institutions for higher education or production centres. This decision would have far-reaching implications regarding the cost, quality and management of vocational education.

It is known fact that not all students entering school complete their education upto secondary level. Most of them drop out (75% up to class VIII) at different levels of schooling. Again, most of the school leavers after class X and XII are forced to join the world of work without any skill. Experience suggests that there is a general trend of going to school/college for obtaining a degree and thereafter adding to the list of educated unemployed, while the country needs skilled persons

in all fields. Little has been done to achieve this target in our State. Industrially we are still backward. It was suggested that we plan :

- (i) To conduct District and State level surveys and identify areas. On the basis of this alone, we can plan our manpower needs and organize vocational courses.
- (ii) It was recommended to start vocational courses at two schools for training primary teachers. The students opting for these should be paid a reasonable stipend.
- (iii) Seeing the general dearth of good steno-typists, it was proposed to open this course for girls.
- (iv) Economy of Sikkim was basically agricultural. In the light of this, courses should be opened at places where training facilities and infra-structure are available (in collaboration with Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Department).

Role of voluntary organisations :

Our country's history of modern education is full of contributions made by social service societies and voluntary organisations. Great political and religious leaders as well as seers and sages transformed their vision of the country's future by establishing educational institutions and by training young minds to shoulder responsibilities of mass education, social reform and cultural advancement. Although a large number of men and women continue to work through voluntary agencies, there is an enormous scope to increase their involvement. wherever possible, effort should be made to entrust responsibility for formal or non-formal education, of young minds as well as of adults, to voluntary agencies.

In Sikkim, the contribution and involvement of voluntary agencies has been more than commendable. It was the general consensus that the Government had already provided sufficient facilities in the field of formal education; it was non-formal and adult education centres that required support and supervision by voluntary bodies. It was heartening to note that the Members of the Legislative Assembly came forward to shoulder the responsibility of supervising the running of these centres with the help of community leaders. It was also the consensus at all levels that more and more bodies (non-political) should come forward to educate the unfortunates who had missed the formal school system.

Access to Higher Education :

In case of higher education, particularly at the Intermediate stage, the problem is not of access but of preventing waste of scarce resources in producing a large number of unemployables. Diversification of courses had to be undertaken with a view to establishing greater relevance to personal development, socio-economic problems and the world of work. Although there is need to induct only those who have both the scholastic aptitude and proficiency, it was not possible to adopt such measures at this stage in Sikkim.

Since Sikkim had a completely different scenario as compared to other sister states and had only one college, no university or centre for higher learning, it would be irrelevant to strictly follow admissions on the basis of scholastic aptitudes. At least for the next five years we do not recommend any embargo on college admissions. In the same manner, we cannot afford to put a moratorium on

the opening of new colleges or a University, rather more colleges should be opened in keeping with the requirements of the State.

The philosophy of de-linking of degrees from jobs is an excellent one but we have to defer it for some time. We must conduct an in-depth study on the subject in the State before we implement it.

It was the general opinion that colleges and centres of higher learning should be given more autonomy for better and smoother functioning.

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