

EDITORIAL

**A FEW ISSUES FOR FORMULATING A NEW
NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION**

After independence from British rule, the nation had the University Education Commission 1948-49 (Radhakrishnan 1949) that gave certain suggestions for improving higher education. The Secondary Education Commission 1952-53 (Mudaliar 1953) suggested various measures for improving school. Its recommendations led to establishment of higher secondary schools and introduction of 'Craft' education at the school stage. The Report of the Education Commission 1964-66 (Kothari 1966) covered all aspects. Basing on the recommendations of this Commission, in 1968, the nation had its first national policy on education (Ministry of Education 1968). After a decade, in 1979, attempt was made to have a new policy. A draft policy document was printed, but before it could be considered by the parliament, the government fell. In 1985, the government of India brought out a document "Challenge of Education- A Policy Perspective", that was printed in large quantity and was distributed free of charge to media and other stake holders. This document was speculative in nature pointing out various issues that might crop up, if certain strategies were implemented. Based on the feedback, the National Policy on Education 1986 was formulated. When, there was a change in the Central government, the new government appointed a committee to review the policy document (Acharya Ramamurti 1990). Before NPE 1986 could be revised on the basis of the suggestions of Acharya Ramamurti government, there was a change in the Central government. The Central Advisory Board of Education set up a committee to review the position (Reddy 1992). On the basis of this committee's recommendations and failure to stick to time target for completion of certain educational projects, a modified version of NPE 1986 was brought out in 1992. The NPE 1986 (with modifications undertaken in 1992) stated that "The implementation of the various parameters of the New Policy must be reviewed every five years. Appraisals at short intervals will also be made to ascertain the

progress of implementation and the trends emerging from time to time.”(Art. 11. 5). As nearly two decades have passed since 1992 modification of the policy and there have been many changes including emergence of various control mechanisms in form of statutory committees, speedy privatisation of higher education, emergence of education as an industry, explosion in self-learning opportunities, and rise in collaboration between Indian and foreign universities and 86th amendment of the constitution that made elementary school education a fundamental right and early childhood care and education in article 45 of the directive principles, it is right time for formulating a new policy. The necessity for formulating a new policy also may be necessary as some of the schemes such as Operation Blackboard , Non formal schooling, etc. operating in 1986 have been scrapped. While formulating the new policy, the educationists may get guided by the suggestions of Sri Aurobindo (1918) that pointed out three parameters - rich inheritance of the past, the widening gains of the present and the large potentiality of the future.

A few strategies mentioned in NPE 1986 (with modifications undertaken in 1992) which are yet to materialise are: 1. Indian Education Service; 2. Investment on education - 6 per cent of the national income; 3. De-linking of Degrees from Jobs; 4. Special attention to training of educational planners, administrators and heads of institutions; 5. Improving the evaluation process and examination reform- ensuring a method of assessment that is a valid and reliable measure of student development and a powerful instrument for improving teaching and learning; 5. Providing systemic opportunity to teachers to innovate; 6. Giving special attention to yoga in schools and including training in yoga in teacher training curricula; 7. State level councils of higher education, 8. Improving process of teacher selection; 9. Improving pay and service conditions of all categories of higher education teachers; 9. Improving the system of evaluation of performance of higher education teachers; 10. Laying down norms of accountability for incentives for good performance and

disincentives for non- performance; 11. Creation of autonomous departments within universities; 12. Flexibility in combination of courses; 13. Provision of improved student services; 14. Concomitant changes in instructional materials and methodology; 15. Transferring higher secondary classes from higher education to school education; 15. Special schools with hostels will be provided, as far as possible at district headquarters, for the severely handicapped children.

There have been many suggestions from committees, commissions, conferences, seminars and individuals to improve quality of education which may need to be debated. Issues concerning all stages of education may be : 1. Banning utilisation of regular teachers in face to face mode institutions by open universities, open schools and other distance education and self-financed programmes; 2. Making reservation for students from SC and ST communities in general schools and hostels instead of establishing separate hostels and schools which may be more effective in the integration of SC and ST students with others.;

Issues concerning higher education may be ; 1. Conducting orientation and refresher courses for college and university teachers through distance mode instead of face to face mode to distance mode and converting Academic Staff Colleges as Regional Resource Centres for Teaching in Higher Education; 2. Replacing the practice of assessing performance of higher education teachers in terms of number of publications in journals with ISSN by assessing publications on the basis of the quality to be assessed anonymously by a panel, 3. Replacing the practice of assessing performance of higher education teachers in terms of number of papers presented in national/ international conferences and included in conference publications having ISBN by assessing papers presented in national/ international conferences publications on the basis of the quality to be assessed anonymously by a panel; 4. Ensuring adequate extension work by college and university

teachers; 5. Instead of having separate hostels for SC and ST students, making reservation for students from SC and ST communities in general hostels, which be more effective in the integration of SC and ST higher education students with others; 6. Making every college / school library remain open from morning 7AM to 5 PM and allowing public to avail library facilities on membership basis and with caution money; 7. Making it part of duty of the college / school teacher to prepare an index of books/ journal articles in journals available in the institution library for various topics to be / being taught by him/her and grading them for use by the students; 8. If Internet facilities are available in the institution, making it part of duty of the school/ college / school teacher to prepare an index of web resources for various topics to be / being taught by him/her; 9. Making peer observation and feedback of at least a few lessons every year as part of the process of teacher professional development; 10. Making universities allow any one with or without any previous qualification to appear at their entrance examinations for admission into various courses and for appearing at Post graduate examinations not having practical work and in post graduate examinations having practical work as a component with endorsement from competent departments of higher education institutions (There are many M.A.(Public Administration) from Utkal University); 11. Establishing a National Resource Centres for Teaching in Higher education;

Issues concerning school education may be ; 1. Instead of having separate schools and hostels for SC and ST students, making reservation for such students in general schools and hostels, which be more effective in the integration of SC and ST school students with others, 2. As the 86th amendment of the constitution, changes in content of the article 45 of the directive principles of the constitution has made it the responsibility of the national and state governments to provide early childhood care and education till a child attains 6 years of age, taking steps such as (a) providing pre-

school classes in all primary schools, as found in case of Union Territory of Pondicherry. (b) setting up Rastriya Early Childhood Education Aviyam to accelerate the process of early childhood care and education, especially in urban slums and in rural areas having a considerable number of illiterate parents, and (d) attaching all anganwadis to nearest primary schools. 3. Providing year-round schools for students who are first generation learners; 4. Providing hostel facilities for orthopedically handicapped, blind, dumb and deaf students in a school in every block headquarters to provide for such children having homes in areas not having public transports to carry the student from home to the school and back; 5. Improving quality of existing mid-day meals and charging fees for mid-day meals from non-poor families; 6. Providing qualification based salary for various levels of school teachers; 7. Encouragement by school boards and councils for autonomous schools having freedom to develop their own curricula and conduct their own examinations and certificates to be issued by concerned school boards and councils; and 8. Encouragement for teaching of Sanskrit at primary school stage (Sanskrit teaching starts at Kindergarten stage in Sei Aurobindo International Centre of Education at Pondicherry).

Issues concerning professional preparation and development for teaching in schools may be: 1. Making necessary modification in the act of the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) to convert it to National University for Teacher Education, following the footsteps of conversion of NIEPA to NUEPA; 2. As in recent past, there are instances of nearly two thousand M.Ed. students getting admitted in a department of education of one private university and NCTE could not prevent such admission, M.Ed. course to be take out of the purview of the NCTE; 3. As students pursuing B.Ed. courses in many NCTE recognised state government colleges functioning with one or two lecturers instead of NCTE stipulated 7 lecturers(Minimum) and in state government colleges having majority of teachers and principals not having B.Ed.

or M.Ed. degrees, come out successful in B.Ed. examinations conducted by the concerned universities, making necessary changes in NCTE act and University Grants Commission rules to allow any degree holder to appear B.Ed. examination as a private candidate; 4. Abolishing present two year B.Ed. courses being offered in NCERT institutions, as a student passing such a course spends 5 years after higher secondary (3 years for General Degree +2 year for B.Ed.), whereas in the same students a student spends 4 years after higher secondary to get a B.A.; B.Ed. or B.Sc., B.Ed. course and both the products are eligible to get the same trained graduate teacher scale of pay. 5. Providing special initial teacher training programme for teaching at higher secondary stage, in form of a Diploma course providing training in method of teaching one subject and practical training in higher secondary classes instead of the current practice one year B.Ed. course imparting training in two method subjects and having practical training in upper primary and lower secondary classes; 6. Giving options to states to have crash programmes to cover all untrained regular post graduate teachers (For instance, in Odisha, most of the higher secondary classes are part of higher education and their teachers are not required to have a B.Ed.) through summer programmes and declaring them trained without making them go through university examinations; 7. Making teacher training institutions function throughout the year (Regional Institutes of Education of NCERT function year-round); 8. Establishing Extension Units in each teacher training institution to provide in-service training programme to school teachers; 9. Making it essential for a teacher training institution to have a demonstration school under its control; 10. Making school teaching for a specific number of days, every year part of duty of faculty of teacher training institutions including university departments of education running B.Ed. courses; 11. Declaring faculty members of teacher training institutions teaching methods of teaching of various subjects as academic supervisors of the schools and earmarking of the schools for such supervision to be the responsibility of the concerned departments of education

of the governments of the states and union territories for their teacher educators and academic supervision to be included as part of duty. 11. Making it the responsibility of the departments of education of the governments of the states and union territories to specify the schools in which teacher trainees of an institution are to have their practical training; 12, Providing remuneration to school teachers and heads of schools for their participation in practical training of teacher trainees; 13. Including techniques of teaching physically handicapped students (theory and practical) in all initial teacher training courses; 14. Covering techniques of teaching preschool classes (theory and practical) in all initial teacher training courses for primary school teaching; 15. Instituting an online course for candidates with school teaching experience for training as future heads of schools; and 16. As most of the central government funding supported and state government managed Institutes of Advanced Study in Education and Colleges of Teacher Education have failed to continue to post appropriate number of professors, readers and lecturers in these institutions for many years, replacing the current scheme of giving central assistance by establishing central government managed Institutes of Advanced Study in Education and Colleges of Teacher Education.

Issues mentioned above need debating at national level and also at state levels to focus on state specific issues. For instance Tamil Nadu does not have Navodaya Vidyalayas, even after four decades of introduction of this central govt. scheme. Bringing out a document like “Challenge of Education” of 1985 giving pros and cons of various suggestions that may be useful for having nationwide debate on specific issues which may come out with suitable strategies.

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Please Note: The Policy document can be found on pages 47-77 of this issue of the journal