

Quality and funding of education

2717. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether Government has taken any steps to improve the quality of education in each State in the last three years;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether Government is contemplating steps to meet the challenges of public funding for higher education; and
- (d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) to (d) Education as a subject on the Concurrent List, is the shared responsibility of both Central and State Governments. The responsibility of school education lies primarily with the State Governments. It is the constant endeavor of the Government to promote qualitative improvement in school education. The Government has established various Boards of Studies which advise on academic matters falling in its area of concern, standards, model curricula teaching and infrastructure facilities. The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 has been enacted which envisages significant reforms in the Elementary Education sector specially with reference to admission, attendance and completion of elementary education by all children in schools which conform to specified norms and standards.

Government has taken major initiatives in academic and institutional reforms in higher education sector which marks a paradigm shift in the development of higher education. Government aims to set up a National Commission/Council for Higher Education and Research as an apex body for determination, coordination and maintenance of standards and promotion of higher education and research. It also aims to have mandatory accreditation system in place of the present voluntary system of accreditation, to promote quality. The National Vocational Education Qualification Framework (NVEQF) aims to embed vocational education in the educational system providing for horizontal and vertical mobility for youth to seamlessly move between general and vocational education.

Government also aims to curb adoption of unfair practices by technical and medical educational institutions and universities. The Educational Tribunals Bill introduced in the Parliament provides for a two tier system to deal with disputes between students, teachers, institutions and regulators. The government has also introduced in the Parliament, a Bill to regulate the entry of foreign education providers.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 (as modified in 1992) encourages nongovernmental

and voluntary efforts in education, while preventing establishment of institutions which intend to commercialize education.

Students not availing mid-day-meals due to caste factor

2718. DR. JANARDHAN WAGHMARE: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

- (a) whether instances of students not availing the mid-day-meals at some places due to caste factor have come to the notice of Government;
- (b) if so, the facts and the details thereof; and
- (c) the corrective measures taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRIMATI D. PURANDESWARI): (a) and (b) Six complaints (two each from Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh and one each from Andhra Pradesh and Orissa) have been received by this Department since 01.01.2010. They were referred to the concerned States for enquiring into the matter and taking necessary action. The States of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Andhra Pradesh have informed that no discrimination due to caste factor was found. In Orissa, however, it was found that the guardians of the school students had stopped their children from taking mid-day-meal prepared by a Cook belonging to the scheduled caste. After an enquiry, the State Government booked a case against one of the guardians, who was arrested and produced before the Court. The Mid-Day-Meal programme in that school has been going on smoothly thereafter.

(c) Many studies have shown mid day meal fosters social equality, spreads egalitarian values, and breaks barriers of caste and class in school. Similarly, appointment of cooks from SC/ST communities teaches children to overcome caste prejudices. In addition, many States/UTs have formed School Management Committees/Samities under RTE Act, 2009 with members from Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribes to monitor the implementation of mid-day-meal in schools.

In order to ensure effective implementation of the scheme, there is an extensive monitoring mechanism at the school, block, district, State and the National levels. The scheme is constantly reviewed through Quarterly Progress Reports; in the National level steering cum Monitoring Committee meetings and during Programme Approval Board meetings as well as through the Central Review Missions. In addition 40 independent monitoring institutes evaluate the Scheme at regular intervals with defined Terms of Reference.

Women Study Centres

2719. DR. K.P. RAMALINGAM: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state: