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Primary education

Your second leader of Jan 17, '89 captioned "Looking at Universal Primary Education" read with the recent deliberations of Amartya Sen warrants inter alia immediate review and recasting of our national education programme for literacy. To combat endemic deprivation of masses, according to Amartya Sen, the primary means is state action which includes not merely public distribution of food at subsidized prices, but also guarantees public health measures, general access to medical attention and widespread literacy and public education. Thus, in the light of the above discourse universal literacy stands out as one of the basic entitlements of masses that ultimately guarantee their entitlement to food to avert hunger. So when in your leader you warn the implementing agency about its utter failure in implementing our UPE programme in its right perspective, it appears as apt and logical.

An in-depth of the present UPE programme will reveal that it has hardly overcome the three formidable setbacks, firstly in enrolling all the children of primary school going age, secondly, in preventing alarmingly high rate of dropouts and thirdly disseminating quality education. Unless straightforward state action to remedy the situation is ensured the fate of the UPE programme committed to wipe out the scourge of illiteracy will hang in the balance. Hence state action in the form of declaration of elementary education for the children upto the age level of 12 (in UK and USA the age level is 16) as free and compulsory should come forthwith to prove the earnestness of governmental pledges. With the introduction of free and compulsory elementary education the two puzzling problems of UPE, viz enrollment of

all school going age children and enormous dropouts will be resolved. But the marked rise of enrollment in all elementary grades may pose a problem of great dimensions in dispensing quality education. The issue, therefore, deserves to be dealt with the utmost care and foresight.

Quality education is virtually the outcome of an interaction of multitudinous factors pertaining to the educational process. A congenial school environment for teaching well-designed and well-written text-books by an adequate number of qualified and devoted teachers with the help of innovative teaching methodologies and appropriate teaching aids and that situation augmented by public awareness may profitably be treated as the sine qua non for dispensing quality education. Our viewpoint is that universal literacy when recognised to have a major role in guaranteeing entitlement of undernourished deprived masses to food, must as well be guaranteed as one of their basic entitlements only in its true and effective perspectives.

Would the authorities be heedful of the suggestions put forward in the foregoing paragraphs and reformulate the policy of UPE soon?

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