

Speech by Smt. D. Purandeswari, Hon'ble Minister of State (HRD) at the seminar on "Teacher Education: Challenges Ahead" organized by the Amity Institute of Education (AIE) at 12 noon on Saturday, the 25th February, 2006 at the Amity Campus, M Block, Saket, New Delhi.

TEACHERS' EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AHEAD

I am glad to be here to-day on the occasion of the Seminar conducted by the Amity Institute of Education on "Teacher's Education: The Challenges Ahead" which is of topical importance in the modern day world scenario.

Few global goals have been as consistently and as universally supported as the notion that every child in every corner of the world should have complete exposure to modern education. The World Conference on Education for all held in Jomtien in 1990 set this process in motion by adopting that the goal of Universal Primary Education be achieved by 2000 AD. The World Education Forum in Dakar in 2000 reaffirmed and extended the Jomtien commitment. Universal primary completion and gender equity in primary and secondary education were affirmed again in the same year as Millennium Development Goal.

Education is not only a goal in itself but is also a powerful driver of social change. Combined with sound macroeconomic policies, education is

fundamental for the construction of globally competitive economics and democratic societies. Education is key to creating, applying and spreading new ideas and technologies which in turn are critical for sustained growth. It augments cognitive and other skills and in the process leads to higher productivity and development. Education builds what the Noble Laureate Amartya Sen calls “human capabilities’ the essential and individual power to reflect, make choices, seek a voice in society, and enjoy a better life. In short, education is one of the most powerful instruments known for reducing poverty and inequality and for laying the basis for sustained economic growth, sound governance, and effective institutions. In order to ensure that a meaningful education is imparted to our children, it is essential that right type of teachers and instructors are put in place. Teacher education programme generally train our teachers to adjust to a system in which education is seen as a mere transmission of information and knowledge is treated as information ‘given’ by the teacher and taken by the taught with out question. In this system there is very little leeway for inquiry, initiative and innovation. This is because mostly the teachers training schemes do not give much scope for the teachers undergoing such training to have a critical examination of curriculum, syllabi or the course contents. Most of such programmes provide little or no opportunity for inquiry or investigation: In the process the teachers end up with a purely pedantic outlook and restrictive mind set which prevent them from serving as effective facilitators of social transformation. This mindset must change. Teachers must be encouraged to develop a spirit of inquiry and research and must be perennial learners and must update their knowledge continuously. It is some times complained that teaching profession always does not attract the best talent because of inadequate prospect of career advancement. This I think is not fully correct. Over the years we have taken

fundamental steps to improve appreciably the teachers' lot in terms of monetary and other fringe benefits; and the process is still on.

However, a potential teacher must inculcate a sense of dedication and spirit of service. He must take up the challenging task with the enthusiasm of a zealot, only then he will be able to create a niche for him as the prime mover of social change. A successful teacher is he who can motivate his students to discover their latent talents, to realize their physical and intellectual potentialities to the fullest, to develop character and imbibe the desirable social and human values. A teacher who does not measure up to the standard will leave no indelible impression on the society at large.

I understand that Amity Group of Societies is playing a leading and provocative role in the field of education. The group, I am told, has several institutions in the field of elementary, and secondary education and also in the area of technical and management studies and research activities. As a part of their on going activities in educational and cognate sectors, the Amity Group is, I feel, in a viable position to initiate a process of nationwide dialogue in various fora on Teachers' Training covering its various facets such as its periodicity, context, contents and methodology. Such studies will lead to informed and focused attention and help as to decide as to what changes will be required in this area in the present scenario when the cry for reforms in almost every sector is the order of the day. I hope the authorities of the Institute will bestow their considered thought on my suggestion.

With these words I once again thank the authorities for inviting me to this seminar and giving me an opportunity to share my thoughts on the subject.

Thank you,

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