

Literacy and Education

14. Building on educational priorities set out in the National Policy on Education, 1986 as modified in 1992 and its Programme of Action, the National Agenda for Governance (NAG) has education amongst its highest priorities. The following educational agenda has been specifically identified:—

- Education for All – Free and compulsory primary education up to 5th standard and total eradication of illiteracy.
- Education of prioritised groups – girls, SCs/STs and Backward classes and educationally backward minorities.
- Access and quality – equal access and opportunity for all up to school stage and improvement of quality at all levels.
- Financing of education – increase in government and non-government spending on education, and bringing this up to 6 per cent GDP level.

In addition, the item on harnessing of youth power makes a specific mention of its involvement in the total eradication of illiteracy. The items dealing with Constitutional and Legal Reforms, and Information Technology have important implications for educational planning and management in particular.

15. In pursuance of the emphasis embodied in the National Policy on Education and reiterated in the NAG, several schemes have been launched by way of central intervention, primarily for meeting the needs of the educationally disadvantaged and for strengthening the social infrastructure in the sector. The important schemes by way of illustration are Operation Black Board (OB), Non-Formal Education (NFE), Teacher Education (TE), National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) (Mid-day Meal Scheme), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Total Literacy Campaign (TLC), Community Polytechnics (CP), Shiksha Karmi Project (SKP), Area Intensive Programme for Educationally Backward Minorities (AIPEBM) and Integrated Education for Disabled Children, etc. Several resource institutions have either been strengthened/established to achieve the objectives of the NPE.

16. As per the report given by the National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), the overall

National figure for literacy has gone up from 52.2 per cent in 1991 to 62 per cent in 1997. The male literacy has gone up from 64.1 per cent to 73 per cent and the female literacy from 39.3 per cent to 50 per cent during the same period. The literacy percentage has also gone up substantially in some of the educationally backward states. Since independence, India has tripled its literacy (female literacy increased by five times).

17. The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the primary stage (classes I-V) increased from 42.6 per cent in 1950-51 to 89.7 per cent in 1997-98 and in the upper primary stage (classes VI-VIII) from 12.7 per cent to 58.5 per cent over the same period. The percentage of girls' enrolment to total enrolment has increased from 28.1 in 1950-51 to 43.6 in 1997-98 in the primary stage and increased from 16.1 to 40.1 over the same period in the upper primary stage.

18. The dropout rate of girls is much higher than that of boys at both the stages. The enrolment of SCs and STs has increased considerably at the primary stage. The share of enrolment of SCs has increased from 17.1 per cent in 1986 to 19.6 in 1993 at primary stage and from 14.7 to 15.6 over the same period at upper primary stage. Similarly, the share of enrolment of STs has increased from 7.8 per cent in 1986 to 9.1 per cent in 1993 at primary stage and from 5.1 per cent to 5.9 per cent over the same period at upper primary stage. Moreover, substantial increase in the share of girls' enrolment belonging to these communities has also taken place.

19. In order to improve the internal efficiency and minimum level of learning, at the school level, the Central government has taken three important initiatives since 1993, namely, Area Intensive Programme for Educationally Backward Minorities (AIPEBM), District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) and National Programme of Nutritional Support to Primary Education (NPNSPE) (Mid-Day Meal Scheme).

20. The government proposes to formulate and implement plans to gradually increase the governmental and non-governmental spending on education up to 6 per cent of GDP. Planning Commission has set up an Expert Committee to assess the current status of expenditure on education, both in public and private sector. The central plan allocation on education has been enhanced from Rs.3350 crore in 1997-98 (RE) to Rs.4245 crore in 1998-99 (BE). In order to

initiate plan to implement the provisions of National Agenda for Governance, the current year's budget (plan and non-plan) provides for nearly 50 per cent increase i.e. from Rs.4716 crore in 1997-98(RE) to Rs.7047 crore in 1998-99(BE).