

62

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Surplus Facilities

A bridge with no trace of the once mighty river flowing underneath may not be an uncommon sight in a country with shifting rivers. That's what makes hydrological studies so very important in drawing up projects spanning rivers frequently changing courses. Such situations might appear in other spheres too.

A country infested with tuberculosis might develop extensive facilities including sanatoria. What would be the disposal of such facilities when the battle against tuberculosis is won? The world has of course met with such streaks of luck in the past but with no apparent problem with the facilities and we don't expect any in the future either. We might recall in this connection eradication of plague and small-pox in the distant and near past and anticipate leprosy and other such pestilence dying out altogether. But the virulence with which AIDS has emerged, malaria reappeared, cancer and cardiovascular diseases are spreading, make anticipations of redundant facilities all very irrelevant.

The problem isn't again wholly imaginary. We are right now face to face with the practical problem of surplus facilities in a certain section of the education sector. There are 1,268 government and non-government colleges in the country. Of these 603 are intermediate level colleges with intake capacity of 96,898 in the first year intermediate classes and 665 degree colleges, with a capacity of 4,51,364 for the same class. Thus the total national intake capacity for the first year intermediate class is 5,48,262. But a total of only 3,73,784 students passed the SSC examination this year from the five Secondary Education Boards in the country. The total number of prospective admission seekers would naturally be around 1.75 lakh less than the number of seats available. This may apparently be a situation peculiar for the current year. But a deeper analysis would reflect lopsidedness in many spheres beginning with the standard of education and ending with corrupt and inefficient public examination system.

The colleges might have come up in response to the felt needs but if the standard of school examinations are maintained the supply of students is bound to dwindle. The trend would remain irreversible without improvement of the standard of teaching. And it is difficult to improve the standard of teaching. For that we need to overhaul the existing manpower.

We are expecting a new education policy. We hope it will be a rational one—universal, compulsory and free at primary level; cheap and easily accessible at secondary level and selective and nationally cost-effective at the higher level but quality permeating all through.