



MEETING OF
THE STATE MINISTERS OF EDUCATION
TO CONSIDER THE REPORT OF
THE JANARDHANA REDDY COMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL POLICY ON EDUCATION

SPEECH DELIVERED BY :

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Hon'ble Minister for Human Resources Development, my distinguished colleagues from other States and friends:

I deem it a great privilege to participate in this very important Conference and at the outset I wish to congratulate our eminent Minister for Human Resources Development Thiru Arjun Singhji for two things - (i) For convening this Conference at the most appropriate time when the Eighth Plan is being given final touches and (ii) for his pragmatic approach and for his open mind to the various issues.

I would also like to take this opportunity to convey the greetings of our dynamic Chief Minister to all of you and assure you that Tamil Nadu will be second to none in supporting the progressive policies and programmes of action of the Government of India for Human Resource Development which is one of the most critical areas.

I would like to make a few general observations which are applicable to all the States before I go on to mention some of the special problems of my State. We are in total agreement with the principal concerns which guided the NPERC particularly the following two viz. (i) ensuring equity and social justice in Human Resources Development and (ii) decentralisation of educational management at all levels. As my colleague Dr. Janardhana Reddy who is an eminent educationist himself and who chaired this important Committee has observed in his overview, these concerns are unexceptionable and are in consonance with the National Policy on Education.

We agree that many of the ideas and concepts had remained on paper without being translated into action and therefore, a time has come when we should make a conscious effort to give a well defined thrust to the "key result areas" as enumerated in National Education Policy. We also agree with the JRC Report that the recommendations of the NPERC require very little of policy reformulation and that the programme of action (POA) needs to be revised considerably. I would also like to endorse the views of JRC regarding Vocational Education, NCHE and AICTE.

Regarding the other issues, I would only like to suggest certain improvisations in the light of the global trends particularly on the kind of education that we should have in the 21st century. We are in total agreement with the views of the NPERC on the need to have an integrated design of vocational education to be operated from class IX to XII. We also agree with the NPERC and JRC that two Committees, one of the Ministers and the other of the Secretaries, would be adequate to perform the functions of the National Council of Higher Education more effectively without any overhead expenditure .

AICTE

Regarding AICTE, I would like to stress with all the emphasis at my command, that the AICTE Act appears to have been drafted overlooking the fact that we are in a federal set up and that education is in the concurrent list. So we suggest immediate steps be taken to amend the AICTE Act taking into account the recommendations of the Ramamurthy's Committee Report, the JRC Report and the Kalyanakrishnan Committee Report and the views of the various State Governments,

to make it an advisory body on the lines of the UGC and Medical Council of India and to ensure that not only the maintenance of proper standards but also to design new courses in the socially relevant and emerging areas of technical education. AICTE should not only ensure that proper standards are maintained by the constant review of the syllabus and also ensure that high degree of competence on the part of the teachers and that there is no mis-match between the investment on technical education and our manpower requirements, at various levels, in the 21st century. We strongly urge that the AICTE should have regional offices headed by senior functionaries with adequate delegated authority to function effectively and speedily in total coordination with the state authorities.

Besides this issue, I would also like to suggest certain other improvisations on the other recommendations of the NPERC which do not involve major departures from National Policy on Education. The NPERC Committee has pointed out that many of the ideas and concepts remained on paper and a time has come to modify the programme of action and implement it without delay.

UNIVERSALISATION OF ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

We are in total agreement with the Janarthana Reddy Committee report and we feel that UEE is better achieved by an integrated single system of non formal education. We totally endorse the views of JRC in para 9.18 on the programme of action for achieving the UEE.. One point I would like to make here is that reduction of drop out rates to 20% and 40% in Classes I to V and I to VIII respectively, had already been achieved by Tamil Nadu thanks to the many progressive measures implemented by the Tamil Nadu Government under the legendary stewardship of Dr. MGR and the dynamic leadership of our present Chief Minister Dr. Jayalalitha, out of our own funds. I would like to underline the words 'our own funds'. We have successfully implemented the noon meal scheme, free distribution of uniforms, foot wears, books, bus passes and other incentive measures in Tamil Nadu. We would like to set ourselves a more ambitious target in this regard and achieve it to set an example to other States if the Government of India would come forward to extend a helping hand.

ADULT EDUCATION

The JRC's views on adult education is in conformity with our State Government's thinking with the following exception of the modus operandi adopted for implementation of this Scheme.

We are in the process of implementing the first phase of this programme. We have received a very serious complaint that the volunteers engaged for this work are attempting political prosylitisation particularly in places like Kanyakumari District where some ex-card holders have been engaged as volunteers. The literature printed for this pupose does not fully reflect the goals which the national Policy on Education had laid down. When we enquired into this matter further, we find that these complaints can be attributed to wrong selection of non-Governmental organisation as the State Resources Centre, wrong selection of the Chief Coordinator and the misplaced sympathy of some bureaucrat in charge of the programme at the centre, who without consulting the State Government at every stage has gone about his work in a questionable manner. Before this problem snowballs into a big issue as has been in Gujarat and Pondicherry, it would be prudent to take an early corrective measure. We propose to work out

suitable corrective measures and before implementing them we will consult the Government of India, to reorganise the scheme of implementation. We have to ensure that the funds are not misutilised and also to ensure that we get our money's worth. We should also make sure that no political ideology is promoted at Government's cost and that the objectives of the laudable scheme are achieved in full.

JAWAHAR NAVODAYA VIDYALAYAS

The Hon'ble Union Minister would be very happy to know that the Tamil Nadu Government have accepted the Navodaya Scheme and have decided to extend necessary assistance for setting up Navodaya Schools as they provide for instruction in mother tongue/regional language upto standard VIII and English as an alternative medium of instruction from Standards IX to XII . We would be implementing this on the same pattern as our neighbour, Andhra Pradesh. We would like to request the Government of India to cover all the Districts in Tamil Nadu with Navodaya Schools within the next 2 to 3 years and I would like to assure that our State Government would render all necessary assistance.

We do not agree with the NPERC's observation that "no further Navodaya Vidyalayas need be opened". This will prevent Tamil Nadu entering the national stream when Tamil Nadu is wanting to do so. We totally endorse the JRC's recommendation on the Navodaya Vidyalayas. We would like only to make two further suggestions so that the students who come out of the Navodaya Vidyalayas are better equipped to take up higher education in emerging areas, particularly in the 21st century and also to promote national integration which is one of the important purposes behind setting up of these schools. On the languages taught from VI to VIII, namely regional language as the medium of instruction, English and Hindi as compulsory languages, we have no modifications to suggest as they are on the same pattern as the CBSE Schools. Once a student passes out of Standard VIII, he will be able to read, write and speak with a reasonable degree of proficiency in the regional language, English and Hindi. This will not only enable geographical mobility but the students would be well equipped as far as the languages are concerned. But for standards IX to XII, we have a suggestion to make for your consideration. Regarding the medium of instruction, the existing provision stipulates that a student studying in English medium of instruction should learn Hindi only. We suggest that in the place of Hindi, we should give the option to the student to choose any modern Indian language namely Hindi, Gujarathi, Bengali, Rajastani, Telugu, Oriya, etc. as this will promote national integration more effectively than uniformly enforcing one language at the cost of other languages. A time has come when we should choose between Unity and Uniformity. If we can have Unity and Uniformity, it will be ideal. But if we are going to have Uniformity at the cost of Unity, I think the right thinking citizens of the country should sit up and think of the long range repercussions, particularly in the context of the global changes.

Regarding the administration of the Navodaya Vidyalayas, it is my personal view that the same pattern of management that is obtaining for Regional Engineering Colleges, namely joint participation of the Centre and the State and the academicians of the Institutions concerned, may be adopted for this. This will ensure attainment of the goals of the scheme better than any other pattern.

Since one school per District would hardly be adequate to meet the requirements, necessary assistance may be rendered by the Government of India to the State

Governments for setting up Residential schools on Andhra pattern at the rate of at least two per District so that in a place like Tamil Nadu, where one District is equivalent to 3 Districts of Uttar Pradesh, there will be at least, three pace setting schools for each District. Instead of keeping a closed mind on the Navodaya Vidyalayas, the Committee of Ministers and the Secretaries can periodically review the performance of the schools once in three years and think of further improvisations as the relevance of the schools to the changing needs of the 21st century should be ensured.

SECONDARY EDUCATION

We agree with the recommendations of the JRC on Secondary Education like Examination Reform, Improvement of Teachers Training, Computer Literacy and teaching of science, mathematics, and languages. I have only a few observations to make on this subject.

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE

Since both the Central and State Governments are facing severe resource constraints, we suggest seeking external assistance without any ideological hangover for improvement of our school facilities. I understand the Government of India have already cleared a project for U.P. Schools for World Bank assistance. We have formulated a similar project which has been approved by our Chief Minister for seeking World Bank assistance. The Project has the following components:

- a) Strengthening the infrastructural facilities in schools in rural areas;
- b) to improve Science Education in Schools by equipping the laboratories properly;
- c) to impart computer education to the school children;
- d) to improve the quality of education;
- e) to train the teachers and educational administrators;
- f) to set up a curriculum development cell for constant review and improvement of the syllabus.

This project also comprises a Rs. 50 crore component for expansion of the Periyar Science and Technology Centre at Madras and for setting up Regional Science and Technology Centres.

Once this Project is implemented, our School Education system would conform in all respects to the National Education Policy and every student passing out of the school will not only be a computer literate, but also be an electronics literate. We would request the Govt. of India to pose this project to the World Bank at a very early date.

You would also be happy to know, Sir, that from this year we are introducing what is called an "Open School System" which is on the same pattern as the Open Learning System in the NEP.

SCHOOL CURRICULAM

It is important to provide adequate time for physical education to ensure healthy bodies and healthy minds among our school children. It is also important to inculcate a sense of national pride and patriotism among our school children. We in Tamil Nadu have decided to prescribe one period a week not only to inculcate this spirit but also to create awareness among the students about our rich cultural heritage, consumer's rights, importance of environmental conservation and ecology and updated health education etc. This means that the teachers will have to be given in-service training in the District Institutes of Education & Training. The sanction of two DIETs for each District would not meet the requirements of Tamil Nadu as the average size of our District is nearly double or triple the size of the district in U.P. or M.P. So during the 8th plan period, we would request one more DIET, for each district to be funded by the Government of India.

EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGY

It is agreed on all hands that our Educational Technology is antiquated and inadequate. The unattractive teaching adopted by the teachers is one of the main reasons for the drop outs and for the poor quality of students turned out. It is imperative that special efforts are taken to improve our educational technology immediately. We would like to have an institute of Educational Technology on the pattern of the Institute being run by the NCERT and in a few other States, to be set up in Tamil Nadu with the Government of India's assistance. The Government of India has been kind enough to sanction a few components of the Institute of Educational Technology and the hardware and software required for the technology like Two-in-ones, Audio Visual Cassettes, T.Vs etc. The Government of India has also sanctioned a T.V. Studio at the cost of Rs. 70 lakhs. This we have implemented fully. We would request the Government of India to sanction other components for a full-fledged Institute of Educational Technology to enable us to improve the teaching technology and give it a new look during the 8th Plan period.

SCERT

The Ministry of Human Resources Development appointed a Sub Committee of State Secretaries who have finalised proposals for strengthening the SCERT in various States, to make it an advanced centre of educational research and training, including curriculum development, training of teachers etc. It was also assured by the Secretary, H.R.D. that this will be a centrally sponsored scheme. We would request immediate action on this proposal.

WOMEN'S EDUCATION

Importance of Women's Education and equality cannot be overemphasised particularly as a vital component to achieve equity and social justice. I am proud to say that we have been a pace setter in this regard as reflected by the fact that we have elected a dynamic lady Chief Minister whose priorities are Human Resources Development, Industrial Development, Social Welfare, etc. We have provided several incentives for the girls' education and that is why our girls' drop out rate is the lowest in the country except for Kerala. Some of the incentive schemes that we are implementing particularly for the girls are the 'foster parent scheme', 'special marriage grant for educated girls', and special monetary incentive for mothers who adopt small family norms etc.

Some of the schemes which our present Chief Minister has introduced in recent months to promote women's education and equality, are as follows:

- 1) Standards I to V in primary and upper-primary schools will be handled only by lady teachers and this will not only improve the employment opportunities of the womenfolk but also serve as a stimulus for girls' education.
- 2) In Women's polytechnics, only women will be appointed as Principals irrespective of their seniority.

Regarding education for S.C., S.T. and for the handicapped, we have done quite a lot with our own resources and with a helping hand from the Government of India, we assure that we will be able to do better.

HIGHER EDUCATION

We are in total agreement with the recommendations of the NPERC regarding Higher Education enumerated in paragraph 13.8 and we have already initiated action on some of these. We are proud to say that despite inadequate financial support from Government of India, we are pace setters in implementing the National Policy on Education. Out of the 102 autonomous colleges in the country, 43 are in Tamil Nadu. We are the first among the Southern States to implement UGC Scales of pay with retrospective effect from 1.1.86. Besides these administrative measures, our Legislative Assembly has recently enacted a Bill to set up a State Council for Higher Education.

Higher Education in Tamil Nadu is highly subsidised to the extent of about 70% to 80% and our Chief Minister has laid down that in view of the State Government's financial constraints and inadequate fund allocations from Government of India for Higher Education, we should progressively reduce the element of subsidy for Higher Education, but at the same time to continue sanctioning scholarships for the weaker sections of the population, like S.C., S.T., B.C., M.B.C. etc.

We wish to congratulate our Minister for Human Resources for taking a long overdue policy decision to regionalise UGC operations and we would like to stress that the location of the regional Office should be on the basis of objective criteria and not on subjective preferences. We would like you to expedite the setting up of the Regional Office for the Southern Region, without any further delay.

One of the first tasks of our State Council for Higher Education would be to take up the examination reforms and to relieve the Universities of holding under-graduate examinations. While we would like to implement all the recommendations of the NPE relating to higher education which are relevant to our requirements, I am constrained to point out one difficulty here. In the 50s and 60s, Tamil Nadu was the first State to accord top priority for primary education and secondary education even without the benefit of the various centrally sponsored schemes that are now available. Now, with these various Centrally sponsored schemes we would certainly like to update and modernise our primary and secondary education system.

As regards higher education, Government of India had spent a lot of money in 60s, 70s and 80s, but Tamil Nadu did not receive its proportionate share for a variety of reasons, some of which are quite obvious. So we lost the benefit of Central Assistance for Higher Education and the infrastructural facilities for higher education in Tamil Nadu

are totally inadequate to meet our requirements. Now, the Government of India has said that they would accord top priority for primary and secondary education and would not be able to spend more money on higher education. So we are losing on both the counts .

I would like to stress here that the regional imbalances in the central investment in various States on higher education should be made good, if Government of India is serious about National Integration. The rightful claims of Tamil Nadu in the field of higher education should not be neglected just because Tamil Nadu did not get the benefit of the central schemes in 70s and 80s. Now we are in a position to give a long-overdue thrust to the Higher Education especially to improve its quality and to make it socially more relevant. The priorities of the Government of India should not stand in the way

Further I learn that for some of the fields like Non-Formal Education and certain sectors of higher education, Government of India would give preference to educationally backward States and that Tamil Nadu is considered an educationally forward state. I would like to emphasise that a lot more requires to be done to improve not only the quality of higher education but also the quantum of higher education in Tamil Nadu and we would like to stress that if the Government of India's policy regarding educationally forward State is cited against this, we would like to point out that your policy will encourage States to be perpetually backward as some communities prefer to be socially, educationally backward to claim constitutional safeguards and other monetary benefits.

One of the areas of our concern which reflect the gaps in higher education in Tamil Nadu, is that the percentage of Tamil Nadu's contribution to the All India Services has sharply declined from what it was in 50s and 60s. Unless these regional imbalances are set right, the repercussions would be undesirable.

The regional imbalances in setting up the National Institutes under the various Union Ministries, Central Universities and All India Training Institute should be studied in depth and a sincere effort should be made to correct these regional imbalances without which the Government of India's fair mindedness will be in serious doubt.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION

We are in agreement with the recommendations of the JRC report on technical education. I would once again like to reiterate the immediate need to amend the AICTE Act and to implement it in accordance with the spirit of the NPERC without endangering the State's sovereignty. Suitable bodies can be set up at the regional levels as recommended by NPERC to ensure the achievement of the objectives laid down in NPE with regard to technical education. We assure you of our co-operation in this regard.

In this connection I would like to mention two important aspects which should be taken into account while amending the AICTE Act. Because of the limited resources with the State, our Government has permitted a number of private educational agencies to start self financing colleges. On the basis of our experience in the last 4 or 5 years, we feel that there is need for a regulatory Act to ensure that the self-financing colleges also conform to the standards with regard to infrastructural facilities, laboratories, quality of teachers, methods of teaching etc. While amending the Act, the Government

of India may also take note of the self financing engineering colleges and the State's enactments/executive orders in this regard.

MANAGEMENT EDUCATION

On the question of management education and quasi-technical institutions like Institutes of Hotel Management and Food Sciences and Institute of Computer Sciences, it should be fully within the competence of the State Government. AICTE need not have any regulatory power except perhaps laying down certain guidelines on the maintenance of standards. If AICTE tries to exercise any power regarding management education, it will affect our State Government's priority scheme for introducing MBA Courses in all Government Colleges. We cannot wait for the AICTE to give its approval as it takes several years because of the inadequate machinery of the AICTE. Even with regard to the polytechnics which are supposed to turn out the middle level technicians, the AICTE should leave it to the State Governments and should not attempt anything beyond laying certain guidelines for the maintenance of standards and other relevant broad objectives. I had made reference to external assistance for improving school education earlier; the need for seeking external assistance for improving technical education is even more imperative for the following reasons :

State's finances are limited. Centre's priority for funding technical education occupies a fairly low level, whereas we wish to accord a very high priority on par with the primary education because it is technical education which can produce employable graduates and to make our country self reliant in technical manpower in the 21st century. It is in this area that we should resort to adaption of foreign technology rather than imparting and copying foreign technology from A to Z. To achieve this, we need to make our technical education not only more relevant to the present day requirements but also modernise it to match the accelerated industrial development that will be taking place as a result of the recent liberalised policies of the Government of India reflected in the last Budget.

The present stage of the technical education is as follows :

The bright boys who come out of IITs, RECs and other good Engineering colleges, migrate to foreign countries for further studies or for employment. The mediocre and the sub-standard people stay in the country with the result there is very little R & D work, inadequate initiative for self employment and a tendency to seek government jobs. The substandard graduates are unemployable in critical areas.

EXTERNAL ASSISTANCE FOR TECHNICAL EDUCATION

On the important issue of mobilising resources for modernising the existing facilities in Polytechnics & Engineering Colleges. We have formulated a Project to seek World Bank assistance to improve and expand technical education facilities in Tamil Nadu. The project components are as follows:

a) Introduction of a 3 year B.Tech course for B.Sc. students in the Engineering Colleges.

b) The four diploma level Institutions in the state, namely: 1) Institute of Textile Technology; 2) Institute of Leather Technology; 3) Institute of Printing Technology; and

4) Institute of Chemical Technology will be upgraded to provide Graduate Courses in these branches of Engineering.

c) Quality improvement of higher Technical Education:

d) To provide facilities for Post-Graduate technical education like M.E., M.S. and Ph.D. for which our students normally migrate to foreign countries.

The total estimated project cost is around Rs.400 crores.

Since the project components are in conformity with the objectives of the NPE, we would request the Govt. of India to recommend this project for World Bank assistance without any reservations. We will be shortly forwarding this Project to the Government of India. Our Hon'ble Chief Minister has accorded a very high priority for this project as the Project has been formulated on the suggestions made by H.E. the President of India and our Hon'ble C.M. at the 150th year celebrations of the Guindy Engineering College.

CONCLUSION

On the other issues I would like to be brief, and if time permits, I will elaborate my comments later. On the question of languages in Education, the Government of India should take note of the strong sentiments in South India and be flexible in language policy. We do attach importance to the need for National Integration but the Government of India should also take note of the strong sentiments in South India to the imposition of any language. Let me underline here that imposition of any language is totally different from promotion. On the contents and process of education, teachers and students in management of education we are on broad agreement with the views of the JRC as Dr. Janardhana Reddy is a pragmatic and dynamic Chief Minister of our neighbouring State.

On the subject for resources for education I only reiterate what I have stated under secondary education and other relevant heads. I once again wish to emphasise that the distribution of the Government of India's funds among the various States should be need based equitable and rational. I am sure that this will be ensured by our present Prime Minister and our dynamic Minister for Human Resources Development. I would also like to very strongly recommend the implementation of the JRC's recommendation that education should not be treated as a residual sector in the matter of allocation of resources particularly in view of the facts that even International lending institutions like World Bank accord higher priority in their programmes for social sectors like human resources development. Advanced countries like Japan and Germany are what they are because of the high priority they have accorded for the development of Human Resources. I once again wish to congratulate the Hon'ble Minister for Human Resources Development for convening this Conference and giving me an opportunity to put forth our views on this important subject and I hope that my colleagues would endorse my views on the merits of each of them.