

A PLAN FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

SL-IOD

IO027617



373.54

EDU-P, 1955

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
1955

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA.

A PLAN FOR
SECONDARY EDUCATION

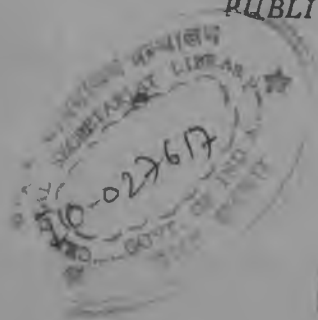


MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
1955.

IOD
373.54
EDU-P, 1955

ED. 117
15,000

PUBLICATION No. 181



~~IOD
378
EDU~~
IND-P

Cover designed by T. K. Mehta

Price As. -|3|- or 4d.

FOREWORD

The need for reform and reorganisation of Secondary education in India has been recognised for many decades and proposals to that effect have been under discussion for at least 40 years. There have been long and continuous debates about the duration of the course, the nature and content of the syllabus and the aims and objects of Secondary education in relation to society and the individual. Commissions and committees have examined the question time and again and made recommendations which have been uniformly acclaimed but not generally implemented.

The publication of the Report of the Mudaliar Commission has highlighted both the need for and interest in a radical re-orientation of Indian Secondary education. A new urgency was given to the task by the emergence of India as a free democratic republic. Secondary education must on the one hand train up the large body of intermediary leaders who are needed for the effective functioning of such a State and on the other, help to select the smaller band of higher leadership to guide its overall policies. The decision to remodel Elementary education on the Basic pattern has made such reorientation of Secondary education even more urgent and necessary.

Long and detailed discussion and consultation among the Central Government, the State Governments, the Universities and the Boards of Secondary Education have taken and are taking place. In a series of Seminars and study camps organised since 1953, headmasters and others immediately concerned with the administration of Secondary education have discussed and are discussing the measures proposed. It appears that agreement has at last been reached in respect of both the aims and objects and the nature and content of Secondary education. A joint Conference of Vice-Chancellors and Chairman of Boards of Secondary Education held in January this year came to unanimous conclusions that were amplified and supported by the Central Advisory Board of Education. Later, the Inter-University Board endorsed the findings without a single dissent.

(ii)

The Central and the State Governments have now moved to the stage of taking specific action to implement the agreements. It can now be said that the reorientation of Secondary education in India has definitely begun.

It is, however, necessary to ensure that there is a clear understanding of what exactly is the pattern of Secondary education which has met with such support. The first stages in reorientation have a decisive influence on the progress of reform. If the schools which are upgraded first have been selected carefully and have the necessary staff, equipment and other facilities for carrying out the purposes of the reform, the success of the scheme is assured. The movement will gather momentum with initial success. This will make it easier to overcome obstacles and resolve difficulties that may from time to time arise. If on the other hand, there is any set-back in the initial stages, it is bound to have an adverse effect on the whole movement for reform.

In spite of long and repeated discussions, it appears that there is still uncertainty in certain quarters about the implications of the proposals. This brochure seeks to describe as clearly and briefly as possible the main features of the scheme and meet some of the plausible objections and criticisms. It is hoped that it will help to resolve doubts, remove grounds for possible misunderstanding and place before the various authorities concerned as well as the general public a clear picture of the proposals that have now been accepted after careful examination by the various expert bodies and indicate the direction in which Secondary education in India is moving.

In conclusion, I would like to thank Shri Veda Prakasha of the Ministry of Education for helping me in the preparation of this brochure.

Humayun Kabir
Educational Adviser to
the Government of India.

11th April, 1955.

A PLAN FOR SECONDARY EDUCATION

Secondary education is admittedly the weakest joint in our educational machinery and needs urgent reform. In his inaugural address to the Central Advisory Board of Education, at its last meeting Maulana Azad said " ...I think you will all agree that this (Secondary education) has till now been the weakest link in the Indian educational chain. It is yet in a sense decisive in determining the quality of education both at the Secondary and the collegiate levels. Secondary schools supply teachers for Elementary schools and students for colleges and other institutions of higher level. An unsatisfactory system of Secondary education undermines the entire system of education in the country."

In order to remedy this state of affairs, the Government of India have decided to reorganise Secondary education on the lines indicated in the following Resolution of the Central Advisory Board of Education passed at its last (22nd) Meeting held at New Delhi from 12th to 14th January, 1955 :

"The Board after very careful consideration of the stage of termination of Secondary education and the qualifications necessary for entry into the universities arrived at the following unanimous conclusions :

- (a) The first Degree course should be of three years and 17+ should be the minimum age for entry into universities.
- (b) The end of Secondary education at 17+ should mark a terminal stage in education and prepare students for life. It should also be of a standard which would enable them to participate with profit in a three-year Degree course.
- (c) The Government of India be requested to appoint a Committee to draw up an integrated syllabus for the School Final Examination to achieve the above objective.
- (d) The last class of the Secondary stage should be called the 11th class and may be reached *after* schooling of not less than ten years, the actual duration of

the school system in the various States to be determined by the State Governments concerned.

"This Board is of opinion that for the implementation of these recommendations, it is necessary that financial assistance in a liberal measure should be provided by the Central Government and the State Governments. This Board, therefore, requests the Central and State Governments and the Planning Commission to provide necessary finances in the second Five-Year Plan for the implementation of these recommendations."

A similar Resolution was passed earlier by the Conference of Vice-Chancellors and Chairmen of Boards of Secondary Education, held at New Delhi on 8th January 1955 (for text of the Resolution see Annexure 'A'), and endorsed by the Inter-University Board at its meeting at Patna held on 25th January, 1955.

In general, the future pattern of education, as envisaged in the above-mentioned Resolution of the Central Advisory Board of Education, will be as follows :

- (a) Eight years of integrated Elementary (Basic) education. This stage will generally cover the period from six to 14, but the last year of this stage may well be used as an exploratory year to find out the aptitude and interest of the pupil ;
- (b) three years of Secondary education proper where there will be a marked diversification of courses. This will generally cover the period from 14 to 17+ ; and
- (c) three years of University education after the Higher Secondary school, leading to the first Degree.

It will be noticed that this pattern differs in some minor respects from that suggested by the Secondary Education Commission. It will be in place, therefore, briefly to recapitulate the relevant recommendation of the Commission and indicate the reasons for departing from it. This Commission which was appointed by the Government of India in October 1952, recommended the following new organisational structure for Secondary education after the four or five years of Primary or Junior Basic education :

- (i) A Middle or Junior Secondary or Senior Basic stage which should cover a period of three years.

- (ii) A Higher Secondary stage which should cover a period of four years.

A study of the Report of the Commission will reveal that while it gives a very competent analysis of the problems of Secondary education and suggests remedies for them, it leaves the question of the duration of the Secondary stage undecided. On the one hand, it suggests an increase of one year in the Secondary stage meaning thereby that the total duration of schooling at the pre-University stage will be at least 11 years (even in States where the School Leaving Certificate is now taken at the end of ten years); on the other, it envisages a Secondary stage of four years after eight years of Elementary education which gives a duration of 12 years. Instead of giving a clear lead in the matter, the recommendation of the Commission has thus made it more difficult to correlate Secondary education with the universities and provide a uniform pattern at the Secondary and University levels in the country.

While considering the Report, the Central Advisory Board of Education at its 20th Meeting, held in November 1953, found it necessary to authorise the Chairman to appoint a Committee (known as the Implementation Committee) to examine its recommendations and formulate a scheme for their early implementation and to indicate priorities in the programme. This Committee held several meetings in December 1953 and January 1954 and recommended to the Board that the eventual pattern of Secondary education should be as follows :

- (a) Eight years of integrated elementary (Basic) education ;
- (b) three or four years of Secondary education where there will be a diversification of courses. (The first year should be devoted mainly to orientation and exploration of the students' aptitudes, and diversified courses should be normally taken during the last two or three years of the Secondary stage).

It will be seen that the Implementation Committee also could not recommend a uniform duration of Secondary education in the country and left it to the States to have either an 11-year or a 12-year Secondary course. Inequality in the length of the course is bound to raise doubts about uniformity of standards and make it difficult to evaluate the attainment of pupils from different States. The matter needed further clarification and was, therefore, taken up at the last meeting of the

Central Advisory Board of Education which after a careful consideration of the issues involved, unanimously passed the Resolution referred to above.

In order to appreciate the advantages of the new educational pattern over the existing one, it is necessary to set forth clearly the reasons for extending the duration of schooling to 17+ for abolishing the Intermediate stage, as has been recommended by the Secondary Education Commission and for instituting a three-year first Degree course at the University level in place of the present four-year one.

Extension in the Duration of the Secondary Stage

As stated in the Resolution of the Central Advisory Board of Education, 17+ will now mark the end of the Secondary stage. The total duration of formal education at the pre-University level, therefore, will be at least 11 years, that is from six to 17. This will mean an increase of one year in the Higher Secondary or the post-Elementary stage. At present, the Matriculation or the School Leaving Certificate Examination is taken in many States at the end of ten years. According to the new arrangement, the School Leaving Certificate examination will be held everywhere after at least 11 years. If any State wishes formal schooling to begin at the age of five, it will be free to do so, but since the terminal age for the Secondary stage is fixed at 17+, and since by-and-large children of the same age may be expected to attain the same level of knowledge and skill, the standard of attainment for the School Final Examination will be the same. Further, the fact that the Constitution prescribes that compulsory education should be provided to all up to the age of 14, will mean that in effect the Secondary course proper will be of three years' duration.

It may be asked: Why should there be this increase in schooling as its extension is likely to impose an additional financial burden on the parents? While there appears to be some substance in this objection, it should be pointed out that if Secondary education is to serve the purpose it is intended to fulfil, the present reform is inevitable. Secondary education is required to be a unit by itself and not merely a preparatory stage, and yet till now it has concentrated almost entirely on preparing students for entrance to the universities. If it is to provide a terminal point for the majority of children, it should be such that the bulk of boys and girls at the end of the stage should be able to qualify as far as possible for gainful employ-

ment and play their roles as good citizens in a democratic society. These two purposes, namely, preparation for life and preparation for Higher education cannot be fulfilled without extending the present duration.

An objection from a contrary point of view may be raised in States where there already exists an 11-year school course. It may be said that in such States, there will be no change, and since the products of schools in these States have to study in the Intermediate classes before they are in a position to join the Degree classes, the elimination of the Intermediate stage may lead to a lowering, rather than a raising of standards. These objections are based on a misunderstanding. The Central Advisory Board has purposely placed greater stress, not on the years of schooling, but on the age at which Secondary education is to end. At present, even in some States which have 11 years' schooling before Matriculation, the examination is taken by pupils at the age of 14 or 15. It is quite obvious that other things being the same, the standard of attainment at 17 will be higher than at 14 or 15. By raising the minimum school leaving age, it is sought to ensure that the pupils will be physically, intellectually and emotionally sufficiently mature to be fit for collegiate education and profit by it. There may be exceptionally bright boys and girls who may reach that stage even before they are 17+ or there may be cases of retarded growth. In framing a programme for the nation, such exceptions have to be ignored and provision made for the average pupil, who in India, will normally be towards the end of his or her adolescence at 17+. As such it is the proper stage to mark the termination of Secondary education in India. Emphasis on uniformity of school leaving age will also largely resolve the difficulty which may arise on account of any difference in the duration of the preceding school form in different States. Experience proves that it makes little difference whether children start formal schooling at five or six for by the time they are nine or ten they have by-and-large attained the same level of knowledge and skill. That is why a uniform standard of attainment is to be prescribed for the school leaving examination in all States.

It might be inquired. Instead of fixing the duration of Secondary education at 11 years, would it not be educationally better to make the Intermediate the end of Secondary education? The University Education Commission, for example, has recommended that the standard of admission to the universities should be the present Intermediate examination to be taken

by a student after completing fully 12 years of study at a school and at an Intermediate college normally at the age of 18. In U.K. and U.S.A. and most European countries like Germany, the France and Switzerland also, at least 12 years' of schooling are by necessary before a student enters the university.

' There is no gainsaying the fact that if we had 12 years of schooling and a three-year Degree course, it would be possible to produce much better school and university products. But are we in a position today to extend the period of schooling up to the age of 18? The Secondary Education Commission has recorded that wherever it went, the members were told by the Teachers' Associations and parents alike that in the present economic circumstances of the country, it was impossible to increase the period of study to 18 years. With our present resources we are not able to give compulsory education even up to 11 today. There is thus little justification for thinking in terms of extending the Secondary stage up to 18. If and when the financial capacity of the country permits such an extension, there is no doubt that this will be done. A stage may come when Secondary education will be compulsory for all. In fact, Maulana Azad in his Presidential address at the 20th Session of the Central Advisory Board has already declared that in his view it is the birthright of citizens in a democratic republic to receive free education up to the end of the Secondary stage.

Again, it might be enquired if instead of fixing the duration of Secondary education at 11 years, it might not be more advisable to leave the matter of whether it should be 11 years or 12 years to the States. The point is that according to a directive of the Constitution, the Government is now under an obligation to provide compulsory education up to the age of 14. By fixing the end of Secondary stage at 17, we envisage a course of clear 11 years of instruction, i.e., from six to 17 and thus provide for a uniform pattern of Elementary and Secondary education for the country as a whole. If a State wants to add one more year to this, it could always do so at the pre-Primary stage and call it by some appropriate name such as the Kindergarten or the pre-Primary class.

For reasons already explained, the addition of this extra year at the initial stage is not likely to make any difference to the standard of attainment of pupils by the time they have completed the period of compulsory instruction provided in the Constitution.

Again, it might be asked: How is the 11-year course going to be of a standard which would prepare students adequately for university work, as this standard by common consensus should in no circumstances be lower than the present Intermediate? Is there any evidence to show that students coming to the university from the Higher Secondary school will attain a standard as high as the present Intermediate or at least more satisfactory than is at present reached at the end of the junior Intermediate class?

It has to be admitted that in India we do not have sufficient experimental evidence which would enable us to give a definite judgment on this point. There is, however, the experience of other countries where a continuous school education up to the age of 17 has given a standard higher than our Intermediate. There is no reason to think that Indian boys and girls cannot attain the same standards as boys and girls of the same age in other countries. Also, the experience of an institution like the Delhi Polytechnic seems to suggest that the standard of attainment of the Higher Secondary group of boys is higher than that of the High school group, even when they do an additional year's work. The real point of the query, however, is whether we are justified in expecting that the standard of attainment at the end of the Higher Secondary stage will compare favourably with that of the present Intermediate. There are several reasons to support such an expectation,

In the first place, the new Higher Secondary courses will be integrated ones. Unnecessary repetition of subject matter will be carefully eliminated from the school syllabus. Till now, for example, children have been required to study Indian history, first at the Primary stage, then at the Middle stage and then again with certain amplifications at the Secondary stage. Similar repetitions occur with the other subjects. This kind of repetition is wasteful and can be profitably avoided.

In the second place, the introduction of the mother tongue or the regional language as the medium of instruction is bound to contribute effectively towards raising the general standards of instruction and attainment in all school subjects.

Thirdly, the institution of only one public examination at the end of the Secondary stage as recommended by the Secondary Education Commission, will eliminate the waste of time involved in preparing students for two separate public examinations—one at the end of the High School stage and another at the end

of the Intermediate. It is common experience that at least two or three months before a public examination, pupils lose all interest in classwork and concentrate on preparing for the examination. In many institutions, classes are suspended for the period to enable pupils to prepare better. Again, after the examination is over, the pupils wait for the results for three to four months. At least another month is wasted in securing admissions to colleges and settling down to work. Each public examination thus means the loss of six to seven working months. Besides, the strain of a public examination tells upon the health of the pupils and often makes them unable to undertake serious work during these intervals of enforced rest.

The introduction of Diversified Courses will offer to children with different aptitudes different courses and thus make instruction more pleasant and enjoyable as well as more profitable. This is bound to exercise a wholesome influence on the standard of their achievement. If these reforms are carefully carried out, there is no reason to doubt that children in our schools will acquire the same proficiency in school subjects as they do in the other countries at 17+.

It is thus clear that there are good reasons why it can be expected that the standards of attainment will improve after the introduction of the new educational pattern. It must however, be admitted that a mere extension in the duration of the Secondary school by one year or prescribing an integrated syllabus, however perfectly formulated, will not by itself deliver the goods. As in any other programme of educational reform, the crux of the problem here also is the teacher. Unless the new schools are given the additional staff competent to shoulder the new responsibilities, the scheme will not work. In this connection it may be suggested that the authorities concerned should make every effort to make the fullest use of the teachers with high qualifications that are already available in their schools. If this is done, it should not be difficult to make necessary arrangements for recruiting the additional number of qualified teachers as the programmes of conversion progress. We have to remember that the implementation of this programme cannot be carried out overnight and will be staggered over a number of years.

The Central Government on their part are keenly aware of the seriousness of the shortage of additional staff and are already taking measures to render financial assistance to the

State Governments for opening new centres of teacher-training and for strengthening and equipping their present training institutions. In regard to the provision of equipment required for the additional year also, the Government of India are making every possible effort to assist the States in making the transition as smooth as possible. However, it must be stressed that the schools to be raised first to the Higher Secondary level should be carefully selected, both in respect of equipment and staffing. Otherwise there is a real danger that indiscriminate conversions at the initial stage may lower the already poor standards of Secondary education and threaten the chances of success of the scheme.

Organisation of the Pre-University Class during the Transitional Period

While the total duration of education at the pre-University level would ultimately be uniform in all States, it may not be possible to achieve that objective immediately. The present duration of this stage differs in different States, being ten years in some, 11 years in others and 12 years in still others. Moreover a large majority of the existing High schools would be unable at present to undertake the responsibility of offering an additional year of education to their pupils; in fact, in view of such difficulties as over-crowding in classes, large number of sections allowed in each form and lack of trained teachers, it would not be right to expect many High schools to take on the additional year and convert themselves straightaway into the contemplated Higher Secondary schools. For some time, we have necessarily to envisage the co-existence of two types of Secondary schools—the High schools of the present type from which students will take the Secondary School Leaving Certificate and the Higher Secondary schools, with an additional year, where they will take the Higher Secondary School Leaving Certificate. Should any one of the students with the lower certificate wish to pursue the university course, they will be required to spend one year in the pre-University course of study as envisaged in the report of the Commission.

On the question of whether the pre-University class should be attached to a school or a college, even informed opinion is sharply divided. Some educationists are of the view that this must be organised in a school, while others (these are generally spokesmen of the university viewpoint) think that this must be done in a college.

The supporters of the school viewpoint hold that as this will be the highest class at the Secondary stage, it will receive a kind of attention and importance at school which it can never secure in a college where it will be the juniormost class. Besides, the organisation of this class in a school will provide opportunities for the development of qualities of leadership and initiative in pupils and exercise a most wholesome influence on the attainment and the tone of discipline in the entire school, like the Sixth Form in the foremost public and direct grant schools in England. Another important reason cited for attaching the class to a school is that as the class belongs to the Secondary stage, to organise it in a college would bring it under the undue domination of the university.

The proponents of the college standpoint on the other hand point out that to attach the class to a college is the only way to cause the least amount of dislocation in the present structure. The common educational structure in the country today is the Matriculation followed by a four-year Degree course—two years in the Intermediate and two years in the Degree classes. Under the new dispensation, when the Intermediate stage is abolished, the colleges can conveniently retain the first year Intermediate class as the pre-University class and transfer the second year to the Degree course. The organisation of these classes in the schools may on the other hand entail the termination of the services of a certain number of college teachers which will not only be resented by the teachers concerned but may also raise many administrative difficulties. There is also the argument that since some time must elapse before an increase in the number of students can justify or enable the colleges to carry on with a three-year course, it would be necessary during the interim period to allow the colleges to retain the first year of the present Intermediate as the pre-University class. It is also held that in order to maintain proper standards, it would be necessary to attach this class to the college until the schools are properly equipped and adequately staffed to take on the additional year.

It will be appreciated, therefore, that there are good arguments on both sides of the issue. The balance of advantage perhaps lies in having the class in a school, since the class essentially belongs to the pre-University stage. But it is not necessary to be dogmatic on the point. A certain amount of flexibility in the matter is desirable and the decision in each case may be left to the discretion of the State Government and the

University concerned. Permission of this alternative during the interim period will mean that the change-over can be effected with the least possible disturbance in the existing schools and colleges.

The recommendation concerning the organisation of the pre-University class during the transitional period has sometimes been criticised on the ground that it will call for another public examination at the end of the year, while on the subject of examinations the recommendation of the Commission is that there should be only one public examination at the end of the Secondary stage. The objection overlooks the fact that the second examination will be held only during the transitional period till the change-over to the new pattern of education is complete and will affect only those students who wish to proceed to the University after Matriculation. As soon, therefore, as the programme of raising High schools to Higher Secondary schools is completed this examination will be stopped. Such an interim measure is necessary because it is not possible to raise all ten thousand High schools in the country to Higher Secondary schools over-night.

The organisation of a separate pre-University class in a schools has sometimes been opposed on the ground that it would hardly be less expensive than to raise the school to a Higher Secondary school. The point is that the pre-University class is to be organised as a kind of extra class in a school which is already a Higher Secondary school. As the necessary equipment and additional staff will be already available there, it will be much easier to add one extra class taking students from the neighbouring schools than to start the entire process of building up that class in an ordinary High school which neither possesses the equipment nor the staff required for the additional year.

The question of prescribing a minimum qualification for entry into the professional colleges has to be examined afresh in the light of the decision to extend the duration of Secondary education. At present this qualification is generally speaking the Intermediate. However, criticism has frequently been made that the Intermediate is not adequate as a preparation for a professional course. To meet this criticism it would be necessary to provide, as has been suggested by the Secondary Education Commission, that before taking up a professional course, one year of intensive pre-professional study should be undertaken

by every student in the relevant pre-professional subjects. Admission to the pre-professional courses should be open.—

- (a) to those who have completed their Higher Secondary course, and
- (b) to those who have successfully completed their High school course and have in addition, put in a year's course at the pre-University class,

The pre-professional courses should as far as possible be organised in the professional institutions themselves.

Abolition of the Intermediate Stage

In order to remodel education on the pattern outlined above, it would be necessary, as suggested by the Secondary Education Commission to abolish the present Intermediate stage and add its first year to the High school, wherever possible, and the second to the college, thus providing for a three year B.A. course. The addition of one year to the Secondary stage will add to the efficiency of the training given there and also improve educational efficiency at the University stage by sending more mature students to college and by providing a continuous period of three years' work. The Intermediate examination at present is not a definite stage in education and as such does not serve any special purpose. On the other hand, it breaks up the continuity of the college course and makes proper planning of the degree work more difficult.

The abolition of the Intermediate stage may result in some cases in the raising of such colleges proper accommodation, equipment, staff and necessary finances to Degree colleges with a three-year course and the conversion of others to Higher Secondary schools eliminating the senior Intermediate class. Such conversion, whether it be towards a Degree college or towards a Higher Secondary school may cause some dislocation in the colleges concerned and will, therefore, have to be initiated gradually and with careful planning. The implementation of the measure will further call for the closest possible cooperation between the universities on the one hand and the State Governments and the Boards of Secondary Education on the other.

In order to give effect to this part of the reform, each State Government should appoint a small committee representing *inter alia* the University and Secondary Board authorities of its area which should examine the case of each of its Intermediate,

colleges individually and make suitable recommendations regarding its place in the future educational set-up. It is desirable that the Principal of the college concerned should be co-opted as a member of this committee while the case of the college is under examination.

Exception has sometimes been taken to the proposal concerning the abolition of the Intermediate stage on the ground that such a measure is likely to create financial difficulties for the Universities and the Secondary Boards. In one university, for instance, there are at present reported to be about 80,000 undergraduate students. If the first year Intermediate class is removed, the university will be deprived of the income from fees from about one-third of this number. The abolition of the Intermediate stage may mean a further impoverishment of the revenues of the university by about six lakhs of rupees now realised in the form of examination fees. It is argued that unless the Government undertake to find the funds necessary for the proper functioning of the university, it will not be in a position to give effect to these recommendations.

No doubt, there is force in the argument, but it is not one of which the Government are oblivious. The Government have already set up a University Grants Commission, whose main function is to assess the financial needs of the universities and accredited institutions of higher learning and assist them with suitable grants. Although it is not possible to make any commitment at this stage, it may also be stated that the Government are keenly aware of the nature of financial implications which a programme of reforming Secondary and University education is going to entail and are prepared to do their very best to meet as far as possible the needs of the universities and Boards concerned in this behalf. It may be added that the Grants Commission have also decided to give very high, if not the highest priority to proposals for the reconstruction of University education on these lines.

A word may also be said specifically about the argument regarding loss of income from fees on account of reduction in the number of students. While it is true that the abolition of the Intermediate stage may immediately mean some reduction in the number of fee-paying students, it is almost certain, that within a few years, there will be more students in universities and colleges than at present. We might start by examining the figures at the Elementary stage. During the last seven years,

there has been an increase of about seven million children at this stage. The number is likely to increase by another 50 per cent during the second Five-Year Plan. This gives an approximate figure of about 36 million children by 1961. An accession of this size in the number of elementary school-children is bound to press on the Secondary stage. At the Secondary stage itself, the number of children has increased from three million in 1947 to six million in 1953. If the rate of increase during the last six or seven years is maintained, this would give a Secondary school population of some nine million by 1961. Efforts are, however, being made both at the Central and the State levels to expand the facilities at the Secondary stage so that approximately 20 per cent of the children of the relevant age group may receive the benefit of Secondary education. This may well mean that by 1961 the total Secondary school population will be of the order of 12 to 13 million. An increase of this order in the number of secondary school-children is bound to have repercussions on colleges and universities. It is also to be noted that this increase will be in addition to the accession in the number of university students that is normally taking place (between 1947 and 1953, for instance, the total annual output of graduates in India has almost doubled). While nobody would suggest that the extension at the University level should be proportionate to the extension at the Secondary level, some increase is inevitable. There can thus be no question of any fall in the number of students in the universities because the four-year course is being replaced by a three-year course. On the other hand, the chances are that even with the three-year course, the universities will find it extremely difficult to offer accommodation to all the candidates seeking admission. Add to this the fact that University education also is now beginning to spread among certain new sections of the population such as the Scheduled castes to whom it had hitherto been more or less completely closed. This has meant a fresh source of increase in the enrolment of universities. The argument about the financial hardship to the universities due to the loss of income from fees on account of the institution of the three-year course therefore unduly exaggerates the difficulty. Even should it occur, it will be of a purely temporary nature and must be met in the interests of better education.

The Three-Year Degree Course

The average standards of university teaching and examinations in this country are very low. The University Education Commission mentions one principal of a Degree college main-

taining that an average graduate of an Indian university is not very superior to a Matriculate of a British university. This may be an exaggeration, but it is quite true that many of our universities do not compare favourably with the best of British and American universities in respect of their teaching and examination standards. One reform that would appear to be essential for improving the quality of work in the universities is to make the first Degree course a three-year course. This reform has been recommended by successive commissions but unfortunately it has not been implemented yet to any great extent. The reasons for the proposal are simple. At present both in the junior Intermediate class and the junior B.A. class, much time is wasted in trying to adjust and reorient the students to college work and to the new methods of study. Also, with two examinations intervening, one at the Intermediate and another at the B.A. stage, the amount of time that can be actually utilised for effective study does not really exceed two to two and a half years. The abolition of a separate Intermediate examination and the institution of a three-year degree course would thus not only effect a considerable saving of time but also facilitate a better planning of educational programmes and activities during the three-year course.

It is sometimes questioned whether the institution of the three-year Degree course will by itself improve university standards. A large number of university students in this country, it is pointed out, are so ill-equipped by training and aptitude that they tend to depress any standard that may be prescribed. Unless measures are taken to keep such students out, no move for the improvement of standards can ever bear fruit.

The problem of standards is a very complex one and will have to be attacked on many fronts. The reorganisation of Secondary education so that it becomes a terminal stage for the vast majority of boys and girls will help. The provision of diversified courses to suit different interests and aptitudes may also be expected to contribute towards equipping the average university entrant better for his new work. The planning of the three-year Degree course will remove one of the major defects from which the present two-year course has suffered. But it must be admitted that even all these measures will not by themselves provide a complete answer to the problem. They will certainly lead to an appreciable improvement, but to be fully effective must be followed by measures to improve the quality of teachers and check the rush of ill-qualified students to the university. In the study on *Student Indiscipline*, proposals for the improvement of the

quality of teachers have been examined and need not be repeated here. The drift of pupils towards the university is largely due to the fact that, for most types of Government employment, the minimum qualification is a university degree. This insistence on degrees has had a two-fold pernicious effect. On the one hand, it has tempted everyone to go on studying for as long as one's financial resources permit. This explains why our universities are so often over-crowded with students who do not have the necessary ability or taste for pursuing higher studies. On the other, persons with a university degree who take lower jobs often feel frustrated and tend to be demoralised and indisciplined. When a person is required to work under another whose academic qualifications are not necessarily superior, such reactions are natural. The Government have recently undertaken to re-examine the matter because of these difficulties and have appointed a high-power committee to go into the question. It is hoped that soon the School Certificate will be accepted as the minimum qualification for almost all Government jobs except those which call for technical or professional qualifications. As soon as this is done, the present rush to universities may be expected to diminish. The standard of university work is bound to rise when only students with the necessary interest, aptitude and preparation take up university work.

Incidentally, it may also be mentioned that in order to enable the students to derive the fullest possible benefit from a three-year Degree course, it would be necessary for each university to reform its examination system and to introduce a suitable scheme of internal tests and records by which due regard can be paid to work throughout the course. In this connection attention is particularly invited to the chapter on Examinations in the University Education Commission Report.

ANNEXURE A.

Resolution adopted at the Conference of Vice-Chancellors and Chairmen, Boards of Secondary Education held at New Delhi on 8th January, 1955.

This Conference of the Vice-Chancellors of Universities and Chairmen of the Boards of Secondary Education is of the opinion that the general pattern of educational reorganisation as recommended by the Secondary Education Commission should be adopted by the Universities and Boards concerned, i.e., there should be a Higher Secondary school course continued up to the age of 17 + followed by a three-year integrated course leading to the Bachelor's degree.

The process of transition from High schools to Higher Secondary schools envisaged in the reorganisation requires several important conditions to be fulfilled, e.g., proper equipment, accommodation and duly qualified teachers. Although every effort should be made to complete this process of conversion as quickly as possible, it must necessarily be spread over a number of years and during this period, Secondary as well as Higher Secondary schools are bound to co-exist.

For this period of transition, arrangements will have to be made for examination at both levels, the school examination being taken by those who are not able to go to the Higher Secondary schools. For those who pass out of the High schools and wish to prosecute their studies further arrangements may be made for a pre-University course in a college or in a Higher Secondary school to be followed by a three-year integrated Degree course as already recommended. This Conference is of the opinion that the change-over to the new pattern should be completed by 1961.

This Conference also recommends that, wherever possible, universities should start a pre-University course from the acad-

emic year 1956-57 followed by a three-year Degree course from 1957-58. In regard to pupils who complete the Higher Secondary course, Universities should make arrangements to see that they are admitted to the first year of the three-year degree course from 1958-59.

This Conference is of opinion that for the implementation of these recommendations, it is necessary that financial assistance in a liberal measure should be provided by the Central Government and the State Governments. This Conference therefore requests the Central and State Governments and the Planning Commission to provide necessary finances in the second Five-Year Plan for the implementation of these recommendations.

