

Inaugural speech of Hon'ble MoS HRD, Smt. D. Purandeswari as
Chief Guest of the Twenty-Third International Diploma in
Educational Planning and Administration
On 15th February, 2007 in New Delhi.

- Prof. Ved Prakash, the Vice-Chancellor of NUEPA;
- Members of the NUEPA Faculty
- Distinguished Participating Officers from foreign countries and other dignitaries and friends.

It is, indeed, a matter of privilege for me to be here to day to welcome so many guests from Asia, Africa and Latin America, who have arrived here in connection with the International Diploma Programme in Education Planning and Administration hosted by the NUEPA. I am glad that like previous years, this year also there is a favourable response from the participating countries which clearly indicates their growing approbation and acceptability of this prestigious programme. I am sure this programme has provided critical inputs to educational as well as socio-cultural development efforts of developing countries and I hope that this will continue in the coming years too. This way it would no doubt help in building up a solid foundation of camaraderie between the host and the participating countries.

Few global goals have been as consistently and as universally supported as the notion that every person 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 education with complete gender equity in primary and secondary education were affirmed again in the same year as Millennium Development Goal.

As we all know, international development discourse, particularly in the area of education, is putting growing emphasis on the importance of human rights. Enjoying a healthy, vigorous life and being well educated are desirable in contemporary societies worldwide. The right based approach to education derives its legal sustenance from a number of international Conventions and Charters such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966). Besides, the right to education is also founded in the European Social Charter (1961), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), and the Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989). A number of multilateral and bilateral agencies also endorse and advocate the right-based approach in the provision of education in developing countries.

The increasing emphasis on the right-based approach is also evident from the fact that as of 2003, 116 countries with written Constitutions have made reference to a right to education in their

basic Statutes while 95 countries have stipulated free education at least for some population sub-groups.

So far as India is concerned article 45 of the Constitution of India provided that the State would endeavour to provide within a period of 10 years from the commencement of the Constitution, free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years but it could not by itself effectively direct the States to universalise elementary education. A new article, namely article 21A was therefore, written in our Constitution which authorized the State, by law, to provide compulsory education to all children between six to fourteen years age. The contemplated legislative intervention envisaged in article 21-A will bring about a metamorphosis in universalising education on a mass scale.

Even with the worldwide recognition of the importance of the right based approach, 'social exclusion' of access to public education is a stark reality in most developing countries. This is clear from the fact that incidence of public spending is significantly biased in favour of the socio-economically better off segments of the population in developing countries. For example, in the mid-1990s, the median incidence of spending on education on the poorest quintile (group) is about 14% or less in many developing countries such as Armenia, Cote d' Ivoire, Ecuador, Guinea, Kazakstan, Kergyz Republic, Madagascar, Morocco, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Tanzania and Vietnam (World Development Report, 2000/01). This implies that children from poor households have much less access to schooling at

progressively higher levels than children from richer families, and their attrition rate increases with the grade (World Development Report 2004).

The point I want to make here is that 'social exclusion' is a necessary evil, and conversely, 'social inclusion' leads to reduction in income inequality, enhances intergenerational mobility and contributes significantly towards achieving a higher level of steady-national average income. In other words, there is a significant negative effect of human capital inequality on economic growth. The policy implication to alleviate poverty, therefore, is to reach out to the poor through an egalitarian provision of public services, particularly education, especially in developing countries (World Development Reports, 2000/01 & 2004).

No doubt, the National Governments across the globe have been intensifying their efforts, particularly after the Jomtien Conference in 1990, to improve public provision of education. Their commitments for achieving the Education for All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) have given a new direction to public policy for educational development. Despite their concerted efforts, developing nations continue to encounter a number of problems that limit the process of development of education. Some of these problems are common to most developing countries and therefore deserve commonality of approach for being effectively addressed. Briefly speaking some of these problems are:

- Schools function in isolation and are not equipped to address the realities of their external environments. They do not meet the community's needs;
- As such, parents are little motivated to invest in a schooling system perceived as offering little hope of improving their living conditions;
- Demographic growth has outstripped economic growth, limiting the government's ability to respond to families' requirements in terms of schooling;
- Distribution of management responsibilities of education between the government and communities does not seem to be equitable; and
- A severe shortage of financial and other resources for school infrastructures, poorly qualified teachers, etc. have adversely impacted the teaching-learning environment created during the expansion stage of schooling system in most developing countries.

In order to make the best use of the available limited financial and other resources, forging a sustainable relationship between the school and the community and reaching out to the deprived sections of developing societies, building planning and managerial competencies of educational functionaries is of paramount importance. Capacity building, in fact, is a necessary condition in any developing society to further its flow of human capital. Moreover, it is important for developing nations to improve both quantity and quality of manpower to

remain competitive in the global market. In this context, I hope, the IDEPA programme would be of immense help for a critical reflection of issues and problems of educational development, particularly school education, that are common to all of us. This International Diploma Programme is significant not only because of its coverage of a wide range of subjects relating to planning and management, but also because it occurs at a time when the participating countries including India are in the process of mid-term assessment of Education for All.

I understand that the participants of this programme will also be undertaking intensive educational field visits in order to get acquainted with the structure and functions of specialized institutions and a variety of other field level innovative educational programmes. This will not only provide them an opportunity to learn from the grassroots level experiences but also to have the feel of the poised multi-cultural and multi-ethnic India.

May I in this context re-iterate that the Government of India is fully committed to provide technical and professional support to developing countries for augmenting their human resources. For instance, as a part of its international cooperation programmes, in the recent past, India has provided professional support to CLMV

countries (Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam) and also SAARC countries for setting up of universities and training institutions. This programme will provide the right forum for exchanging the rich experiences and new ideas of educational development among the participating countries.

Before I conclude I would like to thank the National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) and their faculty for its excellent track record extending to over four and a half decades not only in augmenting competencies of educational planners and administrators but also in promoting international cooperation. I hope that the NUEPA will continue to maintain it in the coming years and decades.

With these words, I wish you a very fruitful and pleasant stay in India and hope that this programme would provide the right forum for exchanging the rich experiences and new ideas of educational development among the participatory countries and boost their efforts for further development of their human resources.

Thank You.