CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis of Education Policies and National Curriculum Frameworks

The present chapter is organized in two segments where the first is presenting the analysis of education commissions and policies. And the second segment is presenting analysis of National Curriculum Frameworks. It is important to mention here that the analysis of both the sections is done on the understanding of discourse analysis from a human rights perspective. This analysis is supported by the conceptual framework of the research which is developed in chapter two, in detail. Internal ambiguities of these documents have, also, been highlighted during this discourse analysis of policies and the National Curriculum Frameworks.

I. Analysis of Education Policies from a Human Rights Perspective

Education has always been given an important place in Indian society. The great leaders of the Indian freedom movement realized the fundamental role of education and, throughout the nation's struggle for independence, stressed its unique significance for national development.

Immediately after independence, a major concern of the Government of India and of the States has been to give increasing attention to education, as a factor, vital to national progress and security but, simultaneously, it was, also, visible that the success rate of this objective was not sufficient and many problems prevailed at both levels- policy and practical. Problems of educational reconstruction were reviewed by several commissions and committees, notably the University Education Commission (1948-49) and the Secondary Education Commission (1952-53). Some steps to implement the recommendations of these Commissions were taken; and with the passing of the Resolution on Scientific Policy, under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, the development of science, technology and scientific research received special emphasis. Towards the end of the third Five Year Plan, a need was felt to hold a comprehensive review of the educational system, with a view to initiating a fresh and more determined effort at educational reconstruction; and, then, the Education
Commission (1964-66) was appointed to advise the Government on, "the national pattern of education and on the general principles and policies for the development of education at all stages and in all aspects." The Report of the Education Commission has, since, been widely discussed and commented upon (*detail analysis is presented further in the chapter*). The Government was happy to note that a consensus on the national policy on education has emerged, in the course of these discussions.

Based on the report and recommendations of the Education Commission (1964–1966), the first National Policy on Education was announced in 1968, which called for a "radical restructuring" and equalize educational opportunities, in order to achieve national integration and greater cultural and economic development. The policy called for fulfilling compulsory education for all children up to the age of 14, as stipulated by the Constitution of India, and the better training and qualification of teachers. The policy called for focus on learning of regional languages, outlining the “three language formula” to be implemented in secondary education. Language education was seen as essential to reduce the gulf between the intelligentsia and the masses. The policy, also, encouraged the teaching of the ancient Sanskrit language, which was considered an essential part of India's culture and heritage. The NPE, of 1968, called for education spending to increase to six percent of the national income.

According to the National Policy on Education-1968, the government of India had formulated certain principles to promote the development of education in the country. These principles are:

**Free and Compulsory Education:** According to the Indian Constitution, education should be free and compulsory up to the age of 14. Steps should be taken to ensure that the child, enrolled in the school, should successfully complete the course.

**Education of Teachers:** The teacher is the most important person to determine the quality of education in the country. She should be honored in society. Her emoluments and service standard should be increased, with due regard to her responsibilities and qualifications. Proper attention should be given to quality teacher education. They should, also, get academic freedom to write, to study and to speak on national and international issues. The constitution of India (Article 19) mentions freedom of expression for all.

**Language Development:** The policy had, also, emphasized on the development of Indian, as well as foreign languages, in the country. The three language formula
should be introduced, in which a student at the secondary level, should know Hindi, English and the regional language of his state. The language, Sanskrit, has been included as an optional subject, at the secondary level. 

**Education Opportunity for all:** Under this policy, every child of the country should get education, irrespective of caste, religion, region or whatever the case may be. Special emphasis should be given to backward classes, minority children, girls and physically challenged children to avail the education facilities.

**Uniform Education Structure:** The structure of education should be uniform throughout the country. It should be a 10+2+3 pattern from higher secondary to college level. During the course of study, each student should get to play sports and games. They should also develop the quality of work experience and should participate in programmes related to National construction and Community services.

**To review the progress:** The government should review the progress of education in the country, from time to time, and should present guidelines for it’s future development. These (and there are many other important aspects) can be discussed about in this policy, which provides a good and strong base for the education system. After this, a new policy on Education came into existence and was formulated in 1986, which, also, has most of the qualities of education policy 1968 and more than that. This is one of the causes that the National policy on Education 1986, was taken up in the present work to understand it from a Human Rights Perspective. Other than the National policy on Education, 1986, is the latest education policy we can refer to. In 1992, the Acharya Ramamurti Committee was constituted, that brought about the Plan of Action for the 1986 policy. Thus, it has become essential and significant to analyze the National policy on Education 1986 and the Plan of Action 1992, from a human rights perspective. (*The detail analysis of these two documents is presented in the next segment of the chapter*).

The National Commission on Teachers, 1983-85, is another important commission, as far as school education is concerned. The National Commission on Teachers, 1983-85, has emphasized the role of teachers in nation building. Though there are many commissions, after independence, that recognized the role of the teacher in the nation’s development, the National commission on teachers has discussed it more extensively. The main focus of the commission was on these three aspects, particularly, (NCT, 1983-85):
(1) Measures to give to the teacher the status he needs and deserves to help him do his duties at the highest possible level of performance, which implies a suitable salary that, in the prevailing economic conditions, will not only meet his economic needs, but be commensurate with his professional status and powerful enough to attract and retain 'talent' in the profession;

(2) The evolution of a system of teacher preparation that would help the teacher develop skills and values, so as to make his teaching and efforts at character development, effective and go far; and

(3) To indicate the broad parameters of a code of conduct which would motivate and help the teacher gives of his best in the performance of his duties; and to point out other conditions that are necessary for such a code's effective enforcement.

The Report highlights the basic concerns that, until standards of school education will not improve, the university education will contribute only partially. The Report raised issues regarding how higher education has to play a role in school education, as teachers in schools are from universities. The Report talks about the role of higher education, as having academic and moral leadership. If the university falters in this key function, there is little that can be done to save the school system from the deleterious effects of its dysfunctionality.

Another important commission was constituted in 2005, the National Knowledge Commission (established on 13th June 2005 and given a timeframe of three years from 2nd October 2005 to 2nd October 2008). This significant commission has talked about the education system in India, at length. The main frame or reference of this NKC was: build excellence in the educational system to meet the knowledge challenges of the 21st century and increase India’s competitive advantage in fields of knowledge, promote creation of knowledge in Science and Technology laboratories, improve the management of institutions engaged in intellectual property rights, promote knowledge applications in agriculture and industry, promote the use of knowledge capabilities in making government an effective, transparent and accountable service provider to the citizen and promote widespread sharing of knowledge to maximize public benefit.
The overall task before the National Knowledge Commission is to take steps that will give India the ‘knowledge edge’ in the coming decades, i.e. to ensure that our country becomes a leader in the creation, application and dissemination of knowledge. NKC believes that knowledge concepts are organized, distributed and transmitted through the education system. Education is a potent force for any developing state. It encourages individuals to:

- Think independently
- Make better-informed decisions
- Keep abreast of important issues and trends at the local and national level
- Question existing socio-economic arrangements in a manner that leads to innovation, change and development.

A good education system relies largely on a complex interface of human resources, pedagogical methods, curricula, infrastructure and academic standards. These are all important variables, at every level and in every field of education.

There were various focus areas, on which NKC worked and presented its report. The first was, **Access to Knowledge**: access is one of the most fundamental issues in a knowledge society. Even if universities, research institutions and laboratories produce large amounts of knowledge, it will be of little use, until the majority of the population actually possesses adequate means to acquire, absorb and communicate this knowledge. The Second was, **Knowledge Concepts**: advances in knowledge and its applications are products of human endeavors; therefore it is of utmost importance that we nurture the skills and intellectual capacities of our largely youthful population, in order to build a strong base of human capital that can transform India into a strong knowledge economy. Third, **Knowledge Creation**: although India has the option of borrowing or buying new knowledge from abroad, it is important to create self-sufficiency by promoting indigenous research, especially in Science & Technology. Science & Technology has the ability to accelerate the processes of other parallel knowledge objectives, leading to economic growth and security. Fourth, **Knowledge Application**: the creation of knowledge cannot be directionless. To derive maximum benefits from our intellectual assets, we must apply knowledge in fields such as agriculture, industry, health, education and so on, where productivity can be enhanced. Knowledge application is both a goal in itself and a facilitator of progress in these important sectors. And fifth, **Knowledge Services**: investment in knowledge
services will produce large-scale benefits for the common man. Technology has the potential to make government services and functioning more accountable, transparent and efficient. E-governance can change the way in which the citizens of India perceive and interact with the government.

Except these focus areas, the NKC is, in particular, concerned with the other aspects of Indian education. Literacy, elementary education, secondary education, higher education, professional education, vocational education, distance education, learning and language are some of them. There are roughly 100 million illiterate children in India. Special initiatives and outreach programmes are required to bring these children into the mainstream. High levels of financial and institutional commitment are required to ensure basic infrastructure in schools, bolster teaching quality and improve academic standards. NKC argued that secondary education needs to be recognized as a crucial intermediary step between Elementary and Higher Education. Innovative strategies are required to make secondary school education less strenuous and more appealing to students. Funding, regulatory frameworks, curricula, private sector participation, academic standards and research are all issues that require urgent attention and sincere resolution, with a long term view in mind. To consolidate and extend India's growing international presence in IT, medicine, law, engineering, and so on, professional education needs to be supported creatively and its quality constantly checked and upgraded. Technicians (and other skilled workers and craftsmen) form the backbone of manufacturing and infrastructure development. The Commission said that a larger and much more dynamic system of vocational education is required to train and equip them in greater numbers. While formal education is useful for building human capital, not all individuals are able to participate in it. Enough resources must be invested to ensure that distance education is developed, as a viable alternative to formal education. It is important for today's workforce to keep up with the rapid pace of technological progress. A culture of lifelong learning needs to be encouraged for all jobs, especially in the public sector. The Commission considered language as an important issue, not just of knowledge concepts but, also, of access and application. Translations from and into local languages will ensure that knowledge is uniformly available in society and local knowledge is made available for use and analysis.
Some other important commissions exist, but it is not desirable to include all in this work, as per the need and requirement of the research, the policy level analysis includes the analysis of the *Education and National Development*, *Report of the Education-1964-66*, *National Policy on Education -1986* and *AcharyaRamamurti Committee Report (POA)-1992*.


The **Kothari Commission** (1964–66), was set up to formulate a coherent education policy for India. It aimed at increasing productivity, developing social and national unity, consolidating democracy, modernizing the country, developing social, moral and spiritual values, providing equal educational opportunities, developing languages and promoting scientific education and research. The commission emphasized the need to eradicate illiteracy and provide adult education. To achieve this, the Indian education policy proposed free and compulsory education for all children, up to the age of 14.

The true aim of education is to prepare a person to play his part well, as an enlightened member of society. Education means integrated development of personality. It should impart training to head, hand and heart. The system of education, introduced by the British government in India, was absolutely unsuited to the needs of our country. It was designed to produce a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, ideas and outlook. It aimed at fostering loyalty to the British rule among the educated class and, through them, among the masses. Its purpose was to secure cheap clerks and such other persons, as could help in carrying on the British administration in India.

Under the British rule in India, education was imparted through the medium of English. It not only deprived people of the knowledge of their own language and literature, but also wasted the precious time of the youth in cramming the rules of grammar of a foreign language. The pattern of education developed in India, during the British rule, was unplanned.

The Secondary Education Commission (1952-53), set up under the chairmanship of Dr. Lakshman Swami Mudaliar, studied the problems of secondary education in India.
and suggested some changes to be introduced therein. It made valuable recommendations, after a thorough study regarding the objectives of education, reorganization of teaching institutions, medium of instruction and the system of examinations, in its report.

In 1964, the Government of India appointed an Education Commission, under the Chairmanship of Dr. D.S. Kothari, to advise the government on the policy of education. The Commission submitted its report in 1966. The report indicated the guidelines for formulation of a National Policy on Education. In July, 1968, the Government of India declared its National Policy on Education. On the basis of the recommendations contained in the reports of this Commission, the Government took steps to introduce certain much needed changes in our system of education.

Till 1970, India had a three tier system of education. Primary education covered schooling for five years. Secondary Education covered another seven years, thus making it a twelve year school education. Thereafter, started university education. There were certain technical and professional courses open to students after the completion of Secondary Education. From the academic session 1975-76, a new scheme of education, called 10+2+3 was introduced, in a phased manner.

The university stage is of 3 years duration. This new scheme includes radical changes in the system, such as making education productive and work-oriented. To achieve this and for the holistic development, it has been suggested that the medium of instruction should be the mother tongue. This represents a human rights perspective based thinking.

The Kothari Commission states that the secondary and higher secondary institutions will provide training in agriculture, commerce, engineering, forestry, arts and crafts. Thus, the five Indian Institutes of Technology at Bombay, Kanpur, Kharagpur, Madras and New Delhi provide facilities for education and research in engineering and technology. Female education, was also highly supported by The Kothari Commission. A large number of girls’ schools and women’s colleges were opened. The number of women students in these institutions has increased manifold. Such given provisions show the faith of The Kothari Commission (1964) in a human rights perspective, especially in terms of women’s rights and their education.
The concept of Common Schools can be found at a number of places in the Report of the Kothari Commission. The vision of the national system of education, that incorporates Common Schools, is eloquently elaborated in the well-known section 1.36 of the report, too long to produce here in full. A summary can, however, be found at section 1.38:

If the educational system is to become a powerful instrument of national development, in general, and social and national integration, in particular, we must move towards the goal of a common school system of public education, which are based on human rights perspective:

- which will be open to all children, irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic conditions or social status;
- where access to good education will depend not on wealth or class, but on talent;
- which will maintain adequate standards in all schools and provide, at least, a reasonable proportion of quality institutions;
- in which no tuition fees will be charged; and
- which would meet the needs of the average parent, so that he would not ordinarily feel the need to send his children to expensive schools outside the system.

The invocation of the term ‘talent’ instead of ‘right’, and the uninhibited reference to the provision of a ‘reasonable proportion of quality institutions’ demand particular attention. Such a provision of quality institutions is quantified, further, in section 10.02. These lines take the recommendations of commission away from a human rights perspective. These show that the policies concerned with children and their education, but not for all.

The commission suggested that a nation-wide programme of school improvement should be organized with three objectives: (a) to raise all schools to, at least, a minimum prescribed level; (b) to assist every school to rise to the highest level of which it is capable; and (c) during the next ten years, to raise, at least, ten percent of the institutions to an optimum standard.

Clearly, the Kothari Commission foresees that only a small proportion of schools, ten per cent, could be raised to ‘optimum standards’, implying that there would exist a
difference in the quality of the bulk of the schools (to be raised to a minimum prescribed level) and a small proportion of quality schools, at least for a decade or more. In section 10.31, the Report clearly suggests a classification of schools into three categories, A, B and C based on their quality, something that would seem to dilute, or even negate, the concept of a common school and so, is against a human rights perspective. The differentiation of schools is, however, made unambiguously explicit in section 10.31. Thus, it will not be possible due to lack of resources, to raise all schools to a high level, within a short period. The strategy to be adopted for development should, therefore, be on the following lines:

The highest priority in the programme should be given to the creation of minimum proportion of ‘quality’ schools at every stage which would serve as pace setting institutions……It is necessary to concentrate available resources in a few centers for primary schools – 10% quality schools for secondary – one in each block.

At the higher primary and secondary stages, admissions to these (quality) schools should be regulated on the basis of merit to ensure that the brighter children, from all strata of society, receive the best education possible.

This is, in fact, one of the most problematic recommendations of the entire Report. Contrary to popular notions, it grants legitimacy to Kendriya, Navodaya, Sarvodaya and other ‘quality’ schools of the Government, but it, further, restricts admission to them on the basis of merit, thus opening the Pandora’s box of admission tests and other screening procedures, within the governmental school system. These implications of the commission cannot be on the understanding of a human rights perspective.

The lack of urgency in implementing the common school system, and tentativeness in the proposal, asking for a pilot phase contingent on the approval of the concerned people, can be found in section 10.19: We are of the view that the neighborhood school concept should be adopted as a long –term goal, to be reached in a well-planned programme spread over 20 years. The strategy for its adoption should be as follows:

- During the next ten years, two programmes should be pursued side by side. The first is to improve all primary schools to a minimum level prescribed and to raise about ten percent of them to a higher standard of quality.
Simultaneously, the neighborhood school system should be introduced at the lower primary stage, as a pilot project, in a few areas, where public opinion is favorable to the acceptance of the proposal.

While these are a sample of provisions for the government school system, what about the private unaided schools, which are termed as ‘independent’ schools in the Report? Again, contrary to the popular notion that the Report recommends them to be a part of the common school system, it, first, recognizes their constitutional validity (in section 10.77), and, then, goes on to exclude them from the national system of public education (common schools) in the following manner: All citizens under clauses (c) and (g) of Article 19 have the right to ‘form associations’ and to ‘practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business’. Thus, all citizens or citizens’ groups have the right to establish private schools. Therefore, the constitution provides that private schools can be established, but if they do not seek aid or recognition from the state, they will be considered as being outside the national system of public education.

It was quite surprising why private schools were kept out of the national system of education. It was clearly against a human rights perspective and created multi forms of school education. The exclusion of private schools from common schooling and the national system of public education is, further, reiterated in the following explicit insertion in the Summary of Chapter 10 of the Report:

“The Common School System of Public Education would include all government schools, all local authority schools and all aided private schools leaving private (independent) schools and unrecognized schools out of its ambit. This was not a good decision on the part of the government. Thus, the private schools were not bound to take admissions of the poor children. This was very inhumane and against a human rights perspective.”

To promote social cohesion and national integration, the Common School system, as recommended by the Education Commission should be adopted. Efforts should be made to improve the standard of education in general schools. All special schools, such as Public Schools, should be required to admit students on the basis of merit and, also, to provide a prescribed proportion of free-studentships, to prevent segregation of social classes. This will not, however, affect the rights of minorities, under Article 30

Notice the use of the term ‘special schools’ and ‘Public Schools’ (a term inherited from the Britishers for private schools) as special category schools, where the Common School system would not apply, but which would be obliged to admit students in a prescribed proportion of free studentships. Elsewhere in the Report, it has been suggested that the Government should spend on these freesthips, in the form of scholarships to students who are picked up on merit for these special category schools (section 10.31). The notice states that minority institutions have also been exempted from the common school system, whereas the Right to Education legislation does not exempt them from any of its provisions, including the 25% neighborhood quota.

The Report even goes to the extent of eulogizing the private schools (section 10.12) and sees their role as ‘seed farms’ in quality improvement.

The report extols that the good private schools i.e. those schools which maintain high standards and have devoted and capable teachers, will have to be detected and will get support from the government. These institutions can serve as a benchmark for others and can be developed as ‘seed farms’ in the common school system of public education.

The problem of internal inconsistency is not unique to the Kothari Commission Report – ambivalence and tentativeness in progressive formulations is the hallmark of most educational reports; worse, different sections tend to contradict each other (that is why one needs to go beyond the oft referred section 1.36 on common schooling of the Kothari Commission Report).

But, why do these contradictions exist within the policy? That is the big political question. The bourgeoisie Indian nation-state was carved out and is structured as a sum of contested vested interests, needs, aspirations, and political clouts, which are reflected in its body-politic. Public policy, in any sphere, therefore, ends up as a ‘please-all’ effort, unable to escape ambivalence, tentativeness and contradiction. A Bill or a Parliamentary report is, finally, a political, rather than an educational (domain) document, and will, more often, reflect the contested politics, rather than progressive logic. Therefore, howsoever logical an argument of public policy might
seem, if it lacks political backing, it is unlikely to go forward. As many political commentators have pointed out, the problem is not an inability to draft sensible formulations in the area of public policy; it is in the structure of the Indian nation-state; where democracy, more often, gets defined as accommodating contradictory viewpoints, rather than arriving at a coherent and logical structure. The Kothari Commission report or the Right to Education Bill is, equally, under stress from such political contradictions.

It is not as if social movements are immune from such contestations. Take language for example. Global educational research supports the view (inherent, also, to the national system of education of the Kothari Commission Report), that the mother tongue, as the medium of instruction in the formative years, is not only essential for a learning mind, but, also, greatly aids the acquisition of proficiency in the second language, later on. It must, therefore, be reflected in any policy. However, one cannot summarily dismiss a counter view coming out of dalit politics. Beginning with Ambedkar, various dalit thinkers and movements have opposed such stress on the mother tongue or Hindi, maintaining that dalit emancipation is linked to freedom from the caste dominating local languages; insisting, therefore, to bring in the ‘liberative’ influence of the English language. Thus, English should be taught from the very beginning of school education. This is a contestation that will have to be negotiated with patience and democratic debate. That a certain ‘global’ elite in India might think English is important, for entirely different reasons, is an added complication that needs to be factored in. These intricate debates cannot be resolved by taking an isolationist, radical sounding position, which might contribute to individualized radical image making, but are unlikely to help improve the education of children, which must remain the primary objective.

The issue of common schooling and inclusive education is important, not only because of what the Kothari Commission Report says or does not say – it is important by itself. Locating this within the Kothari Commission Report has an advantage, since it provides a legitimate policy framework, but that comes with a contradictory baggage too, which cannot be hidden.

As per the NHRC (National Human Rights Comission) report (2010), up to class 8, approximately, around 80% children are in government schools, the rest in private – aided and unaided. Should we postpone the provisions of the present legislation for
the 80% and certain regulations for the 20% - if read and interpreted properly they are anything, but insubstantial or crumbs, as some critics tend to dismiss them – should we resolve the constitutional validity of the existence of private schools, something the Kothari Commission could not resolve? We could either try to outlaw private schools, or we could try and make every neighborhood government school of such quality (as the government run Kendriya Vidyalayas are, to some extent) that parents choose to send their children there, rather than to a private school. That is how educationally advanced countries have ensured that children go to neighborhood state schools, not by outlawing private schools, but by making the state schools as good or better, and free.

The work of the Kothari Commission is regarded as a ‘turning point in India’s educational life’ and is significant in the area of financing education. The Kothari Commission gives some general observations and guidelines, suggesting the new direction that the policy-makers and the planners of education, in India, need to take. Many recommendations are relevant even in the 21st century, though they were made in the late 20th century. However, the recommendations are not exhaustive. The issues related to financing the education in India have been discussed below, very briefly.

Reviewing the report of the commission, J P Naik (1979), who was the member-secretary and who had played an important role in drafting the voluminous report, classified the several recommendations into three categories: (i) recommendations that attracted wide attention, (ii) recommendations that were opposed and rejected, and (iii) "other" recommendations. Other recommendations include (a) those which did not excite any major controversy and were accepted, but implemented differently; (b) those which were simply ignored; and (c) other recommendations. There is, yet, another category of recommendations, viz, (iv) recommendations agreed and approved, but not implemented. Some of the major recommendations on financing of education made by the commission belong to this last category; some belong to the first category that received wide attention, but were followed by little action; many to the second category that were opposed and rejected; and a few to the category, which were either simply ignored and/or are of no significance.

At the very outset, it is important to note that the commission, perhaps for the first time in India, had emphasized the critical role of education in social and economic
development. It was clearly recognized that, "In a science-based world, education and research are critical to the entire developmental process of a country, its welfare, progress and security." It is more emphatically noted that education determines the level of prosperity, welfare and security of the people" (p 3; emphasis added).

The commission seemed to have been influenced by the "human investment revolution in economic thought" created by Schultz (1961), according to which, investment in education leads to human capital formation which, in turn, contributes to economic growth. The whole approach to educational development, in general, and financing of education, in particular, was strongly influenced by its strong conviction on the role of education in development. Not only spatial disparities, the commission, also, realized the need to ensure equity between several socio-economic classes in India. Accordingly, it argued, "we should accord the highest priority to education and allocate the largest proportion of GNP possible to it" (p 873). It also warned, "In an age of science, there can be no greater risk than a policy of drift and niggardliness in education"(p 892). Second, it was very much concerned with the wide gap between India and the advanced countries, and the need to reduce it in education, and, through education, in development, between educationally and economically advanced countries such as India, and on the other hand, between several states and regions, within India. It resolved," the gap between India and other rich countries needs to be reduced” (p 873). Third, an important aspect is that it was the first commission that was required to and did carefully look into the entire spectrum of education and adopted a comprehensive and holistic approach, rather than looking at education in a segmented and fragmented way, at different levels of education.

An important contribution of the commission is a detailed analysis of financing education, in India. The financial analysis attempted in the report, particularly in chapters IX, X, was the first of its kind, in India. In fact, there were very few studies on economics and financing of education, even in other countries, at this time. It made (a) a detailed expenditure analysis- total, by levels and objects,( b) a detailed source-wise analysis of funds, (c) unit cost analysis, and (d) a detailed estimate of resources required for education, for the next 20 years, in constant prices. Both the detailed framework provided, and the insightful analysis made, were of great significance and use for researchers in economics and financing of education and for educational planners, as well. The commission, in fact, noted the absence of studies and the
critical need for such studies, and recommended support to universities for research in these areas.

While concluding, it can be said that the report was considered a landmark in the history of Indian education. The commission made several important suggestions, which, even after 40 years, are still relevant for the development of education. They are relevant not just because their implementation is overdue; they are relevant today for their intrinsic value, essentially because the commission had looked into the distant future, adopted a visionary approach, built its recommendations on strong empirical evidence and knowledge - national and international, with a strong conviction on the role of education in national development, and, above all, with a strong commitment to national development. Despite realizing the need to be austere due to several reasons, as it worked under the overall atmosphere of austerity, the commission did not compromise on a few, vital issues. For instance, it strongly advocated a national system of education; and it pleaded for universal full-time education to all children of common school type, though development of alternative channels of education was also suggested, as full-time universal education was not, immediately, possible. It has argued for a free common school system of public education, up to the end of grade X and the adoption of the neighborhood school concept, at the elementary stage (p 458). It suggested that all private schools must be brought into the common school system. Third, it has recommended a large expansion of a scholarship programme. It has also recommended a significant expansion of the centrally sponsored sector in education. Above all, it strongly recommended increase in the allocation of resources to education, to the level of 6 per cent of GNP.

Unfortunately, while the commission recommended a package of reforms, the government looked at the recommendations as piecemeal suggestions. As Naik (1979) observed, "It is, thus, a tragedy that the recommendations of the one commission which was directed to look comprehensively at education were considered mostly in a piecemeal fashion" (p 38;). While there can be several factors for the inaction of the government, the lack of strong, political will seems to be the most important one. As a result, the Indian education system is, still, characterized with conspicuous failures - in eradicating illiteracy, in universalizing elementary education, in vocationalisation of secondary education, in ensuring excellence and high standards in higher education, in allocating adequate resources for education and in improving the financial
efficiency of the system. All these failures, along with, of course, some spectacular achievements in terms of student numbers in building one of the largest reservoirs of scientific and technical man power in the world, in "exporting" manpower, and so on, are, also, there. The reason for widespread discontentment with the education sector is obvious. The commission itself warned, "A report which is shelved or does not lead to action is worse than no report because it leads to frustration by arousing hopes that remain unfulfilled" (p 897).

The National Policy on Education, 1986

The National Policy on Education (NPE) was announced in 1986, to prepare India for the next century. It said, “Neither normal linear expansion nor the existing pace and nature of improvement can meet the needs of the situation.” The 1986 policy goals were: more than 90% of the country’s rural population was within a small distance from schools, a common education structure for states and prioritization of science and mathematics. These had, largely, been achieved, although the financial and organizational support for the education system still faced problems.

India’s political and social life is passing through a phase, which poses the danger of erosion to long accepted values. The goals of secularism, socialism, democracy and professional ethics are coming under increasing strain.

The introduction of the policy makes it very humane and shows faith in changes, as per their requirement. It starts, “Education has continued to evolve, diversify and extend its reach and coverage since the dawn of human history. Every country develops its system of education to express and promote its unique socio-cultural identity and also to meet the challenges of the times. There are moments in history when a new direction has to be given to an age-old process. That moment is today. (1.1)

These very lines are subject to debate, where it tried to establish the relationship between technology and education. There is no harm in establishing such a relationship, but when this becomes the prime aim, it creates problems, especially in a country, such as India. Today’s scenario is different, but in 1986, the situation and
needs were different and so the priority was also different. It appears in the policy itself. The following quotes from policy clearly indicate that:

“The country has reached a stage in its economic and technical development when a major effort must be made to derive the maximum benefit from the assets already created and to ensure that the fruits of change reach all sections. Education is the highway to that goal.” (1.2)

“With this aim in view, the Government of India announced in January 1985 that a new Education Policy would be formulated for the country. A comprehensive appraisal of the existing educational scene was made followed by a countrywide debate. The views and suggestions received from different quarters were carefully studied.” (1.3)

There are certain clauses of the policy which take it to the understanding of a human rights perspective, such as section 1.12 of policy “The rural areas, with poor infrastructure and social services, will not get the benefit of trained and educated youth, unless rural - urban disparities are reduced and determined measures are taken to promote diversification and dispersal of employment opportunities” talked about a human rights perspective, as it deals with removing the disparities between rural and urban India in terms of education and opportunities, but the reality today has not changed much.

The policy deals effectively with a human rights perspective, when it say, “In our national perception education is essentially for all. This is fundamental to our all-round development, material and spiritual.”(2.1) And “Education has an acculturating role. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit -- thus furthering the goals of socialism, secularism and democracy enshrined in our constitution.” (2.2)

The policy is sensitive enough about the issues related to caste, class and gender and so said in 3.2 The concept of a National System of Education implies that, up to a given level, all students, irrespective of caste, creed, location or sex, have access to education of a comparable quality. To achieve this, the Government will initiate appropriately funded programmes. Effective measures will be taken in the direction of the Common School System recommended in the 1968 Policy. This statement becomes more significant, when it says that the responsibility of education is with the state and
the state should make efforts to make education available to all. This is the responsibility of the states towards its citizens.

The policy says that a common curriculum, with flexibilities, will provide a different orientation to education. The idea will be to create an egalitarian society, with democratic values. The following lines, from the policy, shows the essence of what has been said above. “The National System of Education will be based on a national curricular framework, which contains a common core along with other components that are flexible. The common core will include the history of India’s freedom movement, the constitutional obligations and other content essential to nurture national identity. These elements will cut across subject areas and will be designed to promote value such as India’s common cultural heritage, egalitarianism, democracy and secularism, equality of the sexes, protection of the environment, removal of social barriers, observance of the small family norm and inculcation of the scientific temper. All educational programmes will be carried on in strict conformity with secular values.” (3.4). These lines clearly deal with a human rights perspective, when it talks about including secularism, egalitarianism, democracy and equality of sexes in the curriculum, across the nation.

Educational opportunities should be provided equally to all, not only for national development but, also, for the development of individuals and as a human being. This can be done through a progressive curriculum, which is based on democratic values and represents actual realities and complexities of society. Section 3.6 of the policy deals with this and said, “to promote equality, it will be necessary to provide for equal opportunity to all not only in access, but also in the conditions for success. Besides, awareness of the inherent equality of all will be created through the core curriculum. The purpose is to remove prejudices and complexes transmitted through the social environment and the accident of birth.” Therefore, it clearly talks about equality, not only in terms of access but, also, about the conditions of accessibility.

The policy talked about a collective effort of the nation towards making education accessible and available to all, and says, “the Nation as a whole will assume the responsibility of providing resource support for implementing programmes of educational transformation, reducing disparities, universalization of elementary education, adult literacy, scientific and technological research, etc.” (3.10)
The line under section 3.11 of the Policy talked about education for agriculture, youth and housewives, according to the pace which suits them, but there was a requirement that education should change the pace, instead of just providing education, according to the pace.

Part IV of the policy, specifically, deals with the concerns of equality in education. It starts with a very positive note that, “New Policy will lay special emphasis on the removal of disparities and to equalize educational opportunity by attending to the specific needs of those who have been denied equality so far.” This intention of NPE 1986, directly deals with the notion of a human rights perspective, which understands the importance of education and its equal accessibility to all.

The policy lays extra emphasis on women’s education and emphasizes the role of education, as an agent of change, in the status of women. This will help to remove the gender disparities in society. NPE perceived education, as a means to create an egalitarian society in terms of gender discrimination. It, also, talked about the empowerment of women in this respect.

The education for SC and ST were considered essential in this policy. The basic idea was of their equalization, as there were SC people at all stages and level of education. Many measures were taken by the policy to spread education in the SC community, including:

- Incentives to families to send their children school.
- Pre-matric scholarship.
- Ensuring the enrollment, retention and successful completion of SC students.
- Recruitment of teachers from SC.
- Finding new methods to include more SC in education process.

Such provisions for a marginalized group surely proves the spirit of NPE 1986, towards a human rights perspective and creating an egalitarian society.

Many special provisions have been done for ST. The idea was the same i.e. make them at par with others. Provisions for opening new primary schools in tribal areas on a priority basis, with consideration of cultural issues and concerns, opening residential schools and other schemes for their upliftment, proves that NPE 1986, was quite sensitive about a human rights perspective.
The policy was sensitive about minorities. Minorities and their education has been ignored for years. In the absence of education, their situation in life could not develop in a better way. But, NPE 1986, considered their education and includes section 4.8 in the policy, which proves its sensitivity towards a human rights perspective. It says, “Some minority groups are educationally deprived or backward. Greater attention will be paid to the education of these groups in the interests of equality and social justice. This will naturally include the Constitutional guarantees given to them to establish and administer their own educational institutions, and protection to their languages and culture. Simultaneously, objectivity will be reflected in the preparation of textbooks and in all school activities and all possible measures will be taken to promote an integration based on appreciation of common national goals and ideals, in conformity with the core curriculum.”

Special provisions, regarding differently abled children, gives this policy a human rights perspective. The policy understands the importance of inclusion and talked about the inclusion of differently abled children, with others. Provisions were made to provide hostels to severely handicapped children, along with vocational training.

With reference to adult education, it talked about a national literacy mission and for that it appealed for a collective effort, by private and government agencies. Under this, it talked about workers’ education, promotion of books and libraries, use of media to spread awareness so on.

The policy has shown its commitment about early childhood care and education, specially for a girl child. Section 5.2 says, “day care center will be provided as a support system for universalization of primary education, to enable girls support service for working women belonging to poorer section.” Emphasizing on such provision indicates this policy has a human rights perspective.

Basically, these important aspects have been discussed about elementary education in the policy in section 5.5:

- Universal access and enrollment.
- Universal retention of children up to 14 years of age.
- A substantial improvement in the quality of education to enable all children to achieve essential level of learning.
The policy suggests that all these will be achieved, when a child will be given importance and due respect. It says in section 5.6, “A warm welcoming and encouraging approach, in which all concerned share solicitude for the need of the child, is the best motivation for the child to attend school and learner.” The policy suggests that a child centered approach needs to be used, at the primary level of schooling.

The policy, also, showed its concern with the first generation learner and their problems. It says, “first generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and should be given supplementary remedial instruction.” The policy prohibits corporal punishment, as it perceives it as inhumane. It says, “corporal punishment will be firmly excluded from their educational system and school timing as well as vacations adjusted to the convenience of children.”

Section 5.8 of the policy talked about informal education. It has a dual interpretation in relation to primary education. On one hand it is good, but on the other, it’s not. Read the given lines—“the non-formal education programmes meant for school drop outs for children form habitation without schools, working children and girls who cannot attend whole day schools, will be strengthened and enlarged.” In the positive sense, it is good that it provides opportunities to all children to have education. But, after analyzing this critically, it shows a negative decision, because this provision of non-formal education for children (and especially for girls) goes against the spirit of the fundamental right of primary education for all children. There should not be availability of such alternatives, which restrict children from attending a regular primary school. The policy expects schools to use a participatory approach with learners where, in their view, experiences and knowledge can be respected. Here, it is important to mention that the policy said that the government will take responsibility for all this.

The policy shows its concern regarding dropouts which gives it a human rights perspective, because education is a fundamental right and children need to attend school for this. Accepting that education is important for all, gives this policy a human rights based perspective.

The policy is quite concerned about the issues associated with secondary education, not only about dropouts and quality but, also, about the division of stream and
students enrollment. It says that women, SC, ST and so on, should also opt for science and mathematics, because over a period of time, it has been observed that these groups opted only for humanities. But, now, there is need to encourage them to take sciences. But, the important question here is that does the policy mean that, humanities does not have the potential to develop the learners personality and has less career opportunities or is its only concern that all students should opt for all options? But, a discriminatory essence was prevalent in the policy. The given lines represent this understanding, “Access to secondary education will be widened with emphasis on enrollment of girls, SCs and STs particularly in science and commerce.”

The policy talked about different types of vocational education, which should start after class VIII. The idea to provide vocational education is to bridge the gap between demand and supply. Another idea behind it was to develop more employment and self-dependency, specially for women and the poorer class of society. Though the spirit may be right, yet it is very clear that the whole meaning and importance of education shifted to demand and supply. There is a need to understand that education, in itself, has greater goals, than demand and supply.

Launching a need based vocational programme was the most appreciable initiative of this policy. The idea was to spread self-employment among women and other economically deprived people.

Higher education provides people with an opportunity to reflect on the critical social, economic, cultural, moral and spiritual issues facing humanity. In this regard, special provision has been suggested in terms of facilities, infrastructure and, specially, for researches, at university level.

At the higher education, an open learning system has been initiated, in order to augment opportunities for higher education. These opportunities will strengthen the education system and also the level of education in India. For more students, who will not get a chance to take regular education, an open learning system will provide them opportunities to be educated, which is every ones’ fundamental right. Such recommendations go in favour of a human rights perspective.

The concept of rural universities has, also, been initiated in the policy, to include rural population in higher education, which is a remarkable recommendation.
Part VII of the policy deals with the practical aspects of the education system. The segment argues that, “education needs to be managed in an atmosphere of at most intellectual rigor, seriousness of purpose and, at the same time, of freedom essential for innovation and creativity.” Here, the policy showed concern about the implementation of the suggestions and recommendation.

The policy believes that the cultures of different communities of India need to be given appropriate weightage, in education. Section 8.2 says, “curricula and processes of education will be enabled to develop sensitivity to beauty, harmony and refinement.” The policy linked education and real life practices, in terms of value education. Section 8.4 says, “the growing concern over and increasing cynicism in society has focused the need for readjustments in the curriculum to make education a powerful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values.”

We have a culturally plural society and education should foster universal and internal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. With such a value education, the school will help to eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violence, superstition and fatalism. This understanding of the policy shows its concern with a human rights perspective.

Work experience has been seen as purposive and meaningful manual work, organized as an integral part of the learning process and resulting in either good or useful service to the community, which is considered as an essential component, at all stages of education, in the policy.

Population education and environment education have been given importance, because they both have been seen as a national strategy for development. The policy has identified youth, as a strong pillar for national development. Considering youth important proves its faith in youth and their abilities in nation building. The policy says (8.22), “opportunities will be provided for the youth to involve themselves in national and social development through educational institution and outside them.”

Certain provisions, with reference to the evaluation process, indicate that the policy has a human rights perspective. The policy says, “Assessment of performance is an integral part of any learning and teaching. Assessment should be happen to provide
feedback instead of judging the student. It should be process oriented then product oriented.” (8.23)

Inference in the Present Scenario

The new policy was intended to raise educational standards and increase access to education. At the same time, it would safeguard the values of secularism, socialism and equality (which had been promoted since Independence,) which gives this policy a human rights perspective. To this end, the government would seek financial support from the private sector to complement government funds. The central government declared that it would accept a wider responsibility to enforce ‘the national and integrative character of education, to maintain quality and standards’. The states, however, retained a significant role, particularly in relation to the curriculum. The central government committed itself to financing a portion of development expenditure, and around 10 per cent of primary education is, now, funded under a centrally sponsored scheme. The key legacies of the 1986 policy, were the promotion of privatization and the continued emphasis on secularism and science and one needs to critically evaluate this aim of the policy.

Another consequence of the NPE was that the quality of education, in India, was increasingly discussed, and several initiatives have been developed since in an attempt to counter this:

• Operation Blackboard (1987–88) aimed to improve the human and physical resources available in primary schools.
• Restructuring and Reorganization of Teacher Education (1987) created a resource for the continuous upgrading of teachers’ knowledge and competence.
• Minimum Levels of Learning (1991) laid down levels of achievement, at various stages and revised textbooks.
• The National Programme for Nutritional Support to Primary Education (1995) provided a cooked meal every day for children in Classes 1–5 of all government, government-aided and local body schools. In some cases, grain was distributed on a monthly basis, subject to a minimum attendance.
• District Primary Education Programme (DPEP) (1993) emphasized decentralized planning and management, improved teaching and learning materials, and school effectiveness.
• Movement to Educate All (2000) aimed to achieve universal primary education by 2010, through micro planning and school-mapping exercises, bridging gender and social gaps.
• Fundamental Rights (2001) involved the provision of free and compulsory education, declared to be a basic right for children, aged between 6 and 14 years.

The 1986 policy was a major departure from the national policy adopted on the recommendations of the Education Commission, under Professor D.S Kothari, which in 1966, had called for a common school system, as well as for a Plus-Two stage of schooling beyond Class X. Strengthening of research, in the university system, was another major recommendation.

The 1986 policy led to encouragement in emerging sectors such as Information Technology, which witnessed an upsurge, following the opening up of the technical education sector, particularly in capacity expansion, in the private sector. Although the 1986 policy spoke against commercialization of education, the explosion in the number of private engineering and medical institutions, according to educationists, has only given a, further, impetus to the menace of the capitation fee.

Today, the education system of India is in shambles and it does not even have a human rights based perspective. As far as schools are concerned, it is the time we have a prescribed National curriculum. The states can have supplementary readers, if any state specific information needs to be added to the academic curriculum. The vast disparity in the curriculum and different boards of education is only increasing the gaps in the education between the elite and the poor. Further, in the globalized world, equal attention needs to be paid to provide world class education, so that we become competent enough to sustain ourselves. Focusing more on knowledge building, than rote learning, is the need of the hour.

All the problems in the economy sectors such as transport, industry, commerce, housing, defense and so on are due to lack of education. The proportion of educated
people is too little. Quality and relevance is misplaced. What is needed is not taught and what is taught is not needed.

Academic leadership at the national, university and college levels is far below the world level. Students are going abroad for education, foreign universities are coming to India. Our people in the USA have raised the universities to great heights. Why cannot we do the same in India?

Systems and governance are poor. The education commission, that has been appointed, should reform the governance but, in some way or the other, we have to see the responsibility of NPE, which has failed to do better for the nation.

The government has not been perturbed that its policy stance was tantamount to institutionalizing discrimination against the poor, a majority of whom would be Dalits, the tribal people and religious or cultural minorities, two-thirds of each segment being girls. Most of the disabled children will, also, fall in this category, earmarked for discrimination.

The policy was pushed forward ruthlessly, in spite of wide public criticism and the principle of equality, enshrined in the Constitution. The government's refrain of something is better than nothing' seemed to justify, instead of questioning, the collapse of education policies, during the past 56 years. The concept of a parallel stream was first institutionalized by the 1986 policy, in the form of non-formal education for the poor, especially child workers.

This has been acknowledged as a major policy fault line, as it was used by the policymakers of the 1980s as a rationale, for not focusing political attention on the transformation of the mainstream school system, in favour of the poor, especially the girls and the disabled children. Although the policy was committed to establishing a common school system, through the promotion of neighborhood schools, as recommended by the Kothari Commission (1964-66), the parallel stream of non-formal education became the dominant policy imperative. This, effectively, marginalized the concept of the common school system and the constitutional principle of equality. Quality education, rapidly, became the preserve of the privileged, making education a commodity.

The literacy programme is an example of how attention has been diverted (changed) from the central issue of universalization of elementary education (UEE). The literacy
programme is akin to `mopping the floor while the tap is on' as it seems to be waiting for half of the children in the age group of 6 to 14, who are out-of-school, to become adult illiterates in the 15-35 age group (the official group for literacy mission), so that the literacy programme can be thrust upon them. With this policy, the literacy business will go on well beyond 2015.

There is plenty of evidence to show that this over-emphasis on literacy, making it almost synonymous with education, is part of the international literacy `conspiracy', conceived by the World Bank and the agencies of the United Nations. The Jomtien Declaration (1990), issued by the first World Conference on EFA and followed up in the Dakar Framework (2000), is evidence of market forces working over-time to push the literacy paradigm in global education scenario. Literacy skill is all that the masses need, argue the market forces, so that they can read the product labels and advertisements. It’s somewhat evolved form would be adequate for factory workers to read production instructions and to use, even, the Internet. Critical thinking, creativity, scientific temper, analytical abilities, sense of history or philosophy, aesthetic appreciation and other such educational attributes need to be reserved for the privileged few - this is the implication of the literacy paradigm and the market forces. The Ambani-Birla Report (2000), submitted to the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry, was prepared to extend the market framework into the Indian education.

The current deterioration in the quality of schooling, including in the private school system, can be traced, historically and pedagogically, to this erroneous policy perception. If there was even a modicum of commitment to the UEE goal, the government would have analysed the causes of this policy collapse and drawn useful lessons for re-formulating the future policy framework.

The 1986 Education Policy committed itself on women’s equality in education, much more than the Jomtien-Dakar Framework. The 1986 policy clearly states, "education will be used as an agent of basic change in the status of women" in order to "neutralize the accumulated distortions of the past". It envisaged to provide a niche to the Indian women on the world map and that education will play an interventionist role in changing the poor status of women, by empowering them, so that they can, also, contribute to the social set-up and, hence, the nation. This change in the attitude of the policy-makers was, furthered, by the emerging feminist movements in India.
However, the only programme that was designed to reflect this policy insight was the Mahila Samakhya. Its objective was to enhance the self-esteem and self-confidence of women, build their positive image by recognizing their contribution to society, the polity and the economy, develop their ability to think critically, enable them to make informed choices in areas such as education, employment and health, especially reproductive health, and ensure equal participation in developmental processes. But, the programme remained marginal throughout the 1990s. For every Rs.100 allocated for elementary education in the Union Budget, hardly 25 paise was given to it. In due course of time, even this miniscule programme lost its basic direction.

The Acharya Ramamurti Committee Report (POA) 1992

In the present analysis, efforts will be made to describe the steps under the National Policy on Education, 1986 and the modifications or changes suggested by the review committee (1992) which have a human rights perspective. The review of different recommendations is being done, along with possible suggestions. These suggestions are expected to be more practical and desirable, in relation to the declared policy objectives in the field of education.

The Kothari Commission of 1964 and, subsequently, the National Education Policy, 1986, endorsed the concept of universalization of primary (elementary) education. Further, the Plan of Action 1992, and now the Constitution, also accepted the fundamental right of elementary education. In spite of this and the constitutional provision for free-primary education for the age group of 6-14, the same is very much beyond the achievement of the educational system, to date.

Almost half of the children, in the age group of 6-14, either do not go to school or drop out at an early age. Many have to stay out-side the educational system, due to strong economic compulsions. Efforts, over the last 40 years, to remedy this situation, have not met with any significant success. (P. S. Chakraborty, 2000).

The Plan of Action has identified many defects, such as the inequality between schools, as some schools are provided with good teachers, excellent equipment, while some others languish in ignominy, absenteeism of teachers, unavailability of basic facilities, such as drinking water blackboard, seating space so on. A large number of primary schools are one teacher schools. Efforts to provide a complementary
structure, through non-formal education and adult literacy programmes, to rectify this imbalance by means of significant outlays, have not helped. Rural and tribal areas do not get enough financial and manual assistance. In spite of bringing education under the concurrent list, with a declared objective of minimizing educational disparities, regional disparities, in respect of education, have increased over the years.

According to the Ramamurti Committee, remedies for the above maladies suggested by NPE, 1986, have not worked and will not work. Remedies suggested by the Ramamurti Committee have been at variance with the recommendations of NPE, 1986. However, before critically reviewing the recommendations of the Ramamurti Committee in this respect, it will be pertinent to examine the basic characteristics of ‘educational dualism’ in our country.

With reference to the above, it can be said that the idea of NPE, 1986, for establishing the ‘Navodaya School’ for talented students from rural areas, has lost its importance and its meaning. In this regard, controversy regarding excellence and equity becomes more focused. It is interesting to note that the NPE, 1986, document recognized the basic maladies of the educational system, but suggested solutions through a technocratic model, believes in creating facilities and infrastructure, but, not any basic change in the educational structure and content. It is, also, true that the Ramamurti committee, itself, felt that technocratic solution will not solve the problem and, for this, the committee has suggested future action, with regard to the Navodaya vidyalayas.

The committee proposed the creation of Navodaya Schools to non-formalize education and structurally integrate, at the elementary level, a uniform education for all. The 1986, NPE, hoped to create ‘centres of excellence’ to create a ‘spread effect’ to remove the existing dualism in the education system. According to a survey undertaken by the Ramamurti Committee, the actual effects are completely in contrast to the expectations. These schools have become elitist and have distanced themselves from the rural community. This is against a human rights understanding.

The committee suggested neighborhood schools for all and said it would lead to provide opportunities to talented students, once the base is expanded. Such a system will take out the elitist bias, present in the Navodaya School system. Exponents of the Navodaya School model believe in efficiency and growth. It was said that such
schools would be conducive for national development. But, it was a surprise that they did not realize the impact this system in equality and society. It is really a matter of concern, that the basis of this recommendation was equality and a democratic urge has been, which was completely ignored and, thus, a human rights perspective is also being ignored.

It needs to be accepted that merit based selection is not always right and fair and merit holders may not serve the purpose of education. It is also true, to some extent, that the children from the poor economic strata, where they are struggling for their daily food, cannot compete with children, who have a comparatively better economic situation. Literature proves that people, belonging to low income families, have problems with nutrition and in other parts of life, too.

In view of this, it is quite clear that the creation of the Navodaya School was biased against children from the poorest families, unless adequate care was taken in respect of pre-school and early primary education. The Ramamurti Committee, therefore, rightly recommends discontinuation of the 'Navodaya' school model. Further, the recommendation of the committee, for an integrated universal school system at the elementary level, is conceptually very sound. But, unfortunately, the committee has not suggested any concrete programmes for implementation, where it could successfully develop a base for a policy on a human rights perspective.

Educational investments, in many developing countries, tend to enhance the already advantaged group, rather than the other ones. The committee, instead of suggesting total integration points to these type of structural issues, should have, explicitly, mentioned these.

But, the Ramamurti Committee's suggestion for integrated education (by integrating the formal and non-formal streams) has been strongly opposed by a section of the press, because such an 'Integrated Universal System' of elementary education has the basic ingredients of disturbance, in the present elitist edifice of education.

The fact is, that the neighborhood school concept, suggested by the Kothari commission, has never been implemented. Moreover, disparities and inequality have increased since that time and because of the interest of some elite groups, which may not want equality in society. Thus, it has become crucially important to discuss about these concerns of education, with reference to their solutions. A mixture of structural/
technocrative steps may be of some help in this regard. For the identification of schools in rural, semi urban, urban and metropolitan (slum/under developed) areas, which are below acceptable standards in respect of infrastructure, teaching and other resources is a must.

As a common school system is developed on a human rights understanding, it becomes important to develop a good programme to spread awareness about the different provisions, that have been done for the neighborhood school system and this basic objective should create an awareness about the common school system.

The Ramamurti Committee has suggested non-formalization of the formal school system i.e. the schools open up and change themselves in response to the demands of society. The committee has suggested certain things such as flexible working hours, reducing school hours and increasing learning hours to non-formalize schools. But, of course, all these improvements will require significant improvement of the teacher-student ratio, at all stages. In view of the basic nature and importance of this integration, in the overall improvement of the educational system, generation of resources for upgrading schools and non-formalizing of existing formal schools, through much needed flexibility, must receive utmost attention. This can, predictably, create conflicts and clash of interest. The various editorials; that have been written recently, have been questioning this. This is a clear indication regarding the likely conflict that the proposed changes may create. That is how, in spite of having faith in a human rights perspective, this conflict has ruined the entire purpose.

It is, therefore, clear that the nature of recommendations of the committee is such that it has called for significant shifts in resource allocation. This involves ignoring the demands (however strong) of vested interest. This requires strong political will and commitment to the cause, as only, then, can a human rights perspective based education be made available to all.

Another suggestion of the committee, which has generated a favourable response everywhere, is that of giving adequate attention to pre-school childhood care. The empirical results of research, in this direction, suggest that this is very important in bringing equality in the system. However, resource implications have been kept vague. No meaningful debate, in respect of inter superiorities can take place, without some broad idea of resource implications.
The Ramamurti Committee was not ready to compromise with *excellence in education* for the process of universalization of education. For this purpose, it put special efforts to develop or establish centers of excellence and establish the dualism in the process of education. Not only (in the name of talent and capabilities), are disparities being introduced, but competition never goes with the spirit of education. In this way, it, again, moves away from a human rights perspective, where equitable education should be available for all.

It is, also, a reality that good polices in India have failed, because of inappropriate allocation of funds and resources. Here, it is crucial to know, that if higher authorities are not working with the spirit of elimination of disparities from education, then how can an egalitarian education system be established and how can one even think about a human rights based education system? The committee, rightly, feels that by encouraging creative self-development in students, at the school level, the education system can, really, help the best potentials of each individual, to blossom. But, for this, elimination of competition is the first requirement. It is a great challenge for us to give it a good shape, in the scenario of the social-environment that we are living in today. But, it is a known reality, that in all sectors of education, competition has increased from admission to result. Then where, how and what kind of a human rights perspective based education are we providing? There is a strong need to include this perspective in all the policies.

How should this be achieved according to a human rights perspective? Should not values of non-elitism, democracy, equity, and so on, be nurtured and propagated at all levels (including media)? In such a situation, school education can be used, as a useful instrument, in creating, sustaining and cementing these values and priorities in society. The committee should have brought these aspects into more focus and should have clearly prescribed the pre-conditions for success of a non competitive, value based universal education system, to make it human rights based. Value aspects have been, further, discussed in the subsequent section of the analysis.

As already pointed out earlier, there is a growing concern at the unusual rate of *dropouts in the Indian school system*, which, again, raises the concern of sustainability, as mentioned earlier in the analysis. Drop outs are more in the poor section and most are girl students. Many states have retention rates less than 25 per cent (i e, dropout rates of more than 75 per cent).' A large number of studies have
addition to provision of all resources (as dictated by the technocratic solution) There is a strong need to review the structural aspect of the problem. Only then, can it be accepted that it has a human rights based perspective. Researches have proved that there is a strong co-relation between educational achievements and caste status and income level. Studies have been undertaken, from time to time, to enquire into the reasons of wastage and stagnation, but very few practical results have been achieved.

To make education interesting, the Committee has suggested some recommendations such as flexible school hours, open exit and entry system, a modular system of school education, increased vocationalisation of curriculum, and so on. Apart from these, a teacher can provide extra time to slow learners to provide opportunities to students on a human rights perspective.

In families of economically poorer sections, whose life is very tough and who even struggle for their two meals, the children of school-going age are being put to work, so as to supplement family income and this becomes one of the most important causes for drop outs.

Thus, if the problem of drop-outs has to be tackled according to a human rights perspective, it has to be tackled at: (i) the structural level, integrating the formal and non formal systems; (ii) the technocratic level-improving access, equipment, teaching methods, and so on, and (iii) the attitudinal level. This involves: (a) change of attitude in the teacher; (b) change of attitude of those, who have developed a vested interest in enjoying the benefits of the present system, in sharing the benefits equally with all-which will mean, for them, some degrees of loss of advantage and existing benefits and call for some well intentioned sacrifices; and (c) change in the attitude of parents of the poorer students, so that they are convinced about the essential nature of elementary education for the future growth and survival of their children and family.

According to a human rights perspective, awareness of parents can remove the above impression about education. Steps to improve the economic situation of poor families need to be taken, so that their children don’t have to work to support their family. This will reduce dropout rates. The local authorities can play a vital role here, as they know about the needs of their community. Policy makers, also, need to revise the scholarship schemes in the light of the poor segment of society, so that the benefits can reach the actual needy person. But, on the basis of talented and not talented
students (where talent if based on marks), a social discriminated system has been encouraged and, to some extent the entire political system is responsible for this, which implement its desires via policies.

It won’t be wrong, if we say that the national talent search, which used to be conducted by the NCERT, appeared to help the needy students who wished to go for higher education. But, the reality, is the other way round. It does not reach the, actual, needy students.

Scholars, who get selected under NTS, are mostly form urban, English medium schools and belong to high and middle class families. Most of the scholarships are grabbed by city boys and girls and students from English medium schools. A large percentage of scholars do not study (after their first degree) in India. They, generally, go abroad for higher education, with a slender chance of returning.

This entirely goes against a human rights perspective and the principle of equity, as many villages and semi-urban schools are unaware about the NTS (National Talent Search) scheme. The misallocation of scholarship fund goes against the spirit of this scheme, as the needy are still disadvantaged. This example demonstrates the reason for the mistrust of the people, in the state, regarding the provisions of education and how higher classes benefit from the facilities intended for the poor.

The Plan of Action, 1992, suggests that to make this scheme successful, it is important to create upgraded classrooms, improving infrastructure, increasing linkages with communities, environment and life. To achieve the other part of the scheme, the number and quality of teachers engaged in this type of education, will be most crucial. Here, the historical analysis of facts may generate a few startling conclusions regarding the state of our school education. Contrary to common belief, over the years, the teacher-student ratio in the elementary and middle school level, has steadily deteriorated.

The evaluation of a teacher should be dependent on the assessment of the effective discharge of teaching and developmental responsibilities allocated to him/her. Linking teachers’ rights, authority and power, in making educational choices to suit the specific needs of the students under his/her responsibility, will be desirable. Without such a flexible system, and the delegation of educational decision-making power, the process suggested may not be implemented with dedication, sincerity and professional
commitment. The effective performance of the teacher should be objectively evaluated (as far as possible) and such evaluation should be used for making decisions regarding the upgrading of skills, capabilities and reorienting the attitude and behaviour of teachers. Such development can be perceived, as based on a human rights understanding.

The document focuses on the fact that the progress and advancement of education will, mainly, depend on the quality of teachers and on the ‘human’ pedagogical and technical qualities on individual teachers and this gives the policy a more human rights perspective. It underlines the importance on teachers’ training. But, the effect of this, is a matter of concern.

The Ramamurti Committee has suggested the integration of school educators with the environment, community and society. The committee has, also, advocated using local knowledge and wisdom in compiling the course material. The committee has rightly stressed the use of local issues, to illustrate the various principles learnt in the classroom. This would mean that all teachers should be oriented to link themselves to the problems of the local community. They should be encouraged and given adequate orientation in using 'local issues-based knowledge', as illustrations in classroom teaching.

A standardized course was suggested for the school teacher, which deals with how to bring local knowledge to the classrooms. This course will be compulsory for all teachers. Workshops need to be conducted for the betterment of the theoretical and practical aspects. This seems to represent the Plan of Action concern with a human rights perspective. Help in this regard will be taken from distance learning institutions. Theoretical understanding, discussed by distance learning institutions, will be followed by workshops, which will be conducted for practical purposes. All these suggestions give this policy human rights perspective.

To give the education system a human rights perspective, there is a need to make efforts to improve the content and quality of education, modifying priorities and objectives, and correlating the quantitative and qualitative output of educated man power, with the requirement of these for various tasks, connected with national production and development, has not been successful.
The Plan of Action report blames the state governments for the problems. A middle path needs to be identified, as privatization is not the answer. But, the Plan of Action blaming the state government for the deterioration of the student teacher ratio, increasing educational disparities and biased content in schools, is not acceptable. It is, highly, likely that these institutions gave the wrong policy directives and created a process that encouraged elitism, strengthened dualism and because of the neglect of education, in the rural and backward areas, made it far from a Human Rights perspective.

With reference to evaluation, the committee suggested that evaluation should not be on an annual basis, but it should be semester based. In this regard, it suggested *continuous evaluation*, instead of the end of course annual examination. Yet, this proposed suggestion can be challenged. It is important to mention here that the NPE 1986, had suggested continuous evaluation, but did not talk about removing the annual examination system. Therefore, the Ramamurti Committee recommendations, regarding examinations, are quite radical and new. The committee talked about CCE, where every student will be evaluated on their continuous performance, instead of only on the end-of-term examination. At the end of class X or class XII, the modifications may be introduced to ensure quality and uniformity of standard, so that, to the outside world, credibility is ensured and inter-school comparison become logical.

The committee suggested evaluation should be the inherent part or teaching learning process which, again, represents a human rights perspective. In continuous evaluation, there is a tendency to miss the holistic view of learning. Learning is fragmented and superficially developed. Here, it is also important to know that the recommendation of the policy regarding examination, was not new. It was adopted from the American examination system. It is important to understand that this process of evaluation is reductionist in nature and does not give appropriate importance to the notion of a holistic view of education. In this way, it can be contested on a human rights perspective.

Here, it can be said, that the current examination system needs reforms, but is continuous evaluation the right way or not, needs to be analyzed thoroughly and critically. Attention, also, needs to be given to the complete abolition of the end of the
terminal examination system, only, then, can it be actually, developed based on a human rights perspective.

The committee talked about vocationalization of education and suggested various ways for including common education up to 10th class. In each course, there should be a compulsory component of vocational courses. Such courses should have theoretical and practical components. It was, also, suggested that polytechnics should provide three years diploma after +2 and courses under it, must deal with the need of different organizations, so that employment opportunities can be created. It suggests a degree level course of four years and redesigned courses should be started.

All these changes must have vertical mobility. The committee said that since general and technical education is not being provided as per the needs and requirement, its standard is going down. This is because of the countless growth of substandard colleges. This unplanned growth is still going on.

It is well known that growth, in higher education, has happened, at a large scale, but the per student expenditure has decreased. Here, it is clear, that if the quality of higher education has to be improved, more good quality universities and colleges would be required.

The Ramamurti Committee did not pay adequate attention to the problem of higher education. However, revitalization of the higher education is essential, even for the success of the scheme for universalization of primary and secondary education. In a systemic sense, the problem of higher education must be iteratively looked into, within the overall framework.

The committee considered and acknowledged the importance of the linkages between community and environment. These linkages can be established in various areas i.e. health, sanitation, water, transport, communication, adult education, housing & so on, which shows its concern with a human rights perspective.

The Committee talked about the medium of instruction. Education, in the mother tongue, is better and has been accepted and proved by countless researches. It is the right of a person, too. Thus, the mother tongue was suggested by the committee, as a medium of instruction, at all levels of education. At the school level, there will be little problem, except within the concept of a neighborhood school in urban and
metropolitan areas, where, in some neighborhoods, different language groups may reside. The problem is not difficult to resolve, but should be addressed at the planning stage. At the university and higher educational levels, adequate steps, in respect of the production of excellent text books and maintaining appropriate standards, should be taken, so that, again, dichotomies between English medium and vernacular medium institutions are not created. Till here, the committee recommendations have a human rights perspective, but the suggested method for this is not based on a human rights perspective and is in contrast to the committee’s recommendation, where it has talked about education in the mother tongue, at all levels of education. The method suggested was to make every student (whether a product of English medium/vernacular medium) equally proficient in the English language, both spoken and written forms. How can one say such suggestions have a human rights based perspective, when people do not even have the right to study in their mother tongue? Rejecting their language means also rejecting their culture, which is completely against the human rights of a person. But, the other point of view is that, right or wrong, English has become important in many spheres of the economic and political life of our nation and the advocates of the mother-tongue send their own sons and daughters to English medium schools, for their education. The committee suggested that the compulsory teaching of English should be introduced at all schools, at a reasonably early stage of a student's education, because, at a tender age, learning a new language becomes comparatively easier. In addition, it is absolutely necessary to improve the quality of teaching of English at all schools and colleges. Special stress must be placed in improving the quality of English teaching in schools in rural and semi-urban areas.

The Ramamurti Committee emphasizes on women’s education and removing the disparities and stereotypes, existing in the system. It proposes a broader social framework, to ensure the desired women empowerment. Women's education should be so redesigned, that conditions for all girls to participate successfully in school education, are created. For reducing the rates of drop-outs among girl students, the committee suggests programmes of early childhood care and education. However, the committee has not examined the resource and organizational implications of these measures. In fact, many of the suggestions of the committee, which appear good, require, further, elaboration and working out details, before one can, confidently, pass
judgment about the feasibility in terms of their implementation and only, then, can the policy be said to have a Human Rights Perspective.

As already discussed, the committee has given special emphasis towards the removal of educational disparities, sectoral and spatial. Apart from giving attention to women’s education, SC/ST and backward class candidates, this, also, calls for positive discrimination, in respect of resource allocation for education, in favour of the backward areas of the country. This is a very worthwhile recommendation, based on a human rights perspective. Special schemes should be drawn up, so that the educationally backward areas get a positive push towards improvement, in the field of educational attainment.

The committee accentuates the need of some strict steps to stop the erosion of values in our society. The committee says that research, in social science, should focus on values, tradition and culture. It stresses the need to propagate values of democracy, secularism, scientific temper, socialism, honesty, integrity, courage respect for life and human dignity, at the elementary level, to establish a just society. The various recommendations, made by the committee, have resource implications. The committee has suggested allocation of 6 per cent of GNP towards education. This was, also, suggested in the NPE, 1986 document, but the actual allocation remains far short of 6 per cent. However, even 6 percent of GNP may not be adequate. Further, the implementation of the recommendations, in their true spirit, may require much more local/ regional commitment of resources towards education, to actually give it a human rights perspective.

Many suggestions of the committee, in respect of funding are well-conceived, but specific steps must be designed to give these ideas concrete shape, which can be perceived and evaluated on a human rights perspective. Central/State allocation should be increased, as much as possible (6 per cent of GNP has been suggested; even this may not be adequate and should be increased say upto 10 per cent); all primary education should be fully state-funded; Non-formal education should be funded fully by the State; at the secondary education stage, through education cess and contribution of the community, approximately 40 per cent of the cost will be met at the local level (in the command area of educational institution); sixty per cent of the cost is to be met by the State & so on.
Concluding the Policy Analysis

Concluding any detailed analysis is a very tough task for a researcher as he/she becomes so involved in the research. Here, I am summarizing the detailed analysis of the polices, incorporated in the research.

Education, primarily, has been seen as a tool for social engineering. In the Kothari commission, the vision of a desirable society presented in the report does contain, glimpses of the ideals of equality and social justice. The NPE 1986/92, takes individuals more seriously and there is a definite shift (from the Kothari commission) towards critical thinking, but, still, the individual is regarded as a resource to be used to achieve national goals, rather than an active participant in defining these goals. The Kothari Commission derives the aims of education from the national goals, though the aims of education may contain elements of individual freedom and critical thinking, but the justification for these last two is sought in terms of national goals. That education in itself, has great goals, a demand and supply, needs to be acknowledged by the policies. Equalization of education has been discussed extensively, in all the policies, but ambiguities existing within the policies have ruined the purpose. Along with this, there are many other serious concerns, such as single teacher schools, alternative ways of education, undermining social science, political governed polices rather than educationally governed, technocratic model or change in the educational structure compared to structural changes and so on. The policies accepted that education has a role in the enculturation of learners. It refines sensitivities and perceptions that contribute to national cohesion, a scientific temper and independence of mind and spirit. The constitutional values such as secularism, egalitarianism, democracy and equality of sexes were acknowledged by all the policies.

Policies acknowledged that first generation learners should be allowed to set their own pace and should be given supplementary remedial instruction and prohibition of the corporal punishment. Policies seem to be concerned with the cultures of the different communities in India and universalization of elementary education. As far as practicality is concerned, serious improvement is needed regarding pre-school
childhood care, drop outs, teaching as a profession, the role of the teacher and the CCE to educational policies based on a human rights perspective.

II. **Analysis of the National Curriculum Frameworks from a Human Rights Perspective**

The process of curriculum development, in India, lies between the two extremes of centralization and decentralization. From time to time, the national government formulates the National Policy on Education, which includes broad guidelines regarding the content and process of education, at different stages. These guidelines are, further, elaborated by the National Council of Educational Research and training (NCERT).

Curriculum designing has a special place in the diverse responsibilities envisaged in the charter of NCERT. As the apex of the national agency for educational reforms, NCERT is expected to review the school curriculum as a routine activity, ensuring the highest standards of rigorous and deliberative openness in the process. The NPE, 1986 and the Plan of Action 1992, assign a special role to NCERT in preparing and promoting a National Curriculum Framework.

The curriculum framework, prepared at the central level, provides a broad overview of the school curriculum, including general objectives, subject-wise objectives, suggested scheme of study and guidelines for the transaction of the curriculum and the evaluation of pupil outcomes. The detailed curricula, syllabi and instructional material are developed at the national level. The NCERT develops the syllabi and instructional material used in the schools, run by the central organizations. That is how the school education gets affected directly by the national curriculum framework.

In this light, the present section of the chapter analyzes the curriculum frameworks from the perspective of human rights. The idea behind this analysis is to understand the assumptions, aims and objectives, knowledge, learner and learning from a human rights perspective. For this, three national curriculum frameworks have been analyzed—the *National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education (1988)*, *the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000)* and *the National Curriculum Framework (2005)*.

NCF 1988, considered a child as the builder of the India of tomorrow, which is possible only through a well-designed and effectively implemented educational programme, through which a child can be equipped to realize his/her inner potential and, hence, contribute, meaningfully, to nation building. The curriculum, at the earlier stages of education, is basic to the intellectual, physical and emotional development of the child. The main objective of the National Curriculum Framework for Elementary and Secondary Education was to build on the positive experiences of the past educational reforms and to reflect on the present concerns. The National Curriculum aimed at reducing the existing disparity in the quality of education, provided by the different institutions and the regional imbalances, by setting national norms for threshold resources for the achievement of the minimum levels of learning, specified for each stage of school education. The Curriculum articulated the educational objectives of the national system of education, through a common scheme of studies for elementary and secondary education, with an in-built flexibility, ensuring a greater initiative to the teacher, the school, and the local educational authorities. The Curriculum derived its global objectives of the all-round development of the child from the national educational traditions, the profound values enshrined in the Constitution of India and the contemporary concerns for strengthening India's emotional unity and preparing the nation to face future challenges.

The following social, cultural, political, economic and educational parameters that have guided the development of the National Curriculum Framework1988, are based on a human rights perspective: All citizens of India should have equal access to education. The specific needs of the disadvantaged sections of society ought to be met through the curriculum; Education, regarding the cultural heritage of India, needs to be imparted to the students, in order to develop national identity and a spirit of togetherness; it is essential to impart awareness of the citizens’ duties and rights, and the ideals of the constitution of India to the children; in view of the erosion of values, it is imperative, through the curriculum, to inculcate moral and social values amongst students; besides, the national identity and unity, it is imperative to develop international understanding, through the curriculum; protection of the environment
and conservation of natural resources should be the major objective of the school curriculum; in view of the increasing population of the country, it is imperative to include suitable content, regarding population education, in the syllabi of different subjects; the curriculum should aim at preparing a child for life, which means that relevant knowledge should be imparted and appropriate skills, competencies and values developed; education plays a significant role in the national development, by increasing human resources. Therefore, the primary objective of the curriculum ought to be the total development of the child’s personality; all the processes of education should be child-centered, with the teacher playing the role of a facilitator, during the process of learning; the curriculum should aim at developing a student’s creative potential; the curriculum should develop a scientific approach amongst students; work should not be considered as distinct from education, instead, work should be adopted as a medium for imparting education; the process of evaluation should be continuous and comprehensive; media and educational technology ought to be employed, to make the transaction of curriculum effective.

From a broad perspective, all the points mentioned above, deal with, a human rights perspective directly or indirectly. The main characteristics of the National Curriculum 1988, developed in accordance with the above-mentioned principles, are described in the following sections.

The National Curriculum Framework envisaged an undifferentiated curriculum for all children – irrespective of sex and place of residence (i.e. urban or rural) which is directly related to human rights.

The 1988 National Curriculum Framework (NCF), recommended compulsory core curriculum elements to be taught throughout the country. Most of these core elements were aimed at the development of national identity and a spirit of togetherness, leading to national unity and making people aware about their rights and responsibilities. The common core elements, recommended in the NCF, were: the history of India’s freedom struggle, constitutional obligations, content essential for the development of the national identity, common cultural heritage of India, democracy, secularism, socialism, gender equality, environmental conservation, removal of social barriers, the small-family norm and development of a scientific approach. Most of the areas that have been covered, are directly linked with a human rights perspective.
The existing evaluation system, that measures the achievement of the students, either at regular intervals (term-wise tests) or annually, was criticized by the NCF, 1988. The NCF favoured the CCE pattern, which looks at the affective domain of the students. Such a pattern would ensure the overall development of the students, by making evaluation a part of the teaching-learning process, which would help teachers in moulding their methodology, according to the students’ needs.

The NCF 1988, argued that the testing system should not limit itself to the prescribed curriculum. The students should feel free to explore other areas, beyond the curriculum. Doing this, will lead to better education based on a human rights perspective.

We, also, need to spell out, in greater detail, the idea of the educational testing service. It is appropriate here to mention that the evils of the examination system are not, necessarily, tied up with tests as such, but with the nature of testing, frequency of testing, purpose of testing and the relationship of testing, with the overarching concern for permitting the growth of students' abilities, skills, value-orientation, aesthetic tastes for an integrated development of personality.

The idea of the National Testing Service was suggested in 1986. It was emphasized that the National Testing Service should maintain very high standards of testing, and therefore, the tests should be so designed that they really test the level of excellence and that nobody can pass these tests, if one has merely learnt anything mechanically, without adequate comprehension.

It should be obvious, that if such a national testing service is developed, students who succeed through this test, will, naturally, gain higher credibility and will, also, gain higher preference, with respect to employment opportunity. As a result, the National Testing Service can be a remedy to numerous evils which are, at present, to be found in the current system of examinations.

A re-orientation of the curriculum content and process was looked at in the NCF, 1988. The NCF, 1988, argued for a curriculum suited to the present needs of the market and the emerging technology. The attempts made, so far, for the re-orientation, have been futile. The idea behind the attempts at re-orientation was to make a shift from the expository style of teaching, prevalent in schools today, to a dialogue
between the teacher and the students, where the student is not merely an object who only receives.

The 1988 National Curriculum Framework has recommended various guidelines regarding school subjects. Particularly, the study of social sciences at the upper primary stage, is comprised of the study of history, geography, civics and contemporary issues and problems. At the secondary stage, it should incorporate elements of history, geography, civics and economics to promote an understanding of contemporary India. *The area of Morals and values*, should be treated as an integral curriculum component, for which all teachers are responsible.

It is not necessary here to dwell on the merits of the document, since they are quite obvious. First of all, it is a frank document, and it confesses to the failures that our educational experiments and practice have registered, and the questions which it has raised for eliciting the opinions of the readers, brings out the earnestness of NCERT to find remedies, so that, in the future, we can minimize the incidence of failures. Secondly, it expresses the aspirations to develop in the country a truly national system of education. In doing so, the document underlines the concern for a cohesive society, education of the girl child, and providing special measures for children with special needs and for children from disadvantaged groups. The document has, also, done well to emphasize the need to strengthen national identity and to highlight our cultural heritage and India's contribution to mankind. Thirdly, the document is fully aware of the need to respond to the impact of globalization and the need to convert information-society into a knowledge-society, by utilizing the revolution of new technologies. Fourthly, the document, rightly, focuses on the education for value development and for imparting, to the students, the message of the fundamental duties of a citizen. Finally, the document has underlined the need to make our education child-centered, in the context of the ideal of unending education, with due emphasis on the non-formal processes of teaching and learning and on some innovative ideas connected with work education, aesthetic education, physical education, and a new system of evaluation.

**One critical remark** is regarding the teaching of languages. The NCF, 1988, document frankly admits that the three language formula exists, "only in our curriculum documents and other policy statements." (p. 39) The document points out that some States follow only a two-language formula, and that where even a three-
language formula is followed, there is no unanimity, as to what should be the third language. But, having studied all the relevant facts, and even when pertinent questions have been raised, the document does not come forth adequately, with respect to an important and urgent issue. This issue relates to the study of Sanskrit.

A part of the Fundamental Duties regards that the educational system should be the carrier of the cultural heritage, which would make the past, present and the future, different points on a continuum, rather than scattered in History. In India, Sanskrit has, since ancient times, played the role of a pan-Indian language, which was appropriated, even during the British era, to present the national identity of India. Sanskrit continues to grow, absorbing the new idioms and responding to the modern times. This document, also, looks at the idea of education, as a carrier of culture.

To the argument that the three-language formula does not permit any direct entry to Sanskrit in our educational system, one sharp answer could be that, if a language formula does not serve the real purpose of education that is being conceived and advocated, then it is high time to review that language formula. The discussion document could have, at least, brought out, forcefully, the need for such a review. At the same time, the following three constructive suggestions can be put forth, even in the context of our present condition:

- Sanskrit should be made a part of the curriculum of the study of the cultural heritage of India.

- Sanskrit should, officially, be encouraged as an optional extracurricular language, throughout the entire system of school education; and

- The country should establish institutions and schools, exclusively, devoted to the teaching of those languages, which foster the preservation and transmission of our cultural heritage.

**The next critical remark** relates to a very important area, namely, the area of Value-Education. The idea of Value-Education needs to be considered, now. The matter of Value-Education has been dealt with, very briefly, in the document. The document needs to consider some aspects such as dovetailing Value Education with different
subjects, from class 1 to class 12, along with a different curriculum for Value Education, as a separate subject:

i. The first component should be topics such as virtues, exemplars of virtues, stories of deep human interest, history of morality, religion and spirituality, with a special emphasis of these elements in Indian history, questions about the inner spirit of man, and higher concerns of the synthesis of truth, beauty and goodness, and knowledge of universality, diversity and oneness.

ii. The second component should consist of graded exercises, that would aim at the development of faculties of sensations, perceptions, sensitivity, imagination, aspirations, thought-power, will-power and power of concentration.

iii. The third component should consist of that which would encourage a sense of wonder and mystery, attainment of excellence in the fields of natural sciences, social sciences, poetry, art, music, history, law, health, medicine, environment, and so on.

There is, I think, an important segment in the curriculum presented in the document, which can, easily, be integrated and expanded into the proposed special interdisciplinary subject. This refers to work-education, art education, health and physical education.

**The next critical remark** relates to the first terminal point in our educational system. There is, one feels, a kind of ambiguity which, adversely, affects clarity, with respect to the curricular framework, regarding the aims of class VIII and class X.

To end this ambiguity, class 8 should be regarded as the first terminal point i.e. the first eight years of schooling should be adequate to provide a child with the requisite skills and knowledge to take up a job, if he wants to. The constitution corroborates this opinion, as it says that 14 years of compulsory and free schooling should be provided by the state. This suggests that the constitution believes that the children should be educated in the first eight years, so that they can get an appropriate job, after leaving school. Considering this, the aims of elementary education should be to equip the student with the knowledge of, at least, one language on a considerable level of proficiency to speak, read, and write, as, also, the competence to calculate, in terms
of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, competence to learn further by
self-help, and an adequate grounding in the science and art of life, coupled with
general or special knowledge or ability with respect to several or specialised subjects
of personal interest.

If these aims are adopted, what is, generally, suggested for work education, will need
to be modified. The level of work education, at elementary education, should be such
that one can competently perform duties or responsibilities with respect to various
kinds of work, which are available to the individuals at the age of fourteen. But, this
will, also, create a problem in terms of Human Rights, as to what extent is it justified
that we can allow children to work at the age of 14. Thus, the ambiguity exists in the
document itself.

Again, if elementary education is conceived, as the first terminal point, value-
education should be so provided within eight years of schooling, that one can
intelligently perform the duties that have been laid down in the Constitution and show
minimum maturity to pursue the ideals of a multi-sided personality.

The NCF, 1988, document contains a number of suggestions, concerning the need for
innovations. The underlying premise for these innovations is the aim which has been
laid down for education, namely, "enabling the learners to acquire knowledge,
develop understanding and inculcate skills, attitudes, values and habits conducive to
the all round development of that personality." (P. 9) Twenty-three clusters of
qualities, abilities, skills, attitudes and states of consciousness have been listed, that
need to be generated and promoted among the learners. It has, also, underlined the
need to provide remedial teaching, as well as counseling services, for carrying out the
diagnosis of learning problems and providing support to the needy learner groups. It
has pointed out that, instead of using one uniform, mechanistic way of learning,
cultural practices such as story-telling, dramas, puppetry, folk-play, community
living, & so on, should become a strong basis of pedagogy.

The document advocates the need of participation and the interaction of the students
with the help of various activities, as opposed to the conventional and traditional
teaching methodology. This marks a subtle difference from an, often, dull and boring
classroom, to an interesting and creative space, that allows children to explore various
avenues, including the areas beyond their set curriculum. It is, also, important because of the need to convert information society into knowledge society.

While emphasizing the new roles of teachers, the document suggested that the teacher will have to play a catalytic role, entirely different from what he or she is used to at present. Further, it pointed out, that it is the acquisition of learning skills, ability to, explore, observe and discover the unknown and facility in analysis, synthesis, critical thinking and decision-making that needs to be the watchwords of curriculum transaction, under the supervision of the teacher who should, essentially, be a facilitator of learning.

These, and other similar suggestions and recommendations, are highly commendable, and they all need to be implemented. Unfortunately, the document does not suggest any strategy, as to how the salutary changes it entailed, can be affected.

My own view is that the innovations cannot succeed, if they are sought to be enforced, without creating a favourable climate, in which teachers feel greatly inspired to implement innovations and to devote enough time to develop and accomplish the new tasks, which are implied in the innovative processes of teaching and learning. It would, therefore, be desirable to institute a scheme of innovative schools in the country, in schools, where the teaching staff is enthused by the proposed innovations, could be selected for special help, both academic and financial. This scheme should be monitored by a group of distinguished academics, who could provide leadership and guidance. These schools could provide materials and ideas that could enhance the value of the National Testing Service, as an alternative to the present system of examination, the deficiencies of which have been brought out quite clearly, from time to time, by teachers, students, educationists and various committees and commissions.


The NCF2000, argued for a national system of education, because of the need for a pluralistic society. It, also, emphasized the reduction of the curriculum load, based on ‘Learning without Burden’. It studied the previous documents and, hence, decided to make significant changes. It tried to incorporate the values enshrined in the Constitution such as social justice, equality & so on in the curriculum. With the idea
of social justice, it hoped to provide quality education to everyone, including the marginalized groups and making others sensitive towards the constitutional values.

This document rejected the idea of rote learning and provided a reorientation of the learner and learning and discussed a holistic approach in the treatment of the learner’s development and learning. It suggested the following:

- Creation of an inclusive environment, in the classroom, for all students.
- Learner engagement for the construction of knowledge and fostering of creativity.
- Active learning, through the experiential mode.
- Adequate room for voicing children’s thought, curiosity, and question in curricular practices.
- Connecting knowledge, across disciplinary boundaries, to provide a broader frame work for insightful construction of knowledge.
- Forms of learners’ engagement in terms of observing, exploring, discovering, analyzing, critical reflection & so on, are as important as the content of knowledge.
- Activities for developing critical perspectives on socio-cultural realities, need to find space in curricular practices.

Besides these particular ways to deal with the learners, it, also, talked about the local knowledge and children’s experiences and considered them essential components of text books and pedagogical practices. As school time is a very important period in every one’s life, this document talked about the rapid development in this period, with changes and shifts in children’s capabilities, attitudes and interests that have implications for choosing and organizing the content and process of knowledge.

For language, it favored the three language formula and said it should be implemented. NCF 2000, also, talked about the importance of work experience, art education and value education in the school curriculum.

The content of social sciences was considered in the NCF2000. The NCF2000 said that the focus should be on conceptual understanding, rather than merely facts being memorized for an examination. The students should be able to reflect on social issues. The Social Sciences should have an interdisciplinary approach, allowing the children to discuss major, national concerns such as justice, Human Rights, sensitivity towards
the marginalized groups and so on. History should provide students with a conceptual understanding of the past. The NCF 2000, also recognized the importance of civic identity. The idea of Civics as Political Science was, also, looked at.

It strongly recommended that the availability of minimum infrastructures and material facilities and support, for planning a flexible daily schedule, are critical for improved teacher performance. A school culture, that nurtures children’s identities as ‘learners’, enhances the potential and interests of each child. For this, specific activities ensuring participation of all children—abled and disabled--- are essential conditions for learning, by all. The value of self-discipline among learners, through democratic functioning, is as relevant as ever. NCF 2000, also, emphasized a strong need to conceptualize the learning resources in terms of—the textbooks that focused on the elaboration of concepts, activities, problems and exercises, encouraging reflective thinking and group work; supplementary books, workbooks, teachers’ handbooks & so on, based on fresh thinking and new perspectives; – multimedia and ICT as sources for two-way interaction, rather than a one-way reception; – the school library, as an intellectual space for teachers, learners and members of the community, to deepen their knowledge and connect with the wider world.

Quality education is an important feature of NCF 2000. It said that it is desirable to evolve a common school system to ensure comparable quality in different regions of the country and to ensure that, when children of different backgrounds study together, it improves the overall quality of learning and enriches the school ethos. This document understood the importance of collaboration of the school authorities and wrote said that meaningful academic planning has to be done, in a particularly manner, by headmasters and teachers and monitoring quality must be seen as a process of sustaining interaction, with individual schools, in terms of the teaching-learning processes.

A Critical Review

The NCF2000, wanted to re-write the textbooks from the perspective of the right-wing. But, as has always been the case in India, the ruling authority tried to re-enforce its authority and, hence, control social mobility. The NCF2000, looked at the fact that Value- Education had been a burning issue for the past many years. School education,
firmly based on rote-learning, was, also, looked at. However, it was believed that the NCF2000, was entrenched in the philosophy of Hindutava (which I do not completely agree with).

But, was this the basic agenda? If we go through the entire document, we, certainly, understand the basic idea. “India’s various ethnic groups form interconnection loops, competing and cooperating, while forming a complex web of interaction. Indian culture is a living process of assimilating various strands of thought and life styles. The process has created a collage of the Indian exemplifying Unity and diversity and diversity in unity” (NCF 2000, p.2-3). If these lines are supposed to be analyzed from a human rights perspective, with relation to Indian history, the kind of assimilation and collation to be talked about, is based on creating hierarchies and imposing relations of subordination and exploitation, which has not to be discussed here at all. The term heterogeneity is very cleverly used to hide inequalities.

“The economic structure of the country was designed on the basic principle of distribution of resources, not distribution of income. The social matrix was congruent with the economic design based on the principle of distribution authority given to each village unit... In the agrarian society, successive generations followed the occupations as well as the goal sets of the family or the caste at large.” ((NCF 2000, p. 3). Here, there was no need to labour on the fact that gender and caste oppression lay at the foundation of our society or that Zamindari was the important system around which much of our society revolved. Also, there is no point talking about such things, such as the caste system, which has been the fundamental principle of the social matrix, which worked with a predefined social and economic status.

“India had an advanced system of education and the world’s first university which presented a consummate example of education based on philosophy and religion................. Chhandoy Upanishad (chapter VII, section I) mentions eighteen different subjects of study including areas such as natural disaster management, mineralogy, linguistics, science of elements, science of defense” (NCF 2000, p. 1). Such lines are really problematic in the document, which is supposed to be more secular in terms of a particular religion, than quoting Upanishads (which is seen as a biased text in India and worldwide for preserving a discriminatory social system) as such documents will preserve the hierarchy of a particular caste and class of society, which is against any country which claims to be democratic and secular.
‘various kinds of biases and imbalances such as rural/urban, rich/poor, and differences on the basis of caste, religion, ideology, gender, etc. Education can play a very significant role in minimizing and eliminating these differences by providing equality of access to quality education and opportunity.’ (NCF 2000, p. 9) This equality is to be achieved in two ways, by ensuring that each person ‘receives suitable education at a pace and through methods suited to her/his being.’ Secondly, by developing a curriculum that promotes the ‘awareness of inherent equality of all.’

The debate that different children have different needs has been in the air for quite a long period of time and homogenizing them, within a single system, is the major cause for school drop-outs. However, this does not validate different objectives of education, for different sections of the population. Rather, the curriculum simply asserts the equality of the human beings, which helps in recognizing inequality as difference and replacing discrimination with an ‘awareness’ of equality. In this regard, there are no fundamental changes in society, which continues to be fragmented, along with recognition of equality.

While it is proposed, on the one hand, to remove ‘all gender discrimination and gender bias in school curriculum, textbooks and the process of transaction’, it is stated, with equal emphasis, that ‘it will be the most appropriate thing to recognize and nurture the best features of each gender in the best Indian tradition.’ (NCF 2000, p. 9) In other words, what the so-called Indian tradition prescribes for women, will be nurtured in them, through an educational approach suited to them.

The section on vocational education is, even, more forthright. We have the following illuminating passage under the subhead, ‘vocational education for all’:

‘The vocational education programme designed to meet the varying needs of the socially disadvantaged groups, such as women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and physically challenged persons, would help them acquire suitable productive skills. It will make their lives more meaningful as they will be economically independent and self-reliant.’ (NCF 2000, p.90)

The document, in a way, reinforces the distinctions, by upholding the bourgeois ideology of an innate intelligence in the children, which makes some children come
under the category of the ‘intelligent’, while others are designated as ‘dull’. The NCERT validates the category of ‘Special Education for the gifted and talented’ who will be identified on the basis of the ‘Intelligence Quotient’, ‘Spiritual Quotient’, ‘Emotional Quotient’ & so on, which will, more or less, re-inforce the distinctions. Needless to say, some of our best scientists and artists wouldn’t have passed!

According to NCF 2000, ‘education will, also, have to help the nation achieve social cohesion by preparing the young generation for ‘learning to live together’, a concept which, in the Indian tradition, has been hailed as Sahridaya Sarvabhutanam

Universalizing elementary education carries the same kind of perspective. The creators of the document would like to promote the idea of having multiple curricular strategies, in tune with the requirements of the target groups. ‘Reaching the still unreached… will require designing and developing new modules and delivery systems that would suit the needs of specific groups…. While there would be some identified competencies of universal nature to be acquired by all children, there would always remain scope for some competencies identified separately for varying contexts to meet the local specific challenges of life.’ (NCF 2000, p. 21) Inherent in this is the understanding that some children need to be taught for ‘local challenges’ only, while some others need to be groomed for global demands. Such education cannot facilitate the development of any nation, in favor of that particular country. We all know that there are various kinds of diversities in our classrooms. And, in this respect, it, also, looks very interesting that we need to deal with the students as mentioned above, but not to create differences. In any democratic country, everyone has the right to get an equal chance to equal education. It is important to notice that the NCF 2000, does not talk of certain common components of the curriculum, it seeks to define its point of departure in terms of emphasis on the local knowledge for tribal people and vocations for the women, scheduled castes and tribes.

Certain points, verbatim, have been taken from NCF 1988 word for word and some have been left out; and the left out ones are give a better sense of whatsoever has been discussed, regarding the curriculum.

‘Strengthening of national identity and unity is intimately associated with the study of the cultural heritage of India... At no point can the school curriculum ignore the inclusion of specific content to forge national identity, a profound sense of nationalism and patriotism tempered with the spirit of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, non-
sectarian attitudes, capacity for tolerating differences arising out of caste, religion, ideology, region, language, sex, etc. (NCF 2000, p.12)

The differences based on caste are considered to be equivalent to the differences based on religion, region, gender and so on. The toleration of, even, the differences, based on caste, is advocated. While this has been taken from the 1988 document, it leaves out a significant aspect of the 1988 document: ‘However, while highlighting the need to preserve the cultural heritage of our country, the school curriculum should also help in making our younger generation aware of the need to reinterpret and re-evaluate the past and to adapt the new practices and outlook appropriate for the modern society.’ (NCF 1988; p. 4-5)

In the NCF 2000, there are serious implications for the teaching of History because it said that national identity and integrity are linked to the teaching of cultural heritage and gives little space for a critical and analytical approach. Moreover, it will facilitate all kinds of prejudices. It means certain facts will be taught without questioning their validity. They will be just accepted. The 1975 emergency will be taught without explaining the monopoly of Indira Gandhi, as she has did not even discuss it with her cabinet members. Caste problems in India will be taught in a way we all need to live together and should accept each other without discussing the suffering of particular marginalized communities. Thus, the study of History and even other subjects, does not give space to all its radical and critical possibilities.

NCF 2000, also, seeks to provide space to regional and ethnic histories. ‘For strengthening the unity and integrity of the nation it is essential that the cultural heritage, traditions, and history of the different ethnic groups and regions of the country and their contributions are understood and appreciated...' (p. 12-13)

Interestingly, even though the 1988 document contained these very words, the curriculum for Social Sciences drafted on its basis sought to underplay the regional histories for fear of encouraging separatism. (‘Introducing this kind of local history at the school stage has the danger of promoting parochialism and regional cultural chauvinism.... It may be desirable to avoid regional histories at the school stage as separate courses of study and include the details of developments in the region in any period in the general context of Indian history of the period.’ Guidelines for Syllabus, NCF 1988, p. 59) This policy had a privileged stance towards the history of the Indo-
Aryan speaking people of the northern plains and had given it a ‘national’ status. The very rich and complex histories of the regions came to be ignored in school histories. Children living in Bengal or Tamil Nadu were forced to ignore the rich histories of their regions and read about the royalty of the Hindi belt.

Once again, the objective for studying the histories, is not to, critically, understand the societies concerned, but to build and reinforce identities. Thus, what suits the dominant sections of the regions and ethnic groups today, would be passed on as legitimate histories.

Since India is a part of the world, therefore, international peace and understanding should, also, be promoted. The curriculum should allow the students to reflect on some international issues, where the pupils understand the idea of the world as a family (vasudhevkutumbkam) and each nation as a distinct, cultural group and the pupil should see himself/herself as a part of the world. However, the 2000 document ignores the study of the world in India. World Geography has been kept out of the purview.

Value Education is another field of NCF 2000, which needs discussion. It said that some good values need to be inculcated in the students such as self-assertion, strength of conviction, fighting for one’s rights and so on. The inculcation of these values is to be achieved through educating children about religions not one religion, but all possible religions. It may be recalled that secularism, as enshrined in the constitution, requires that religious education be a private affair and no business of the state. It was said regarding the above statement that this is not religious education but about religions, the values inherent therein and a comparative study of the philosophy of all religions. ‘No rituals, dogmas and superstitions are propagated in the name of education about religions.

Many questions can easily be asked on such types of Value Education. To begin with, one is intrigued to know the NCF 2000 plans to teach religions without rituals, dogmas and superstitions; or, for that matter, how can one disengage the philosophy from the rituals.; which school of philosophy of each of the religions would be privileged to be taught in schools; which of the religions would qualify as religions to be taught in schools. Even though these, and many other questions, have to be answered and debated, the central point remains whether religious instruction should be allowed in secular, educational institutions. Should we not uphold the secular value
of confining religion to the private domain and keep the public domain, including state-sponsored education, free from all religious affairs? Should the schools be places for learning to conduct critical and scientific inquiry into social and natural phenomenon or should they be places for, uncritically, imbibing dogmas passed off as religious philosophy?

A more serious danger exists, when the state agencies undertake religious education or education about religion, as the NCF 2000, prefers to call it. The state should not favour any particular religion or uphold certain religious beliefs and ideas, especially in a school, where children are from different religious backgrounds. Favouring one or two, out of the variety of religions in India, merely breeds intolerance and destabilises peaceful society. The scientific matters can be favoured as science thrives, not on beliefs, but on reason and observation. To allow the state to have a stake in religious matters, leaves civil society at the mercy of the state.

It would be interesting to go, briefly, into the history of Value Education in the three NCERT curriculum documents. In the NCF 1975, ‘self-actualization’ was considered to be the condition and the substance of value education. In 1988, we see a significant shift in favor of, actually, developing a given set of values, as the independent components of education. Whereas the NCF 2000, talked about the same things as the NCF 1988, but merely outlined it, in a paraphrased manner, in the context of the scientific temper. ‘The scientific temper characterized by the spirit of inquiry, problem solving, the courage to question and hence, objectively, leading to the elimination of obscurantism, superstition, fatalism, while at the same time, sustaining and emphasizing the indigenous knowledge ingrained in the Indian tradition.’ (NCF 2000; p. 40)

The present document has little to add to what the earlier documents had to say about the teaching of Language, Math and Science. In fact, its main thrust is to reform Social Science teaching. Most of the new elements discussed above are sought to be delivered through changes in Social Science teaching. ‘Social studies are the most suited areas of study for integrating almost all the core components indicated earlier.’ (NCF, 2000; p. 64.)

The 2000 document is in broad agreement with the principal objective of equipping future citizens. Social Sciences "helps the learners in understanding the human
environment in its totality and developing a broader perspective and an empirical, reasonable, and humane outlook. It also helps them grow into well informed and responsible citizens with necessary attributes/skills so that they can participate and contribute effectively in the process of development and nation building. (NCF 2000, p. 62). Noteworthy is the omission of the critique of the undesirable elements of our heritage, the purpose of social reconstruction and a vision of the fraternal community of nations. The difference between the three documents comes up in the context of spelling out the details.

The NCF2000, puts forth the idea of selection and organization of the content areas. When the world is undergoing an Information Revolution, the curriculum-makers should not load the curriculum with information, but promote the inter-relatedness and the understanding of ideas, which can be possible, by an emphasis on the concepts and not facts. Well-planned activities, that take cognizance of the learners’ experiences, will help them develop basic competencies and skills. Hence, the organization of the content should be looked at, which focuses on an in-depth study of, even, a few concepts.

It recommends a thematic approach, a greater focus on activity-based learning and skill development for containing the curriculum load. This would imply a return to the 1975 position. However, while the 1975 document recommends attention to the concerns and perspectives of the disciplines, the 2000 document has little need for it, at the school stage.

The Yashpal Committee, which went into the question of curricular load, found the teaching of Civics rather weakly developed and even recommended scrapping Civics as a subject. It had suggested that the current wisdom of teaching History, in a chronological order, from the distant past to the present, may be stood on its head. The 2000 curriculum document, too, takes up the issue of Civics and History teaching, but with, somewhat, different consequences. It is recommended that:

‘... the concerns and issues of the contemporary world need to be kept in the forefront. To this end, the quantum of history may be substantially reduced. Past developments could be studied as a backdrop for understanding the present. As such the needs and challenges of today must be responded suitably. ... This would necessitate considerable increase in the coverage of courses in civics.’ (NCF 2000; p. 62-3)
While the move to enlarge the scope of Civics, to include issues of contemporary importance, is welcome, it is necessary that the treatment of the subject ensures that children are exposed to different perspectives on the subject and are trained to make their own judgments. Simply moralizing, which is, often, contemplated in the context of Civics education, needs to be revisited.

**National Curriculum Framework 2005**

The NCF 2005, is a very useful document, and is a refreshing departure from the 2000 NCF. The NCF 2005, is a more carefully worked-out document than the 2000 document, as it looks at including various other subjects such as environment, peace & so on. The document focuses more on the creativity and the overall development of children, rather that filling their brains with information. The guiding principles are connecting knowledge life to life outside school, no rote learning, enriching the curriculum for the overall development of children, and without being textbook centric and reducing examination stress.

The document is divided into 5 areas-Perspective, Learning and Knowledge, Curriculum Areas, School Stages and Assessment, School and Classroom Environment, Systemic Reforms.

The first chapter, entitled *Perspective*, takes into account the history and the rationale behind the revision of the National Curriculum Framework. It discusses the efforts, at reforming the curriculum, since the inception of India as an independent nation, including the Mudaliar Commission (1952-53), the Kothari Commission (1964-66), the Curriculum Framework (1975) and the NCF1988, along with the NPE1986. The chapter recognizes the Gandhian vision of education, as a means of raising the national conscience towards the social problems of injustice, violence, inequality & so on. It refers to the report entitled, *Learning without Burden* (1993), which highlighted the problems of curriculum overload, which made learning a source of stress for children during their formative years. It refers to the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, introduced in 2000.

Chapter 1 recognizes the Constitutional vision of India, founded on the universal values of social justice and equality. It takes four issues as its guiding principles, for
the curriculum-makers, (a) connecting knowledge inside the school to the experiences outside the school (b) the shift of learning from rote-learning to understanding (c) going beyond the prescribed curriculum and the textbooks (d) making the examination system more flexible; hence; reaching out to every child with equality, quality and quantity. This chapter looks at the social context of education and the hierarchies of caste, economic status and gender relations, cultural diversity, as well as uneven development that characterize Indian Society, and deeply influences access to education and participation of children, in schools. It cautions against the pressures to commodify schools and the application of market-related concepts to schools and the quality of schools. Finally, it discusses the educational aims, as derived from the Guiding Principles. Education should aim to build a commitment to democratic values of equality, justice, freedom, concern for others’ well being, secularism, respect for human dignity and rights. It should, also, aim at fostering independence of thought and action, sensitivity to others’ well being and feelings, learning to learn and unlearn, ability to work for developing a social temper and inculcate an aesthetic appreciation.

The Chapter, Learning and Knowledge, focuses on the primacy of the learner. Child-centered pedagogy means giving primacy to children’s experiences, their voices and their active participation. It discusses the nature of knowledge and the need for adults to change their perceptions of the child, as a passive recipient of knowledge. Rather the child can be an active participant in the construction of knowledge, which is facilitated by encouraging children to ask questions, relate what they are learning in school to things happening outside, encouraging them to answer from their own experiences and in their own words, rather than by memorizing. It recognizes the need for developing an enabling a non-threatening environment, since an environment of fear, discipline and stress is detrimental to learning. This chapter emphasizes that gender, caste, class, religion and minority status or disability should not constrain participation in the experiences provided in school. It points out that the diagnostic criteria of ‘learning disabilities’ is not well established. It is, therefore, entirely possible that learning disabilities may arise from inadequate and insufficient instruction.

The chapter, Curricular Areas, School Stages and Assessment recommends significant changes in Language, Maths, Natural Science and Social Sciences, with a view to reducing stress and making education more relevant to the present day and
future needs of children. In Language, it makes a renewed attempt to implement the three-language formula, with emphasis on the Mother Tongue, as the medium of instruction. India is a multi-lingual country and the curriculum should promote multilingual proficiency in every child, including proficiency in English, which will become possible only if learning builds on a sound language pedagogy of the Mother Tongue. It focuses on language, as an integral part of every subject, since reading, writing, listening and speech contribute to a child’s progress in all curricular areas and, therefore, constitute the basics of learning.

In Social Sciences, it recognizes disciplinary markers, with emphasis on integration of significant themes, such as water. It also recommends a paradigm shift to study Social Sciences from the perspective of the marginalized groups. It recommends that gender justice and sensitivity to tribal and dalit issues and minority sensibilities should be included in all sectors of Social Sciences.

The NCF2005, looks at the school and classroom atmosphere, by nurturing an environment that provides space for the parents and community, addresses the need for the plurality of material, takes into account teacher autonomy, discusses curriculum, including the library, textbooks, educational technology and goes beyond the understanding of the traditional notions of discipline.

*Systemic Reforms* have also, been incorporated in the NCF, 2005. It covers issues of quality and the need for academic planning for monitoring the quality. It reaffirms faith in the Panchayati Raj and suggests the strengthening of the Panchayat Raj Institutions, through systematic activity of mapping functions appropriate at relevant levels of the panchayats, while, simultaneously, ensuring appropriate financial autonomy, on the basis of the funds-must-follow-functions principle. This chapter looks at issues of academic planning and leadership, at the school level, to improve quality.

Teacher education, for curriculum renewal, focuses on developing the professional identity of the teacher, as also in-service education and training of teachers. *Examination Reforms* is an important component of this chapter, to reduce psychological pressure, particularly on the students of classes X and XII. The NCF, therefore, recommends changing the typology of questions, in order that reasoning and creative abilities replace rote learning, as the basis of evaluation. Finally, it
encourages innovation in ideas and practice, through plurality of textbooks and use of technology and recommends partnerships between the school system and other civil society groups.

**A Critical Review**

My review on the documents of the National Curriculum Framework for School Education, are made from different perspectives, which I have just outlined in the theoretical framework of curriculum analysis. The comments are, primarily, on the curricular concerns and issues and organisation of the curriculum. I have organised my comments around some basic areas: the relationship of human beings to society, the nature of knowledge and understanding, human learning, and the context of the learner & so on.

The document looks at a human being as, ‘a positive asset and a precious national resource which needs to be cherished, nurtured and developed with tenderness and care coupled with dynamism.’ A liberal view of a human being is presented in the sections entitled, ‘Child as a constructor of his knowledge’ (1.2.12) and ‘Characteristics of a learner’ (2.3.3). However, both the sections look at only the pedagogical aspects and do not relate pedagogy to the socio-political agenda of education, which does not provide an understanding of the human rights perspective.

The document seems to be more liberal in its psychological, than in its socio-political, vision. This could have led to a tension, within the document, because of these two different views taken of human beings in different sections of the document. In any case, children, as future citizens, are, primarily, seen as national resources, even if they are cherished ones.

In a democratic country, the relationship between the citizens and their nation must be dynamic. One vision could be that we, collectively, have a shared notion of a human being, due to cultural and biological reasons that shape our nation and society, so that a collective notion could be, optimally, realized and, further, enriched. Here the notion of a human being, in my opinion, is democracy, as an ideal can be justified only if we accept the notion of a human being as primary. In this vision, we shape our
society and nation to match our shared notion of human beings, which leads us to the human rights perspective.

The dialectical relationship of the human being and society should be emphasized. Both, the human being and society, mould and re-mould each other. There is an imperative need to analyse this dialectical relationship and, further, define ourselves and our society.

The view that human beings are, primarily, a resource, is inappropriate. Dealing with the curriculum in such a way does not in favor a human rights perspective. When we look at a human being, primarily, as a national resource, then the nation becomes the primary notion. This leads us to an absurd position, as one cannot conceive of a nation, without formulating the ideals which make human life worth living. To avoid this absurdity, too heavy a reliance on national goals, becomes necessary.

National goals are seen, not as targets to better realize the shared notion of a human being better, but something holy and sacrosanct, for which citizens can be used, which is certainly against human rights perspective. Here, society is split between the national goal setters and those who should be used for achieving these goals (hierarchical relationship). Thus, the nation-society rearranges itself into resources and users of those resources. This position undermines equality and reaffirms the status quo.

A curriculum framework needs a theory of knowledge, which looks at the selection and organization of the learning experiences. This can be possible, by looking at the epistemological aspects, which look at integrating different subjects, say History and Science, which would address issues such as the difference of the historical knowledge from the scientific knowledge & so on.

The national curriculum document, however, seems to completely ignore the need for a theory of knowledge. This is evident from even a cursory reading of the various lists of the concerns given. There are category mismatches in the lists provided to define thrust areas (p. 23) and general objectives of education (p. 29). These lists contain many overlapping and trivial points. As pointed out earlier, one cannot meet the requirements of an adequate epistemology for a curriculum through lists, howsoever long and comprehensive. Also, they do not place various epistemic activities such as
enquiry, reasoning, questioning, exploration, & so on. in any general integrative
framework or approach to the growth and development of knowledge, in the human
mind.

One is at a loss to understand why the document assumes that exploration, problem
solving, decision-making, interactive group learning, understanding the web of
relationships, seeing patterns, & so on, are linked with information and
communication technologies. Some of these ideas are as old as the tradition of
education itself and others have been emphasised from the time, when IT was
nowhere in sight.

What has IT got to do with these ideas? Does IT promote exploration or problem
solving or decision-making in any way? What is the specific impact of IT on
education, if any? How is the computer, with all its paraphernalia, a better educational
tool than, say a well-written book or even the lowly blackboard and chalk? The idea
of life-skills is another example of attempts to carve out concepts, which muddle
one’s thinking, rather than adding to clarity.

Life-skills refer to certain generic skills, covering a variety of issues such as the
health and social aspects of an individual. Life-skills allow an individual to adapt and
mould himself/herself, as and when required. These include ‘problem solving, critical
thinking, communication, self-awareness, coping with stress, decision-making,
creative thinking, interpersonal relationships and empathy’, to name a few.

Well, one may be tempted to ask the authors to provide an example of something
worth teaching, which does not qualify as a life skill, by this definition. What is the
use of a concept of life skills that includes all the aims of education? This is an
example of a problem created by the lack of an epistemological perspective.

This lack of perspective is, also, manifested in the sections on integrating diverse
curricular concerns (1.2.9), and reducing the curriculum load (1.2.11). The document,
rightly, denounces the tendency to clamour for inclusion of ‘environmental
education’, ‘consumer education’, ‘AIDS education’, & so on, as separate areas of
knowledge. But, it does not seem to differentiate between collection of information
and bodies of knowledge. The solution to this problem does not lie in incorporating
information, related to these so called important concerns in already existing subject

171
areas, such as Science or Social Studies. The solution lies in understanding the nature of Science and Social Studies and, then, teaching them in a fashion that develops abilities to understand problems and issues related to the environment and society.

Again, in reducing the curriculum load, the document rightly emphasises a shift away from content (understood as collection of information), but does not work out implications of ‘learning to learn’, which is not a matter of emphasising process alone. Without some criteria to decide on the relative worth of what is learnt, the problem of curriculum load cannot be solved.

Psychological arguments, alone, cannot decide these issues. Since the document does not have an epistemological perspective, the list of concerns in the first chapter remains just that, a list of concerns. It does not help in formulating any viewpoint or a set of principles to provide grounds for curricular decision-making.

The second chapter looks at learning. The section ‘Child as a constructor of knowledge’ takes in the concept of the social constructivist psychology, but fails to recognize the epistemological assumptions behind the concept. Therefore, while the psychological perspective implicates pedagogy, it is expected to influence neither the curriculum organization and the categorization of knowledge, nor the demarcation of the subject areas and understanding their relative importance.

In addition to the social constructivist position, Howard Gardner’s, ‘Theory of Multiple Intelligences’, and the four pillars of education made famous by the Delors report, ‘Learning: The Treasure Within’, have, also, been mentioned. But, the theory of multiple intelligences is invoked only to emphasise the need for emotional education. This seems to suggest that the authors of the National Curriculum Framework do not think that constructivist psychology can adequately deal with emotional development. But, we are left to guess this, as the inadequacy of the constructivist psychology is not shown. Apart from stating that we must have curricula based on ‘MI theory’, there is no explanation of what this may involve. The famous four pillars of education appear, rather, shaky. This is not to critique either of these two theories, but to make the point, that sketchy references cannot serve as a basis to persuade us that the edifice of school education must be built on these foundations.
The fourth aspect takes into account the socio-economic context of the learner which, however, must be culled from various areas such as the impacts of globalization, the information revolution and the emerging technology.

‘Curriculum development essentially is a process of permanent search for qualitative improvement, in response to the different changes in society’ (p. 6), ‘responding to the impact of globalisation’ (p. 10), ‘meeting the challenge of information and communication technologies’ (p. 11; emphasis mine). In all these quotations taken from the National Curriculum document, ‘change in society’ is the most dynamic aspect of the learner’s context. The individual, the learner, is cast as a reactive entity. The learner only reacts, responds; she does not act. The learner is not seen as a pro-active entity.

The document considers equality as its significant feature, but a curriculum for equity does not see human beings as a resource and, hence, fails to see the capabilities to respond to the changes in and around us. If the marginalized groups want to gain an equal status in society, they need to become leaders of change. The ideal of equality and the notion of a human being, accepted in the document, cannot go together. Unless we can visualize the curriculum development process, as a dynamic and perpetual quest for transforming our society into a just (equitable?) society, and of constantly expending the horizon of human possibilities, we will always be led by those in control, or God.

The National Curriculum Framework – 1988, had ‘equality of education and opportunity’ as its first concern. The new document has ‘education for a cohesive society’ in its place. Cohesiveness recurs in only two sub-sections. First, in connection with education of the children from disadvantaged groups and second, towards the end, to recommend ‘learning to live together’. Equality of opportunity features at places in, somewhat, guarded terms.

What is the primary goal here – cohesion or justice? Cohesion through justice and equity? What if one has to sacrifice justice and equity for cohesion? These questions come to mind, because the new framework has replaced a more important value (equality) with a less important one (cohesiveness). Cautious comments such as equality, not meaning ‘nominal equality, the same treatment for everyone’, under the heading of ‘cohesive society’, may give a feeling of something being amiss. Highly
undemocratic societies can be cohesive, both in theory and practice. Wouldn’t it be better to strive for a democratic, egalitarian and pluralistic society, through education?

Globalisation is recognised as an outcome of technological changes, geopolitical evolution and ‘a dominant ideology of regulation by the market.’ But, in the suggested ways of responding to it, the most important aspect of the ideology of regulation by the market, has been totally ignored. The idea of the market providing regulating principles for society, rather than being regulated by social needs and ideals, contradicts the ideals of a liberal, humanistic education.

The phenomenon of globalization caters to the value of money and, hence, fails to look at the intrinsic worth of an individual and equality of all, and sees an individual at the mercy of the market forces. The need is to understand the subtle impact of the market forces on the value systems that guide us through our journey, as a part of society.

In this final section, I would like to engage with a debate which has assumed centrality in the present political climate and is reflected in the curriculum document – the question of religion and values, and their place in the school curriculum. ‘Secularism,’ according to the document, ‘in the present educational parlance, has wrongly been misunderstood as rejection of religion. There has, now, emerged an opinion that the term ought to mean equal understanding of and respect for all religions, "sarvadharmasamabhava" or "panthanirapekshata". ‘Secularism’, according to the Oxford Advanced Learners’ dictionary means, ‘the belief that morality, education, and so on should not be based on religion.’

According to the Catholic Encyclopedia: ‘Secularism is that which seeks the development of the physical, moral, and intellectual nature of man to the highest possible point as the immediate duty of life – which inculcates the practical sufficiency of natural morality apart from Atheism, Theism or the Bible – which selects, as its methods of procedure, the promotion of human improvement by material means, and proposes these positive agreements, as the common bond of union, to all who would regulate life by reason and ennable it by service’ (Principles of Secularism, 17).
And again, ‘Secularism is a code of duty pertaining to this life founded on considerations purely human, and intended mainly for those, who find theology indefinite or inadequate, unreliable or unbelievable’ (English Secularism, 35).

‘Secularism,’ according to Charles Watts, ‘in dealing with the social problems of the day, relies upon human reason, not upon "divine" faith; upon fact, not upon fiction; upon experience, not upon a supposed supernatural revelation. It can discover no value in what is termed “spiritual proposals” as a remedy for existing evils. Hence, secularists can recognise only that as being socially useful, which tends to the physical, mental, moral, and political improvement of mankind, as members of the general commonwealth. Considerations about matters that are said to transcend the province of reason, and that make the business of this life merely of secondary importance, secularists seem to be, at the most, only of theoretical interest, and of no real service in the social struggle in which the society is, at present, engaged.’

These three quotes are to indicate that the word ‘secularism’ has been (and is associated) with certain ideas that have no use for association with either God or religion. But, the national curriculum document seems to be responding to a notion of secularism, which is different from what these dictionaries and encyclopedias say on the matter. Therefore, one needs to see the merits of what the document believes about secularism. The main points made in the section on, ‘Egalitarianism, democracy and secularism’, are as follows:

1) We should try to promote ‘equal understanding of and equal respect for all religions’, through education.

2) ‘SarvadharmaSamabhava’ is the same thing as ‘panthnirpekshata’.

3) Religion, in its basic form (devoid of myth, dogma and ritual), would draw the younger generation towards basic moral and spiritual values.

4) Only education, that leads to belief in God, can contribute to the service of the country and humanity.

A state-run education system should promote an equal understanding of all religions, without adhering to a particular religion or particular religious ideas. This is possible, if all the religions are, critically, analysed in the classroom and the students should be free to make their own choice. This would lead to the acceptance of the different religious ideas, as either true or with equal disbelief, in all the religious ideas.
Demanding equal respect for sets of beliefs or dogmas is nothing, but indoctrination. A state-run education system, in a pluralistic, democratic society cannot justify getting into it. (It is, also, in stark contrast to the scientific temper, much praised in the document.) It goes without saying that it is totally antithesis to critical thinking.

In psychological terms, no actual believer is capable of equal respect for all religions. One may have equal respect for all human beings, irrespective of their religion, but a non-believer is more likely to pass this test than a believer, though theoretically, a believer may be capable of it, as well. But, equal respect for all human beings, irrespective of their religions, is not the same thing as equal respect for their religions. A public education system can, only, be equidistant from all and keep its decision-making free from religious interference.

‘Sarvadharmasamabhava’ interpreted, literally, would mean having a similar attitude to all religions. The attitude in question may be equally positive to all, equally negative to all, or equally lack concern for all. But, here it is meant as equally sympathetic to all. “Panthnirpekshata” is, actually, closer to the term secular. A state is “panthnirpeksha”, when it does not allow its policy decisions to be swayed by religious beliefs of any kind. This attitude entails no respect, or lack of respect; just a determination to keep religious beliefs at bay. Therefore, “sarvadharmasamabhava” can be a synonym of “panthnirpekshata” only if it means equal unconcern for all, but the latter is secularism in its original form. The other possibilities are inconsistent with “panthnirpekshata”.

*Pre-school education* has, also, been ignored. Especially, when, on one hand, the Supreme Court has attempted to make it compulsory. NCF, 2005 does not say anything about this. This shows the gap between different documents, as they do not consider the importance of the already existing documents.

The ideas of non-violence and truth are very well-known in India, since ancient times. These concepts should be included in the curriculum and not ‘Peace’, which still strengthens colonization in our minds. Peace Education and non-violence should not be separate themes to be included under different subject areas. Education should be non-coercive, which is possible if human rights are made a part of education. The legendary figure of Bhagat Singh is not against non-violence. The democracy of
Human Rights, the integration of Human Rights into various subjects, are some serious issues that need to be considered.

The accountability of the system is also missing in the document. For example, the governments of different states spend a certain amount on education, then should they not be responsible for some kind of result? This is a glaring lacuna. The private school system has its own accountability system, since the parents are aware and keep a track of their children. But, the situation is, altogether, different with children studying in government schools. Accountability has not been sustained in such a system. The NCF 2005, should incorporate this, while framing the documents.

The teacher’s authority and its importance has not been given due acceptance. Teachers were not asked to provide their understanding and experiences to the document. Thus, it is very unfair to the teaching community to have something which has been imposed on them, from an outside authority. That is why it is being implemented half-heartedly. Some orientation programmes have been conducted, but only some hours cannot help teachers to implement the curriculum effectively. Thus, the National Curriculum Framework process has to be both top down and bottom up. If, on one end, there are people who have international experiences and knowledge, they must also take care that the voice from others be obtained and incorporated.

This document confuses the association between schooling and education. New forms of learning should be explored, to improve the quality of teachers. Teachers should have a democratic space, which would allow them to change their methodology, if required. The students should be allowed to explore other ways of learning. The document talks only about physical and cognitive development. What about emotional and other kinds of development? Are they bringing in everything under the umbrella of cognitive development? With this, the whole idea of Bloom’s taxonomy has been challenged. Understanding and emotions are taken as a part of cognitive learning. Values, attitudes and feelings have been used in the document, but it has not been mentioned how these will be dealt with. There is a need to, further, express the capabilities and not compress them.

The issue of the Mother Tongue is glossed over, by making some groundless statements. How many Mother Tongues will we teach? Most languages have the potential, but we cannot assume that, as of today, all are, equally, developed and on
Besides all this, how can a teacher in class deal with many languages, simultaneously? Thus, the need is to have some better ideas and arrangement regarding the language problem.

**Concluding Analysis of the National Curriculum Frameworks**

The National Curriculum Frameworks, with their guidelines, assumptions and values, voice the concerns of the state for the national education system reflected in the school textbooks. Therefore, the National Curriculum Frameworks play a major role in guiding the national ethos of education.

So far, in India, there have been only three versions of the National Curriculum Framework (hereafter NCF). The first one was titled the “National Curriculum for Elementary and Secondary Education: A framework” and was published in 1988 (NCF1988). This was revised in 2000 and the revised document was called the “National Curriculum Framework for School Education” (NCF2000). Another review and revision took place in 2005 and the new document was, simply, called the “National Curriculum Framework 2005” (NCF2005). This last document is the current curricular framework followed in India, and, therefore, the subject of my main focus.

There are some good qualities in these NCFs, along with scope for improvement. Extensive, complex and unclear values, orientation is clearly visible, specially in the NCF 1988, 2000. It is important to note that the Constitutional values are being acknowledged in all the NCFs, where equality and social justice are emphasized more. The emphasis has been given on national integrity and building a strong national identity, through education.

The Indian cultural heritage and the use of religious believes in moral development have been visualized by the NCF 1988 and 2000, where the aims of education have been seen in the perspective of education for nation building, character building and inculcation of values, to learn how to learn, scientific temper, and an international perspective. Education for value development, aesthetic sensibilities, work and education, impact of globalization, and ICT has been favoured more in the NCF, 2000. Overall, all the NCFs have their qualities and scope for improvement to give on a human rights perspective.