

[23 February, 2001] RAJYA SABHA

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question No. 43.

Policy Framework for Reforms in Education

43. SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN:[†]

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN:

Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister's Council on Trade and Industry has submitted a report on Policy Framework for Reforms in Education to Government;

(b) if so, what are the details of recommendations made by the said Council in the Report; and

(c) Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. The report has made several suggestions for all sectors of education. Government is yet to take a final view in the matter.

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, part (b) on my question has not been answered at all. As far as I know, the report was submitted in April last. The recommendations of this Council had been reported in various newspapers. But I do not understand why these recommendations of the Council are being concealed from the Parliament. Anyhow, I understand from what has been reported in the newspapers that one of the major recommendations is that the Government shall confine itself mainly to primary education, and the higher education, especially the science and technology education, shall be completely, or mainly, left for the private sector, if that is so, it will be an attempt at commercialising education and, if it is approved, an overwhelming majority of people will not be able to send their children to higher education institutions. Therefore, in view of this, will the hon. Minister disapprove of this recommendation?

The second part of my question is this. I understand there is a

[†] The question was actually asked on the floor of the house by Shri J. Chitharanjan.

recommendation that the University Grants Commission shall confine itself mainly to liberal and performing arts; the other sections will be excluded from its purview. What exactly is the reaction of the Government in regard to this recommendation?

डा० मुरली मनोहर जोशी: श्रीमन्, इस रिपोर्ट की 28 के करीब सिफारिशें हैं। इनमें से बहुत सी सिफारिशें तो ऐसी हैं जिन पर सरकार पहले से ही कार्यरत है। लेकिन इस सदन ने एक शिक्षा नीति को पास किया है। 1986 में एक शिक्षा नीति संसद द्वारा पास की गयी थी और सरकार की वही नीति अभी तक बरकरार है। इसके साथ-साथ सुप्रीम कोर्ट ने भी अपना एक फैसला शिक्षा के बारे में, शिक्षा के व्यवसायीकरण, शिक्षा के कर्माश्रितलाइजेशन के बारे में किया है। उसमें भी उन्होंने निर्देश दिया है कि शिक्षा का व्यवसायीकरण, कर्माश्रितलाइजेशन नहीं हो सकता। इसके अलावा हम बहुत सी संस्थाओं, विश्वविद्यालयों से भी इन सिफारिशों पर चर्चा कर रहे हैं और उसके साथ-साथ हमारे विभाग ने इस बारे में कुछ विचार सरकार के सामने, प्राइम मिनिस्टर की कमेटी के सामने भेज दिये हैं। उन पर विचार हो रहा है। मैं इस बात से सहमत हूँ कि सरकार शिक्षा के किसी भी क्षेत्र से बाहर नहीं होनी चाहिये और उच्च शिक्षा के क्षेत्र में भी सरकार का रोल, सरकार की भूमिका लोगों को शिक्षा प्रदान करने के लिए रहेगी। हम एक्सेसेबिलिटी और क्वालिटी दोनों के लिए कमिटेड हैं। मैं यह निश्चित रूप से सदन को आश्वस्त करना चाहता हूँ कि किसी को भी, किसी निर्धन व्यक्ति को और किसी मेधावी व्यक्ति को उच्च शिक्षा से वंचित करने का विचार नहीं है।

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Sir, since 1986, very serious developments have taken place in the whole education field and also in science and technology. Therefore, it is highly necessary to rethink about the policy that was adopted in 1986. Sir, before approving this report, I would like to know from the Minister whether the Government will try to get the opinions of various higher educational institutions in this country, and also university teachers and other teachers and their organisations and those who are concerned with the problems of education. I would also like to know from the Minister whether, before finalising this report, he would be kind enough to initiate a discussion on the recommendations of this commission in Parliament.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: We have already taken into account and consideration the responses and concerns of the

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Federation of Central Universities Teachers' Association (FEDCUTA). We will also interact, and we are in continuous interaction, with educationists and educational institutions, and if there is a need to have a broad-based discussion, we will certainly go into it. To the best of my understanding, the principles laid down in the Education Policy adopted by Parliament in 1986 are quite sound. The deficiency lies in its implementation at various points and at various levels. I would certainly welcome improved methods of implementation. I do agree, there have been very speedy changes in terms of scientific research and technological advancements, and the Government is fully conscious about it. The Ministry of Science and Technology is taking adequate steps, interacting with international institutions. Recently, we had received a Russian delegation of scientists and members of their national academies who attended a workshop here; and we are collaborating with them on various aspects of material sciences and other sciences. We have also a very strong relationship with American scientists, and an Indo-US Joint Science Foundation has been established. We have very strong interactions, in terms of science and technology, with Germany, France, England, Portugal; many other developing countries are also coming to us for increased scientific collaboration. So, the hon. Member need not have any apprehensions regarding India's approach to scientific and technological developments. The policy of my Ministry on science and technology is to take technology right up to the villages and technology to the common man. That is the guiding principle. So, there should be no apprehension about the country's interactions with the developing and emerging technologies and its commitment to use science.

SHRI J. CHITHARANJAN: Would you discuss it in Parliament?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: Since it is a well-known and established policy, any time, you can have a discussion on science and technology, and I am ready to have it. *(Interruptions)*

SHRI V.V. RAGHAVAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, human resource development is a very important national task. Already, trade and

industry has been taking a keen interest in this field. There are private institutions charging huge amounts of capitation fee in professional education now. That has led to commercialisation of higher education, especially professional education. As a result, the common people are denied of those opportunities. Thus, job opportunities are also denied to the common people. Only the financially well-to-do people make use of it. When, already, there is commercialisation, in addition to that if trade and industry is given a free hand, then what would happen? The hon. Minister promises that it would not happen, but the present practice goes against his promise.

Whatever may be the form of policy declaration, there is a report before the Government and it has emanated from the office of the hon. Prime Minister. I demand that the content of the report should be placed before the House. Before taking any decision, the opinion of the House must be taken into consideration.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: The Government will always take into serious consideration the opinions expressed by hon. Members, and will always be guided by the existing policy adopted by Parliament and the Supreme Court judgements, and the opinions expressed by various Vice-Chancellors and educational institutions. But, let me also bring out a very fundamental position and fact that for higher education, and for education in general, the country needs resources. We are inviting the community, industrial houses and trade houses to participate in educational endeavours. This does not mean that education will be governed by the market forces, or, that education or research would be handed over to trading houses and industrial houses. But their participation in the endeavour is welcome.

If you want to generate a quick economic growth, industrial progress, accompanied by research and technology and appropriate manpower, have to go hand in hand. A synergy has to be created. The linkage has to be forged. Therefore, we are in constant touch with the industry, with the academia and with the science and technology experts to evolve strategies and framework for solving this problem. After all, the users of higher education and science and

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technology are in a very large number from trade and industrial houses. They must also come and pay for it. So, we are inviting investment from them, inviting donations from them, in creating a mechanism so that they can repay to the universities and science and technology institutions for what they have learnt.

In many cases, say, in IITs, a large number of their alumni come here to offer liberal assistance to them. Should we deny? Or, should we give them an opportunity? That is the basic question. A Vice-Chancellor of a particular institution has appealed to his students saying, "Well, now, after having been educated, you have obtained gainful employment. Will you please consider donating your first salary cheque to your *alma mater*?" These are the mechanism and methods through which resources are being generated. But, if you are always under the hallucination that something is being handed over to commerce and industry, then, certainly, I am here to say, "Please get out of this hallucination." The Government has no intension of commercialising or industrialising education, or, give it completely to the private sector. But, certainly, resources have to be generated for this.

When we want to increase the fees for generating the resources, then you oppose, if we want to invite these resources from outside sources, then also there is an opposition. I think, a time has come to give a very cool thought to it, to discuss the twin question of quality and accessibility of education. I am here to assure you that we are devising ways and means where no meritorious person would be denied accessibility to higher education.

SHRIMATI SHABANA AZMI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I think you for this opportunity. Sir, in paragraph 1.17 of the Ambani-Birla Report, it is stated, "Building knowledge for a competitive, information-based society must be the core theme of reforms in education. ...Education must shape adaptable, competitive workers who can readily acquire new skills and innovate." Does that mean that the Government intends to use education as a means of building up a capital resource of human beings for the purpose of market driven economy? As the Minister himself has stated the Education

Policy of 1986, which was then modified by Parliament in 1992, emphasised the social and cultural role of education rather than the restrictive market driven one defined by the Ambani-Birla Report. Sir, through you, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether the Government agree with this narrow view on education especially when the nation is struggling to inculcate social values and build up a genuine democratic practice in society? The minute we say that we are involving the private sector, the thing is that the private sector chooses to use people who will serve their narrow purpose and others will be denied access to education. How does the Minister hope to deal with this anomaly?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: Sir, I have already stated that the Government has to take a final view with regard to these recommendations. We are considering all these aspects and will come to a final view after deliberating with all concerned and those who have a stake in education. But the fact that the country needs a highly developed scientific and technological manpower is also true. How do you generate wealth today? It is the knowledge-based technology which is in the forefront of creating wealth. Now if you lag behind in developing a knowledge-based society, knowledge-based system, you will be left behind in the race. Should we go again the same way of missing the industrial revolution and the early technological revolution. Should we not come forward and see that how this new revolution alongwith our social commitments can be made profitable for country's benefit? A judicious mix has to be created. I am not saying that the Government has no social concern or education should be deprived from social concern. It is the primary concern of the educational system to imbibe a human being with human values, social values and with an international outlook. But, at the same time, he must be a partner in the knowledge-based society, knowledge-based system, which is developing very fast. Therefore, we are trying to integrate. All over the world, this integration is taking place. Even in the State of West Bengal, people are now trying to integrate these two systems. Do you hand over all your industries to the private sector when you invite private capital?

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This a sort of abhorrence to private capital, I think, is also misplaced. It has a role. It has a role to play in all countries everywhere in the world. It should play its role. It should not dominate, it should not manage and it should not control. But it has to be given a role. After all when it comes to educational processes, it is also meeting one of the social commitments. So, one should not be totally afraid of it. But I do agree that a mechanism should take this into consideration and should not forget that education has a social commitment; and we are committed to it.

MISS MABEL REBELLO: Sir, as per these recommendations, the higher education is to be commercialised. In that eventuality, what will happen to the deprived sections of society such as dalits, women and backwards especially those who are living in the Scheduled Areas? The other thing is, my apprehension is that trade and industry hardly spends 0.5 per cent on research. If education is to be privatised, who will sponsor or fund research in education.

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: Sir, I have been repeating and I am again repeating that there is no danger of either commercialising or privatising higher education. But the role of those who are being benefited by higher education should repay some of the benefits has been envisaged. And this is the principle which we are trying to draw. As regards accessibility, I have always been saying that accessibility and quality are the twin issues which we are attending to. I am here to say that our mechanism will take care of those who are deprived, who are left out. As you know, recently we have given a Central University to Mizoram which is a backward area. We are helping the various institutions wherever it is needed. Recently, in Gujarat, where the entire university system was destroyed, we have paid a sum of Rs. 50 crores to rebuild it. Therefore, the Government is not shirking from its responsibility of training students, but the Government wants to mobilise resources; and I am here to tell you that even now the Government is paying more than 75-80 per cent of the cost of research and technological advancement in the country; we will continue to pay it and even more. At the same time, if you look at the developed countries, the situation is just opposite. All

scientific and technological research is funded by the industry, to the tune of 70 per cent. But, in India, it is just the reverse. We are paying 75-80 per cent, and the industry is paying only 20 per cent. So, there is no reason or cause for being apprehensive that education will be grabbed or those market forces will completely manage education. After all, today, the market is playing some role in the country's economy; and education is also authorised to have that much role.

PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Sir, I was a little scared when I looked at the Report because the Report has addressed the entire issue of education solely from the point of view of trade and industry. But we have to look at it from the social and cultural viewpoint, from the common people's standpoint. Hon. Member, Smt. Shabana Azmi, has already mentioned about the purpose. I do not want to repeat it. The purpose is to create a knowledge-based society; and, at the end, the Report says that it is to create a competitive environment. Sir, I take your point that a knowledge-based society is important. But knowledge for whom? Is it only for a selected few? There is a very interesting and, really, an almost frightening sentence in this Report. It is, 'India currently faces two challenges — income poverty and information poverty. The two challenges have to be equally met.' How do you equate the two? Of course, knowledge is important. Though I have spent all my life in the field of education, I cannot equate knowledge poverty with poverty of food, drinking water and housing. Would the hon. Minister accept this view?

The second question is this. Sir, much has been said about privatisation. What would be the affect of privatisation of higher education? The Report says, "leave..." — not party — "... higher and professional education to private sector." If the entire education is left to the private sector, which ultimately increases the cost of education, what will be the effect on women in a highly patriarchal society? Does it not amount to is empowerment of women?

DR. MURLI MANOHAR JOSHI: Sir, I have made it amply clear that this Report is under consideration and the Government will take

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a final view after taking into account the views of the hon. Members of the House, the views of educationists and the views of all those who have a stake in education. So, there should be no apprehension about it.

Secondly, I am repeating *ad nauseam* that the Government has full commitment for the socially deprived sections of the people and, particularly, for women. The Government has a policy of making education free for all women up to graduation and also for professional courses for the SC/ST girls. So, our commitment for women and for these sections is fully amplified by our policy statements. But, please do not be scared. If somebody wants to help or some institution wants to help our educational system, should we take it or should we not take it? Should the Indian universities remain starved of funds totally? Or, should we make use of the opportunity offered by those donors, as I have said, who are here to help their *alma mater*. We are considering all these aspects and we will take into account to see that any education policy does not deprive anybody who is meritorious and poor with regard to access to higher education upto the highest level.

Secondly, we fully agree that there is a role for the Government at all levels of education, be it primary, be it higher, be it research or be it technology.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Question Hour is over.

WRITTEN ANSWERS TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Sale of spurious drugs in AIIMS

*44. SHRI SURESH KALMADI:
SHRIMATI AMBIKA SONI:

Will the Minister of HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a man caught selling spurious drugs recently inside a ward of AIIMS;