

This paper is a response to an article written by Dr Prakash Javdekar, Union Minister of HRD, in Dainik Jagaran, a daily newspaper on 29 August, 2016, through which the Minister has invited public opinion on certain issues related to our education system. The Minister expected that such opinion would help the government in formulating the 3<sup>rd</sup> National Policy on Education (NPE) to be launched shortly. Being a humble retired university teacher, I feel deeply concerned about certain educational issues which need urgent resolution. I have tried to be very brief and presented my views on crucial issues concerning elementary, secondary and higher education.

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**Elementary Education**

The data published by the government shows that during last 70 years we have been able to achieve the goal of UEE only partially. Presently, about 96% of children aged 6-11 years and nearly 80 per cent of those aged 11-14 years go to school. The dropout rate for children from all social sections has also come down substantially. But, quality of education imparted in our schools is very poor. The published reports show that an average elementary school child is at least two classes behind his present class in terms of knowledge and basic skills expected to develop. For example, a class V child has only developed knowledge and skills expected of a class III child. A sizeable portion of class V children cannot read class II book in language. This raises many questions which need to be answered through the new education policy.

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- How could a child of class V, who cannot read class II book, reach class V? There has been some very serious flaw in our assessment/promotion system. We may or may not have a formal system of examination for small children, for psychological reasons, but we must have some means to ensure that minimum essential knowledge and skills expected of a child of a given class, develop to the desired level. For this purpose, minimum levels of learning should be identified for each class and no child should be promoted to the next higher class unless he achieves those levels. Theories of instruction have argued that every child can learn everything if method of instruction and time required are adjusted to suit his/her requirements. The NPE should address this issue judiciously.
- It is learnt through the press that there is acute shortage of qualified, trained and competent teachers in schools. Many schools in some states are running at the mercy of para-teachers under different nomenclatures. These para-teaches are under qualified, academically poor, ill-trained and low paid. Subsequently, they suffer from low level job-satisfaction, less interest in teaching, incompetence in teaching skills and low self-concept. This tells upon their performance

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