

Literacy and Education

10.14 Education, the most crucial investment in human development, is an instrument for developing an economically prosperous society and for ensuring equity and social justice. A holistic view was taken in 1986 when the National Policy on Education (NPE) visualised education as a dynamic, cumulative, life long process, providing diversity of learning opportunities to all segments of society. The Prime Minister's Special Action Plan (SAP) has stressed the need for expansion and improvement of social infrastructure in the field of education. The government has accorded high priority to education, the main facets of which are :

- total eradication of illiteracy
- gradually increase the governmental and non-governmental spending on education up to 6 per cent of the GDP
- implementation of the Constitutional provision of making primary education free and compulsory up to V standard
- move towards equal access to and opportunity of educational standards up to the school-leaving stage
- improve the quality of education at all levels—from primary schools to universities.

10.15 In pursuance of the emphasis embodied in the National Policy on Education (NPE) and reiterated in the National Agenda for Governance (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 for education. The important schemes by way of illustration are Operation Blackboard (OB), Non-Formal Education (NFE), Teacher Education (TE), National Programme of Nutritional Support of Primary Education (NPNSPE), 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. The approach to the Ninth Five-Year Plan (1997-2002) has been formulated in the light of these objectives. The total central plan

allocation on education has been enhanced from Rs.4045 crore in 1998-99 (RE) to Rs.4700 crore in 1999-2000 (BE).

10.16 Elementary Education: The strategy for educational development during the next decade envisages (i) Constitutional Amendment Bill to provide free and compulsory elementary education, and (ii) Central legislation for providing education to children up to 14 years of age. A 'Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan' for convergence and decentralisation of programmes and schemes of elementary education at the district level is on the anvil.

10.17 The Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) in the primary stage (Class I-V) increased from 42.6 per cent in 1950-51 to 92.14 per cent in 1998-99 and in the upper primary stage (Class VI-VIII) from 12.7 per cent to 56.8 per cent over the same period. The percentage of girls enrolment to total enrolment has increased from 28.1 per cent in 1950-51 to 43.5 per cent in 1998-99 in the primary stage and increased from 16.1 per cent to 40.7 per cent over the same period in the upper primary stage. The dropout rate of girls is higher than that of boys at both the stages. The enrolment of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes has increased considerably at the primary stage. The share of enrolment of Scheduled Castes has increased from 15.8 per cent in 1989-90 to 17 per cent in 1997-98 at primary stage and from 12.2 per cent to 14.6 per cent over the same period at upper primary stage. Similarly, the share of enrolment of Scheduled Tribes has increased from 8 per cent in 1989-90 to 8.3 per cent in 1997-98 at primary stage and from 4.9 per cent to 6 per cent over the same period at upper primary stage. The share of girls enrolment of these communities has also increased. A central provision of Rs. 3035 crore was made in 1999-2000 (BE) for elementary education as against Rs. 2741 crore in 1998-99 (RE).

10.18 *Adult Education* : According to the NSSO, the overall percentage of literacy has increased from 52.2 per cent in 1991 to 62 per cent in 1997 and projected at 64 per cent in 1998. 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.

10.19 The National Literacy Mission (NLM) was set up to represent a national and political commitment on the need to harness all social forces to achieve the objective of eradicating illiteracy and effecting a qualitative change in the lives of the people. Flexible and innovative programmes in the form of Non-Formal Education (NFE) was launched to cater to school dropouts, girls, working children etc. 72.56 million persons have been made literate up to 1998-99, 60 per cent of them are women, 22.4 per cent are Scheduled Castes and 13.2 per cent belong to Scheduled Tribes.

10.20 *Secondary Education* : Secondary Education provides skilled manpower for the economy and is a bridge for higher, technical and professional education. Secondary education curricula continues to be first degree oriented courses in spite of strong advocacy in favour of vocationalisation. The Ninth Plan will lay emphasis on the revision of curricula so as to relate these to work opportunities.

10.21 *University and Higher Education*: Liberalisation and globalisation of the economy generates higher demand for new skills. Even though the number of universities and colleges of all types have increased (228 universities and 6759 affiliated colleges in 1996-97 as against 27 and 370 respectively in 1950-51), what now matters is the quality of higher education.

10.22 *Technical and Vocational Education* : There has been substantial growth of technical education which is considered most vital and significant component of the human resource development. From 43 polytechnics with an intake of 3400 students in 1950, the number has grown to 1,128 Polytechnics with the intake of 1.90 lakh students in 1997. Similarly, the number of degree level institutions and the corresponding intake figure rose from 38 and 2940 in 1947 to 552 and 1.36 lakh in 1997. India needs many more IITs and university teaching hospitals to meet the needs of expanding population.