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Recommendations of National Knowledge Commission

Latest blueprint for virtual burial of education

In human society education has always been a backbone. It pertains more so to the modern society, where education is supposed to produce not only the human resources for governance and functioning of the state machinery and for each and every kind of material production. It also equips people of society, particularly the generation coming up, with knowledge, intellect and character required to stand against injustice, oppression and exploitation to keep up the well-being of the society as a whole. This was why, even under the shackles of the British imperialist rules, when the rulers wanted to introduce modern education in this colony of theirs, primarily and mainly with a view to producing a band of native professionals necessary to help them maintain their rule, their bureaucracy and their colonial production system, the doyens of modern India, the front-running freedom fighters craving for freedom of the country and its people, thought otherwise. True to the spirits of the Renaissance, they wanted education to be a 'man-making, character-building process'; they desired each and every countryman to have the fullest benefit of such education so as to acquire a rational, secular, scientific bent of mind, and courageous yet humanitarian outlook of life; they looked for an education for all, equal and free, so that the vast masses of poorest people of the country are not debarred from its benefit. Themselves they worked for it, built up social movement for education, set up nationalist institutions to fulfill these objectives, yet knew that the goal could not be reached without the government taking up the task. So

they demanded of the government 'free and equal education for all'. With the imperialist rulers not meeting it, people of the country dreamt it to be fulfilled in the free, independent India.

Independence was won, but it only installed the Indian capitalists in power of the state. During these sixty years of independence there have been so many commissions and committees set up by governments of different banners and vocabularies to free education of the country from maladies and lapses, to make it fit for people. Though Indian intellect and scholarship were acclaimed over the world, education for the common poorer section of the masses, however, seemed to stand still amidst shambles, naturally inviting strong criticism from different sections of education-loving people from different walks of life. So the each new set of recommendations, each new policy had to spend a lot of words on what had not been done, what had been the flaws and what was to be done to make amends. But those always proved to be verbose rhetoric. Words covered up the design to make education give effect to the plans and programmes of the rulers, the capitalists-monopolists to be precise, that may help them maintain their rules in the best possible way at any given time. Now, when a National Knowledge Commission has been set up and is working in full steam, it needs a thorough scrutiny on how it matches the hitherto recurring script, or if it deviates in any respect.

NKC

The National Knowledge Commission (NKC) has been set up in 2005 as a high-level advisory

body to the Prime Minister of India with 'a mandate to guide policy and direct reforms,' in key areas like education, science and technology, etc. It aims at 'transforming India into a knowledge society'. The NKC has placed reports and recommendations to the government, on a vast range of aspects including school education, higher education, medical education, management education, legal education, open and distance education etc. Those have already been integrated in the agenda of the XI Plan with a proposed fat sum of allocation. On these NKC recommendations the major organizations of industrialists-

monopolists, namely the CII lately held a session (Delhi, 11 August 2008), while the FICCI, held a Seminar (Delhi, 13 August 2008). So, there is no dearth of rhetoric or patronage from the policy makers, namely the government and the capitalists-monopolists, no paucity of fund allocation even to the extent of silencing the criticism that government does not spend enough on an issue like education.

Besides, the NKC recommendations make amends for other earlier criticisms; thus they vouch for 'expansion' of education, not curtailment; they stand for 'excellence' against the allegation

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SUCI condemns wanton attacks on the life and property of Christian community

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in course of a statement issued on 24 September, 2008 expressed grave concern at the RSS-BJP backed pre-meditated escalating attack of the VHP-Bajrang Dal activists on the life and property of the members of minority Christian community in different parts of the country including vandalizing their places of worship. Such heinous barbaric acts, said Comrade Mukherjee, are spawning from the worst kind of communal hatred of the Hindu-fundamentalist Sangh Parivar and it is being perpetrated in a well-calculated manner on the eve of the next parliamentary election so that it could brighten electoral prospects of its political outfits, riding upon raked-up Hindutva sentiment. Comrade Mukherjee also charged the Union as well as the concerned state governments for practically doing nothing to contain these planned attacks, which smacks of their covert complicity in allowing such an orgy of violence.

Demanding stern action against the culprits orchestrating the violence, Comrade Mukherjee wanted the Government of India to quell this wanton hostility with a strong hand and if the situation so warrants, by deploying military. He also urged upon all sections of the people to come out boldly against such fascist assault, exert due pressure upon the government to stop such dastardly acts forthwith and appealed to them to maintain communal amity and harmony like the apple of the eye.

National Knowledge Commission set to implement GATS provisions

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of fast deteriorating standard; they ask for 'autonomy' for institutions instead of curbing it. Notwithstanding the words, how far these recommendations can bring about significant and proclaimed changes need scrutiny. But before that a few words on the background seems necessary.

Background: post-independence scenario

The newly independent Indian capitalist state started its journey in a situation when in the world the capitalist-imperialist system had been deep in its crisis. Indian capitalism, too, was soon enmeshed in insurmountable crisis in every sphere of social life. Capitalist exploitation led to increasing poverty, and impoverishment of vast masses of common people led to market crisis; crisis of market brought about industrial recession; recession gave way to lock-out, closure of industries, retrenchment of workers, adding menacingly to already mounting unemployment. It was reflected in education too. The policies hinged upon one focal point: Reduce or put a hold to rising number of educated unemployed to whom the state had some obligation to provide job. The first chairman of the University Grants Commission (UGC) made it clear, when he said "We want to restrict higher education in order to minimize the number of educated unemployed." So, the policy of curtailment of education, particularly at the higher stage, and restriction of seats to give effect to that, loomed large beneath every move. 'Only the better, deserving and keen should be given chance to higher education', 'our education has been an inverted pyramid where undue emphasis is placed on higher education and primary education is neglected': thus went the arguments and pleas to set in the trend. Higher education was curtailed more and more. Primary education though remained in a shambles.

However, in the years immediately after independence, the society, specially its academia and intelligentsia, still bore perceptible impact of the noble ideals and values that the freedom fighters had held aloft and still nurtured the unfulfilled dreams of the freedom movement. True to its past, education was conceived to be free for all countrymen; society demanded academic freedom for

educationists and educational institutions and government's financial responsibility towards providing education to its people. Teachers were still regarded with respect, as society viewed education, tacitly or explicitly, as a 'man-making, character-building process', teachers giving effect to these. Besides, the rulers needed a vast band of professionals and personnel for country's reconstruction and consolidation agenda. Thus, to begin with, even the then rulers could not ignore these and education was viewed to be broad-based, modern in content, with academic institutions enjoying relative freedom and the state performing its duties of funding and coordinating in a relatively democratic manner. Along with that, the great prestigious victory of Soviet Union over fascism in the second world war and emergence of a strong socialist camp, bore heavily upon the capitalist countries, including ours. They were forced to put up at least a semblance of 'welfare state' that stood for its people. While the socialist countries guaranteed 'free and quality education' up to the highest level, these capitalist states could not simply cast aside their responsibility of providing education to their respective people. This was reflected even in the then commission reports. The Kothari Commission (1962-64) thus commented: It is undesirable to regard fees as a source of revenue. They are the most regressive form of taxation, fall more heavily on the poor classes of society and act as an anti-egalitarian force... We recommend therefore, that the country should gradually work towards a stage when all education should be tuition free."

Background: NPE '86

But crisis of world capitalism, as also that of its Indian counterpart, showed no signs of respite and resolution. With industries facing recession, the capitalists-imperialists groped for alternative means and fields for investment; they found it in service sectors: education, health, power and such others. Shedding apart advocacy of welfare state, they threw open those service sectors to private capital. Identifying that these service sectors were essential for people's life and that people will be compelled to pay high for these services, as far as they can, the ruling capitalists

unleashed an all-out attempt for commercialization and privatization of service sectors. At the same time, they needed an orchestrated campaign to set up and orient public opinion in favour of their strategies.

It was at this stage, that Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress government in our country introduced the National Policy on Education (NPE) in 1986, in its service to the capitalists. It brought forth a fundamental change in outlook and approach to education. Robbed of its role as a 'man-making, character-building process', education was categorized as a 'unique investment', visualizing, as mentioned above, it will surely fetch profit as people would have to spend to their limits for decent and effective upbringing of their children. Ideas were carefully floated that 'in face of dearth of funds, government must be relieved of its responsibility of providing education to its people', 'instead there should be public private partnership (PPP)', 'it is the duty and responsibility of parents to provide for education of their children', or 'students should pay, for the education they seek for' and so on. All the commissions and committees set up by the union or different state governments in the following years gave effect to the policy and the campaign introduced with the NPE '86. In result, floodgates were opened for unbridled fee-hike at all stages of formal education, for introduction of self-financing courses and institutions, thus making a smooth way to private capitals. Parallel to it, government participation and grants were reduced which, in turn, led to closure of many institutions from resource-crunch, or to handing over of those fund-starved educational institutions to private investors.

Notwithstanding all palliatives, crisis of capitalism went on aggravating. In the meantime, eroded from within by the modern revisionism, the socialist camp had faced debacle; Soviet Union, east European socialist countries and finally Socialist China went through counter-revolution bringing back capitalism in those countries. Taking advantage of this collapse of the socialist camp, crisis-ridden capitalism-imperialism thrust the burden of globalization on the world with a view to bringing the entire global market into its fold and

thereby to finding refuge and remedy to their market crisis. To give effect to it, the capitalists stepped up their privatization and liberalization, that is commercialization, thereby opening up state-owned public sectors of even basic industries to private capital, and national markets of particularly smaller countries to finance capital of foreign imperialists. It was, however, soon evident that the crisis was not even to be lessened with all these panacea. As globalization increased strength and consolidation of capital, reaped heaps of profit for capitalists, added to the list of billionaires even in countries like India and China, it simply meant manifold intensification of capitalist exploitation of the masses, pushing them to more and more impoverishment and deprivation; even the global market could not put an end to the ever-increasing market crisis thus leading to stagnation and unprecedented industrial recession even in most advanced capitalist-imperialist countries; each attempt towards revival and rejuvenation of economy by this or that means simply ended in burst of 'bubble economy'. On the other hand, with the collapse of the socialist camp, desperately aggressive capitalists-imperialists threw aside all talks and measures of social welfare, and to suppress any voice of dissent, cruelly curbed democratic rights of people earned through years of struggle.

All-out nature of attack was evident further from the stand the judiciary took. Within a decade, even in 1992, the Supreme Court had issued its landmark verdict in the Mohini Jain versus the State of Karnataka case that banned any sort of auctioning of seats of educational institutions against capitation fees. Within a decade, the same apex court of the country, changed its stand. In the TMA Pai Foundation and others versus the State of Karnataka case in 2002, it even passed a verdict to suggest that the fee structure must take into account the total expenditure of a particular course and a 'reasonable surplus' for 'future development' of the institution etc. It was thus apparent that education system and processes were being set to the pattern, methods and outlook of capitalist market economy, run entirely with profit motive. Such a

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NKC brand of expansion only expands education market

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verdict virtually legalized capitation fee as also charging fees to the tune of several lakhs of rupees and donations of similar amounts for seats marked as management quota, NRI quota etc.

Such commercialization-privatization was, and is, never restricted to professional or higher education; it swamped education right from the pre-primary and primary level itself to all later ones. Rapid proliferation of private English medium schools, exorbitant fee hike, extortion of money from students on the plea of 'development' fund etc., appointing teachers on contract in place of permanent teachers and involvement of giant corporations like Infosys, Wipro and Reddys' Labs, etc into education processes in the name of 'community participation' and self-sustenance are some of the more common manifestations.

GATS & NKC

Profit hunger of capitalists is ever insatiable and ruthless. So, whatever scope of making profits over and above these privatization-commercialization measures remained there, capitalists planned for using them up in full. As a part of their globalization agenda and prescribed by the WTO (World Trade Organization), the capitalists-imperialists have formulated the GATS (General Agreement on Trade in Services). It formulates a set of rules and code of conduct agreed upon by the WTO member countries for all-out open global trade in education, or for that matter other service sectors. For the sake of it, a Council for Trade in Services (CTS) has been formed under the WTO. It has suggested several modes of learning process involving all the stages of formal education from primary to higher. These modes include cross border open and distance education using postal service, radio, TV, Internet facilities, ISD calls, etc., traveling abroad for studies by 'consumers' meaning students, founding of colleges and universities by multinational corporations, the 'providers' in the GATS terms, through memorandum of understanding (MOU), exchange and assignments of expert

personnel to other countries. Such modes will only help the rich; common poorer people of the country like India can hardly use means like radio, TV, Internet facilities, ISD calls etc., or can travel abroad for higher studies. On the other hand, the GATS has set other major conditions like the right to terminate any time the service of the employed persons; reducing or abolishing retirement benefits; abolition of the right to association and movement for students and teachers, called 'consumers' and 'facilitators' respectively; ensuring that laws of land do not stand against using education for trade under the GATS and so on, all sure to go against the interests of common students and teachers.

The Indian rulers, which have become a junior partner of the world capitalist-imperialist system, have now set out to act by the provisions of this GATS. It is thus liberalizing Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) in education and to facilitate the process, is bringing a 'Foreign Education Providers (Regulation for Entry and Operation) Bill' in parliament. Side by side, to build up public opinion, proponents of FDI in higher education whip up a campaign that investment by reputed foreign universities and opening their branches in India will help students have the service of these much-sought-after institutions at a much cheaper rate than what they would have to spend abroad to have the same service from the original institutions.

What these proponents cleverly conceal are the facts that leading educational institutes and universities of different countries like Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, Princeton, etc. never earned their fame and stature as seats of learning, on account of any commercial investment. It was the devotion for and commitment towards cultivation of knowledge and cause of spreading education, which prompted the galaxy of great scientists, social thinkers, and historians and others to undertake prolonged selfless struggle over decades for learning-teaching-research even in face of thousand and one hardship and obstacle in course of their struggle they often had to face, which they could

overcome only by virtue of their commitment. Such devotion and commitment can never be expected from even the fore-ranking members of staff in branch counterparts or campuses of traditionally renowned institutions in other countries, built on liberal flow of FDI and with a commercial outlook. Those campuses can at best be used to pull resources and 'profit' and to produce bands of so-called foreign degree-holders who earn their degree paying the price commensurate with the respective 'brand name' of the institution. Whether they develop into real knowledgeable persons committed to the cause of cultivation and dissemination of knowledge, is no concern for either party involved in the process, teachers, students or research workers.

NKC speaks of expansion of education, paves the road for expansion of education market

The NKC recommendations in higher education comprise a comprehensive design for overhauling the system of education with a view to facilitating implementation of GATS at that stage. We have already mentioned that these recommendations appear to make amends for the earlier criticisms against and flaws in the education policies of the country. There are words of 'expansion' of education and 'inclusion' of larger section of people, instead of curtailment. Lamenting for low percentage of enrolments in higher education, the NKC proposes for raising the number of universities from about 350 to around 1500 over the country as a longer-term goal, 20-30 new national universities in the medium term, 4 or 5 to begin with and in the short run. However, the new colleges and universities would be 'self-financing' and 'self-sustaining'. The NKC tries carefully and cunningly to guard the motive. It says: "NKC does not encourage setting up for-profit educational institutions by private players. However in three professions - engineering, medicine and management- there has been a de facto privatization of education so that two-thirds to three-fourths of the seats are in private institutions. But private investment in university education, where more than 70 per

cent of our students study, is almost negligible. It is essential to stimulate private investment in higher education as a means of extending educational opportunities. It might be possible to leverage public funding, especially in the form of land grants, to attract more (not-for-profit) private investment. In principle, it should be possible to set up new institutions in higher education, not just more IITs and IIMs but also more universities, as public-private partnerships where the government provides the land and the private sector provides the finances". (NKC: Notes on Higher Education). Obviously, merit would not be the major criterion for admission to these institutions; rather it would be open to 'all' those 'who can afford to pay'. It should not be overlooked that poverty has been ever-spreading in independent India. Eking out of means to arrange for a square meal a day still allures millions. It is thus difficult, rather often out of question, for millions belonging to lower middle class and poor families to get education and earn merit for admission to higher classes. To them, higher education, thus, remains a dream unfulfilled. So, while earlier curtailment meant scope for the rich and upper middle class who were supposedly 'deserving' for higher education, the present 'expansion', too, means the same, leaving scope for those who can afford to pay high fees. Furthermore the NKC 'believes' that top-ranking 'foreign universities should have an opportunity to come to India' and openly pleads for 'a level playing field for private investment in education as means of extending educational opportunities' with the same rules applicable to both domestic and foreign institutions and for 'appropriate policies for the entry of foreign institutions into India and promotion of Indian institutions abroad'. All this means that in the name of 'overhaul' and 'reform' the NKC aims at all-out privatization and commercialization of higher education with Indian and foreign capital having their full play.

Drive for commercialization is also apparent from the recommendation for 'rationalization of fees', raising them up to 100% in all government funded universities.

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NKC stands for excellence for a few, doom for the lot

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While the Kothari Commission of yester years desired the entire formal education to be tuition free, lately the judiciary has prepared the ground by suggesting that the fee structure must take into account the total expenditure of a particular course and a 'reasonable surplus' for 'future development' of the institution. The NKC, in its turn, strongly considers fees as a major source of revenue and works on a balance sheet of how much foreign exchange revenue may be earned by allowing foreign institutions and promoting domestic private institutions. It further recommends that fees should meet at least 20 per cent of the total expenditure in universities. In addition, fees need to be adjusted every two years through price indexation. Besides, the NKC suggests that "Most public universities are sitting on a large reservoir of untapped resources in the form of land. It should be possible to draw up norms and parameters for universities to use their available land as a source of finance". What else could be more hollow and false than the NKC claim that it does not stand for 'for-profit' education? If and when university fees are adjusted with price-index, where will they soar up to with fast rising price index and inflation already hovering around two-digit values?

In addition to these recommendations, the NKC recommends more government spending on education in terms of GDP and scholarships for socially and economically disadvantaged students, who can avail of that opportunity only after they find entry after paying the required high fees. So, judged on the totality of recommendations, the NKC assurance of scholarships for poorer students is another hollow feat to be used as a camouflage for the real. In fact, exclusion will be the general rule and inclusion will be the exception if these recommendations are implemented.

NKC stands for excellence for a handful few and autonomy chained by all-powerful regulatory body

The NKC argues "some of our universities are much too large, for ensuring academic standards and providing good governance"; it adds that the prevailing "system of affiliated colleges for undergraduate

education, which may have been appropriate fifty years ago, is neither adequate nor appropriate at this juncture, let alone for the future. It is cumbersome to manage. And it is difficult to ensure minimal academic standards across the board". So it favours disaffiliation of colleges from universities, in the name of granting so-called autonomous status or even university status to a set of certain colleges. What the NKC remains silent about is that such disaffiliation has nothing to do with autonomy in its truest sense for which the doyens of the Indian modern education stood for. They wanted the government to bear the financial responsibility, without interfering into framing of syllabi, methods of examination and such other academic issues. It was the concern of academicians to decide upon the content and time frame or duration of any course, examination pattern and system of evaluation of students, fee structure and such others. Affiliation of colleges to this or that university was a system that evolved historically with the introduction of modern education in the country. Colleges affiliated to a university, followed the academic pattern set by the academicians associated with that university and, even if remotely placed, could thus take the advantage of their experience and wisdom. Thus students of even an unassuming, rather backward college did have the chance of studying under the same system as those of renowned colleges and could have the degree whose worth was determined on the reputation and standing of the university to which his or her college was affiliated. The NKC brushes aside this time-tested system as "neither adequate nor appropriate at this juncture" without actually pointing out why it is so. If there were administrative problems in management, it should have sought for measures from the authorities to overcome them. But instead it strikes at affiliation itself and thereby creates two kinds of institutions with two levels of standard. One of these two kinds would include a few elitist ones blessed with the NKC favour for excellence, necessary funds and such other privileges. So, it recommends "creation of 50 National Universities that can provide education of the highest standard", which can be established

'by the government, or by a private sponsoring body' and with 'autonomy to set student fee levels' tapping other resources for generating funds such as industry collaboration, overseas operations, commercial use of universities land, buildings and laboratories. Even "Exceptions need to be made in existing income tax laws to encourage large endowments". Besides, colleges 'with a proven record of academic excellence and efficient administrative functioning can be granted autonomy in terms of academic self-governance'.

The vast number of other colleges called 'community colleges' would provide both vocational education and formal education and would focus on promoting 'job-oriented ... and life-coping' 'holistic' education and 'eligibility for employment to the disadvantaged'. Just imagine! Deprived of the NKC favour, these colleges are supposed to make ordinary, 'disadvantaged' students, as the NKC itself terms them, equipped with 'holistic education' and 'eligibility for employment'.

In regard to the question of achieving excellence, we must also refer to another vital issue of teacher-student ratio. It is no denial a fact, that the ratio is miserably low, much below its optimum value in most of our common colleges, even universities, that is required for a teacher to pay proper attention to students. Added to it, thousands of teaching posts lie vacant, with the government or the private authorities least inclined to fill them up. With privatization, the institutions are becoming further eager to work with minimum teaching force, that too on 'contracts', to make it 'cost-effective'. Obviously such miserably poor strength of teacher-force kept in charge of 'expanding' student community will never be enough to ensure any kind of excellence, whatsoever.

Besides, the NKC views excellence, of course the market-oriented excellence, to be attained merely through methods like semester system of courses and evaluation, so-called course credits and competition among the colleges and universities etc. It clearly ignores the fact that excellence is attained only through struggle with devotion and commitment to the cause of education as the motive and not by means of some technical

brush-ups. Also, for excellence, the NKC prefers salary differentials within and between universities, along with other means of attracting and retaining talented faculty members that is teachers. The method smacks of similarity with the method of rating performance in private limited company. In educational institutions it will only lead to awkward professional competition, mistrust and jealousy and finally ego-clashes and disunity among teachers, only to be exploited by the authority.

On questions like 'freedom', 'autonomy' or 'regulation', the NKC holds : "The existing regulatory framework ... is not conducive to innovation or creativity in higher education". So it suggests setting of an Independent Regulatory Authority for Higher Education (IRAHE), as per the prescriptions of GATS. It would be the only agency that would be authorized to accord degree granting power to higher education institutions. It would also be responsible for monitoring standards and settling disputes. It should also be thought of as the authority for licensing accreditation agencies. It 'must be at an arm's-length from the government'. Thus the IRAHE with its rights and privileges will emerge as an all-powerful body, which will have the power to dictate terms to all universities and colleges in accordance with the GATS provisions, while making all other bodies like UGC, AICTE, MCI and BCI useless and defunct.

A few words need be added here on the system of accreditation. Already, following the recommendations of the Birla-Ambani Committee (2000) working in line with the NPE'86, the Union government has made accreditation by NAAC (National Assessment and Accreditation Council) virtually compulsory for colleges and universities. The effect has been two-fold. Institutions providing market-oriented, self-financed courses are favoured with higher NAAC ratings. And secondly, different state governments decide to close down those with lower ratings. The latter are usually the institutions with poorer resources and cater to the needs of the poor and lower middle class students. For example, Orissa government attempted to close down about 400

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NKC speaks of autonomy, clamps all-powerful regulatory body on education

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colleges; at Ranchi in Jharkhand, a tribal dominated state, one college building was going to be handed over for the purpose of a private 5-star hotel. Naturally such accreditation simply widens discrimination further.

Besides, this system of accreditation of institutions, in conjunction with open advocacy for privatization and commercialization will undermine and impede studies of the general courses, as accreditation demands market-orientation in courses-curricula and conduction of the institution. Such attempts at restructuring education on the pretext of market relevance will only accentuate studies on certain specialized technical or professional skills and information and will obstruct the very process of development of the faculty of reasoning and commitment to society in a student, so crucially important for society, and for sustenance of humanity and human civilization.

NKC-prescribed examination-evaluation process will spell doom for education and students

The NKC does not leave out examination and evaluation pattern. While the system of affiliation to a university offered colleges the scope for an academic unity, a common, centralized examination- evaluation system was meant to judge and evaluate students in an impersonal manner, as far as it was practicable. So, the same question papers were set by setters not related to the students, by way of either teaching or otherwise. A common set of examiners supposed to be unknown to the examinees, checked and evaluated the answer-scripts. Even the examinees sat for their examinations, in centres other than their own college. If there were any difficulties, for instance in keeping the questions secret, or evaluate the scripts properly and in time, or arrange for quick disposal of relevant materials to the centre of examination or to the examiners, it all hinged upon vigilance, efficiency and integrity of the authority. The NKC proposes disaffiliation of colleges and holding of examinations in 'decentralized' manner with teachers themselves setting questions for their own students and

evaluating their scripts. It also proposes regular examinations at small intervals as in semester or trimester systems, instead of holding one single examination at the end of a long one year time. Instead of awarding marks and deciding 'pass-fail' on their basis, the NKC stresses upon 'continuous internal assessment'. Its argument goes like : " The nature of annual examinations at universities in India often stifles the teaching-learning process, because they reward selective and uncritical learning...There is...need to reform this... system so that it tests understanding rather than memory...internal assessment would also foster the analytical and creative abilities of students alike." (Notes on Higher Education, 29.11.2006)

Here again, words ignore the reality and cover up the intention, rather the design. For a vast country as ours, where during the days of freedom struggle, modern education was making its initiation, there was definitely dearth of adequately equipped teachers, question-setters and examiners. Centralized system of examination was the best possible and available means with available human and other resources. On the other hand, for any established, well-lubricated, adequately equipped education system, continuous evaluation of students by their teachers would surely help judge the performance and progress of students in the best possible way. But, on what factors will the success of the system depend?

The prime condition of such a system to succeed is that all concerned, namely the teachers, the students, the administrators, the policy makers and the governments, must have sincere commitment to the cause of cultivation of knowledge and of spreading education to each and every member of the country's population. But presently the education system is viewed in terms of business and profit, as a field of unique investment; knowledge is presented as a commodity; and the process of learning-teaching has been converted to virtually sale and purchase of that commodity. The governments, administrative authorities and even policy makers such as the NKC under discussion, simply accentuate this process by

the measures they take or prescribe . They promote rampant privatization and commercialization, the root of evils; for that they take resort to falsehood as indicated above, turn deaf ear or blind eye to corruptions and malpractices of rackets that carry on leakage of question papers even in public examinations, issuance of fake marksheets, running of coaching centres practicing all sorts of corruptions, and so on. The academic world is already vitiated with nakedly self-centred careerism and opportunism, education has already been pushed out-of-reach of common poorer students, cut-throat competition, insecurity and bleak prospect and lack of ideals among students and even teachers are giving rise to evil and corrupt practices.

Can such an ambience be considered congenial for the system of continuous internal assessment as the only or even major means of evaluation, as the NKC prescribes? Rather, will it not provide the concerned authorities including teachers, with means to exert and abuse their power and position? Nepotism, corruption, blackmailing and such other vile practices no longer remain rare possibilities. Pathetic instance of Patan in Gujarat, where a band of teacher-rogues took advantage of internal assessment and blackmailed poor tribal girl students and raped them at will, speak amply of the sorry state of affairs. It can be very well imagined what the continuous internal assessment system will boil down to.

Hence in this phase of 'open market economy', the governments are talking of 'expansion' of education and 'inclusion' of larger section of people, instead of curtailment, of 'excellence' to make good for fall of standard, which words boil down to 'marketing education' instead of 'restricting' it, in the name of expanding educational opportunities and quality improvement. They trumpet for liberal funding instead of curtailing funds, but what they really do, is to allow indigenous and foreign private investors for establishing 'self-financing' institutions. It will also be done by upgrading many existing colleges, particularly the professional colleges, into 'autonomous colleges' or

'deemed universities' and later hand them over to private and foreign investors. So from the common peoples' viewpoint it will not be expansion of education but expansion of market for private managements in education that will cater to the needs of those who can afford to pay high fees. Quality higher education will recede further away from the poorer section of the population, even the middle class families. Academic freedom, even 'autonomy' will be kept under the scanner and surveillance of an all-powerful regulatory body. Education will head towards the ultimate doom.

Market-orientation destroys very essence of education, facilitates vocationalization

There are still other grave dangers posed by the unbridled and all-out privatization and commercialization let loose by the NKC recommendations. And that lie in their effect on the content and character of education. But before discussing that we should look through certain aspects of the issue.

It has been indisputably established in course of human civilization, that mankind's vast treasure of knowledge can never be a property to be owned privately and used as a tradable commodity for selfish ends. The spectacular edifice of human knowledge has been erected only through efforts and life struggles of countless scientists, philosophers, historians and others. And once erected, knowledge or truth became the property of the entire mankind, each and every member of it enjoying the right and privilege to make use of it for the benefit of individuals and society. The individual is remembered with due reverence for the service he or she has provided, but the treasure of knowledge belongs to the whole mankind. The tyrants, the exploiters of all ages, on the contrary, have tried to gain control over this treasure to fulfill and serve their interests. In the same way, capitalists-imperialists bogged in their present unassailable crisis strive hard, using WTO and TRIPPS under GATS, to impose their sole control over mankind's vast resources of knowledge by totally privatizing and

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People's movement the only means to thwart NKC attack on education

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commercializing education.

As mentioned, all the measures adopted by the governments of our country, particularly since the introduction of the NPE '86, have been directed towards giving effect to this design of the capitalists-imperialists. Thus, in face of acute unemployment and with jobs receding increasingly further beyond reach, the NPE '86 advocated for job-oriented education only as a ploy to confuse students and youth about the root cause of unemployment. While unemployment was rooted in the crisis of the prevailing capitalist system and was irresolvable within this system, it was alleged that general education was not enough and right for finding jobs. It is true that such a campaign could create confusions in a considerable section of students and their guardians, in face of the pressure of ever increasing unemployment. It drove them to opt, rather in a craze, for studying in professional courses. Lured by the illusive prospect of employment and bright future in

industries, students and their guardians often went beyond their means to pay astronomical fees for the professional courses. Private managements successfully exploited this artificially created market, liberally patronized by governments.

At the same time, it struck at the root of nobility and prestige education enjoyed in society. As

socially aware, ethically-culturally sensitive to humanitarian causes. Instead, viewing education simply as a means to find job in an effective way, makes students concerned only about his or her own self-interest, the career. It thus turns them into self-centred robots to whom concern for society, its people around him, its well-being after getting rid of injustice and oppression, in summary

Ghosh, a foremost Marxist thinker of this era and the founder General Secretary of our party, forewarned that with the help of this peculiar fusion of only the technical aspects of science with spiritualism, the capitalist rulers are creating a fertile ground for the growth of fascism which de-humanizes man and obstructs the very growth of human being and civilization.



Part of the audience and the dais at the National Convention against the NKC recommendations held at Delhi University on 13 August by the AIDSO

mentioned, through the contributions of the great characters of our past, society viewed education as a wholesome 'man-making, character-building process', that makes people

human values and ethics all lose appeal.

GATS-NKC attempts to rescue capitalism from crisis only at the cost of people's education

NPE '86 already gave way to such brand of education. Now the NKC standing for all-out privatization and commercialization adds fillip to this trend of robbing education of its soul, in order that the capitalists may sustain their rule based on injustice and discrimination. To free their road of any obstacle, any opposition, the rulers are hell bent upon thwarting cult of true knowledge, that may instill a rational and scientific bent of mind among students. Parallel to such truncated education, there are attempts to revive religious, spiritualistic values, that only promote blind faith and obscurantist ideas, further eroding democratic, secular, scientific and rational bent of mind. The glorious past of the country is being presented in an unhistorical way, belittling its real wealth and contributions and injecting communal venom in its appreciation. The worst instances of such malicious campaign, that accompanies this design of destroying the entire system of a truly modern, democratic, secular and scientific education, are found in ghastly communal pogroms, mindless killings of innocent people and such other crimes. This is the condition, viewing which Comrade Shibdas

So, this is in brief, the fresh and devastating onslaught being mooted by the National Knowledge Commission at the beck and call of the GATS. We have kept ourselves confined mainly to the NKC recommendations on higher education. The picture is no different for other stages or aspects of education. It has thus become imperative for each and every education-loving, democratic minded people, teachers, students and their guardians to realize the danger that looms large before the education of the country, particularly the education, the common people of society aspire for. They must recognize that a doom for education does not only destroy their own life and livelihood. Education being the backbone of society, a disaster to education will take its toll on the society itself, on its entire cultural-moral-ethical ambience. It will seriously impede the process of development of humanity and human civilization. Hence they will have to make it a point that this onslaught need be thwarted with the help of a massive people's movement developed countrywide and embracing the entire mass of education-loving people of the land. It must be lifted to become a fight for truth, a fight for humanity that can not be defeated even by the cunning, powerful rulers and their henchman standing on the quicksand of falsehood and discrimination.

AIDYO represented at International youth camp in Turkey

Comrade B R Manjunath, President of Karnataka State AIDYO represented the organization at the International Youth Camp held at Dikili near the city of Ismir in Turkey from 26 August to 2 September 2008. The Camp was organized by the Federation of Socialist Youth Associations (SGDF), Turkey.

Apart from delegates from Turkey and India, 500-odd delegates from revolutionary youth organizations from Russia, Azerbaijan, Chile, Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan and Greece (KOE) participated in the Camp. Apart from these countries, youth organizations of Nepal, Georgia, Croatia, Western Sahara and others had sent their messages since they were unable to attend due to visa problems. Many youth of Turkish origin studying in the UK, France, Germany, Spain, etc. also joined the Camp. There were exhaustive discussions on the several problems and challenges being faced by students and youth in various countries. They also shared and exchanged their experiences of the

various forms of struggles undertaken by students and youth in countries over the world.

Comrade BR Manjunath described the situation in India beset with problems like an increasing rate of unemployment, imperialist cultural invasion, privatization and commercialization of education, problems and atrocities faced by the women's community, and presented the analysis and views of the AIDYO about all these problems. The nationwide growth of movements led by the AIDYO and its fraternal organizations and the successes achieved impressed the delegates. In particular, the struggles in Nandigram and Singur where the poor peasants had risen in protest against land acquisition by the capitalists drew their attention and admiration. A session was devoted exclusively for the Nandigram movement and there was a documentary video show of the movement. At the end of the session the youth raised thunderous slogans like 'Nandigram is not just a place, but an unforgettable message', 'Long live Nandigram'.

Assam State SUCI expresses grave concern at sinister move to brand genuine Indian citizens as foreign nationals and at attempts to incite communal flare up

SUCI, Assam State Committee, in course of a statement issued on August 22, 2008 expressed grave concern at the fresh outbreak of communal killing in different parts of the state and the well-orchestrated vicious campaign with palpable communal overtone unleashed by the arch communal, chauvinist and parochial forces centring round the question of influx of Bangladeshi nationals that has triggered increasing attack and extreme harassment of common people belonging to minority community. Right from the day the stir against infiltration of foreign nationals broke out in the late seventies, SUCI has been insisting that in order to remove all apprehensions, every necessary and appropriate step should be taken to not only stop but leave no scope at all for clandestine infiltration of foreign nationals, not only from Bangladesh but from any other foreign country. SUCI also urged that there ought to be speedy and time bound programme for detection of all genuine foreign nationals taking 25 March 1971 as the cut off date strictly in accordance with the provisions of law and jurisprudence. One of the fundamental tenets of jurisprudence, the statement recalled, has been that in the process of discharge of justice, burden of proof lies with the prosecution. The Assam State SUCI noted with disquiet and anguish that whereas the repealed IMDT Act in the main was framed based upon this fundamental judicial principle, the Foreigners Act 1946 was not formulated adhering to this vital governing principle. The Assam State SUCI, therefore, strongly demanded immediate restoration of this just, fundamental legal provision contained in the IMDT Act for identifying the foreign nationals so that no genuine Indian citizen is unnecessarily harassed or meted out rough or discriminatory treatment and proper justice to the prosecuted persons is ensured. It also urged the government to ensure perfect administrative neutrality in discharge of its duties and appealed to all concerned to see that no kind of bias creeps in at any stage of the process as due justice can not be delivered if the process does not remain free from any

preconceived notion or predisposition.

Reiterating its firm stand state that while there can be no difference in so far as detection of genuine foreign nationals in this way and their deportation in accordance with international laws, conventions and custom, are concerned, Assam State SUCI drew attention of all right thinking people of the state to the fact that exploiting to the hilt people's passionate desire for detection and deportation of genuine foreign nationals, the arch communal and chauvinist forces, in furtherance of their communal, racial and parochial design, in pursuit of manifest hatred as well as disaffection towards the state immigrant Muslim population who are very much Indian citizens and above all to serve their narrow electoral interests, are frantically trying to brand as many of them as Bangladeshi infiltrators. The state committee of the Party expressed serious concern at this nefarious design and emphasized that if such pernicious acts are not foiled and nipped in the bud, it would surely prove to be a boomerang. Instead of detection and deportation of genuine foreign nationals through appropriate judicial process in a calm and cool atmosphere, such designed activities would give rise to worst form of communal polarization resulting ultimately in the rash of communal bloodbath. Guided by the great and unassailable lesson provided by the history that adherence to correct process, methodology and justness alone can guarantee fulfillment of just goals, state committee of the SUCI fervently appealed to all sections of the people of Assam to be on guard against those, who with ulterior motive are out to mislead, misguide and misdirect them on the issue of detection and deportation of genuine foreign nationals resorting to foul means and engineer a communal flare up. The state committee of the party called upon all right thinking persons to maintain communal peace and harmony ignoring and rejecting all provocations and incitement. It also urged the government to maintain a strict vigil and quell any communal inflammation with a firm hand.

Red Salute Comrade Mohan Singh

Comrade Mohan Singh, one of the senior-most organizers of the party in Bellary district, Karnataka, died of a road accident on 3 August last. He was initiated into the party as a school-going boy during the days Party was in a formative stage in Bellary. Very unassuming in nature, Comrade Singh was a silent dedicated worker. Silent but analytical, smiling yet serious, he was a very valuable comrade. He was known for his good command over various fields of science as well



as literature but never boasted of the same. He developed this cult in himself to contribute to the collective knowledge of the party. He never considered any work small and carried out even the simplest task to satisfaction and most happily He was a beloved of all comrades right from the leaders to new workers. His modesty and firm conviction to revolution attracted everybody. His untimely demise under most tragic circumstances has been a great loss to the party, class and mass struggles.

A memorial meeting was held on 10 August at Gandhi Bhavan in Bellary, Comrade K. Radhakrishna, Karnataka State Secretary and other state and district leaders paid glowing tribute to the memory of the departed comrade and called upon all to take due lesson from his revolutionary life.

Mao-Zedong memorial meeting in Patna

Under the auspices of Bihar State Committee of SUCI, a meeting of party workers-supporters-sympathizers in memory of Comrade Mao-Zedong, the great proletarian leader and the architect of the Chinese Revolution, was held at the party office premises in Patna on 9 September, 2008. Comrade Arun Singh, member, Bihar State Committee, was the main speaker. In course of his analytical speech, Comrade Singh showed how Comrade Mao creatively applied the science of Marxism-Leninism in the concrete situation of a backward country

like China and accomplished proletarian revolution to free the Chinese toiling masses from semi-feudal semi-colonial exploitation. In the process, Comrade Mao emerged as a giant communist leader and enriched the treasure house of Marxism-Leninism. It is because of deviation from Mao's revolutionary line that counter-revolution has succeeded in China. Comrade Singh expressed confidence that with the revival of proletarian revolutionary movement in China based on Mao's thoughts, the tide would turn again to make scientific socialism victorious.

Flood relief work in Bihar



One of the flood relief camps organized jointly by the SUCI and the Medical Service Centre at Radhepura in Supoul district of Bihar

SUCI observes All India Protest Day on Singur

In the last issue of Proletarian Era, we published photographs of demonstrations held by SUCI in different states on 5 September, the all-India Protest Day in support of the struggling peasants of Singur, West Bengal. Here we include a few more reports.

Responding to the call of the Central Committee of the party, the Delhi State organizing Committee of SUCI, staged a dharna on 5 September 2008, at Jantar Mantar demanding return of the forcefully acquired land at gun-point by the ruling CPI (M) government for the Tatas at Singur and against the SEZ policy of the Central and State Governments. The Dharna was addressed by Sumit Chakravarty, Chief Editor, The Mainstream, Suhas Borker, Film Maker & Social Activist, Prof. Narendra Sharma, Convener, All India Save Education Committee, Delhi, Comrade Satyawana, Secretary, SUCI,

Haryana State Committee, Comrade Pratap Samal, Secretary, Delhi State organizing Committee of the Party, Comrades Pran Sharma, and R.K. Sharma, both members of Delhi State organizing Committee.

The speakers explained the background and the course of the movement of the Singur peasants that include a sit-in-demonstration in front of the Tata Motors factory site in Singur under the leadership of a struggle committee of peasants cutting across different political parties. The sit-in demonstration was participated by lakhs of people from all over the State in support and solidarity with the struggling peasants. Alarmed at peasants' determination, the Tatas are blackmailing the people of West Bengal by threatening to withdraw from the state. The CPI (M) together with the business houses is slandering the movement in different ways.

The speakers also criticized the SEZ policy of the Central Government, which was faithfully implemented by the CPI (M) in Nandigram. They explained how the CPI (M) as an agent of the monopoly houses, was exposed in the eyes of the democratic minded people for its fascist handling of the Nandigram people's struggle. But the very same CPI (M) has not taken the lesson that ultimately the people's movements can not be defeated through torture or the might of the State, provided it is consciously organized. The speakers called upon all the well meaning people to support the legitimate movement of the people of Singur and come forward to register their support.

Sultanpur (U.P.) District committee of SUCI organised a demonstration at the D.M. Office at the Sultanpur Collectrate on 5th September 2008, on the struggle of peasants of Singur. At Tikoniya Park SUCI activists assembled and raised slogans in support of the struggling peasants of Singur, demanding handing over back to them their land which was forcibly occupied for the proposed Nano motor-car factory of Tata. They also condemned the high-handed attitude of the Tatas threatening the peasants as also the people of the state that they would shift their Nano Factory elsewhere. SUCI activists also condemned the

anti-people, anti-peasants policies of the W.B. Government, working in collusion with the Tatas. SUCI then held a procession through the city to reach the Collectrate and to hand over a memorandum to the DM there. The memorandum was addressed to the President of India. The programme was led by Comrades Jagannath Verma, Secretary, Sultanpur District Committee, Usha Singh, Ram Murti Maurya, Ram Chandra Maurya and others.

As part of the all India day on Singur, the State Organizing Committee SUCI Andhra Pradesh burnt an effigy of Chief Minister of West Bengal Mr. Buddhadeb Bhattacharya was burnt at Nizam College gate, Basheerbagh, Hyderabad (AP), demanding giving back the land forcefully grabbed from the farmers at Singur.

Addressing the gathering Comrade K. Sridhar, Secretary, State Organizing Committee, SUCI, reiterated the demand of returning the forcibly grabbed land to the farmers. He pointed out how the CPI(M) led government with its Marxist cloak is actually working for the TATAs, the Birlas & the Salems against the interest of peasants and workers. He hailed the heroic struggle of Singur peasants and urged upon all sections of exploited people to come forward in support of this just struggle.

Government employees protest against recommendations of 6th Pay Commission

As a step towards intensifying movement against retrograde recommendations of 6th Pay Commission, a massive demonstration of government employees at the call of Joint Platform of Action was held on Parliament Street, Delhi on 19 September 2008. The meeting was presided over by Shri Dipak Dholakia., all India Working President of JPA. Shri A. K. Mazumdar, JPA, All India General Secretary, Shri R. B. Pandey National Convener of National Public Health Alliance, Smt. Anjali Jetli, Delhi State Vice-President and Nursing leader, Shri Prem Chand, Delhi Secretary of JPA and other leaders of various unions and associations addressed the gathering. The speakers demanded that the Rate of Patient Care Allowance be doubled, Government employees be given fair wage as per the recommendation of 15th Indian Labour Conference which is not less than Rs. 21000/-; minimum – maximum ratio should not be more than 1:8. Abolition and outsourcing in the name of promotion of Group D employees must not be done. There must not be any reduction of total

strength in Group 'C'. Recommendations of Performance Related Incentive Scheme (PRIS) and Variable Annual Increment must be withdrawn. Recommendations regarding withdrawal of bonus, overtime allowance, proposal of Medical Insurance in lieu of CGHS benefits and the suggestion of abolition of PROMOTION inherent in the scheme of Pay Band must be rejected. The reflection of pay hike in HRA and other allowances must be given effect from 01-01-2006. There should be no privatization and corporatisation of government departments. No Government Office should be closed down. There should be no downsizing in any form whatsoever, no contract or casual employment as well as outsourcing of jobs of perennial nature. There should not be any change in existing Pension and New Pension Scheme must be withdrawn unconditionally.

The leaders warned the Government that if the anti-employee recommendations of the Pay Commission were not taken back and the issues raised by JPA not duly addressed, a strong nation wide movement will be launched.

AIDSO candidates victorious in student union election in M.S. University, Baroda

All India DSO, the only left student organization in M.S. University, Baroda (Vadodara), a premier university of Gujarat, contested the Students' Union election there highlighting students' problems, and particularly problems of education, the country now faces. The campaign also highlighted the anti-student and anti-education policies reflected in the recent recommendations of the National Knowledge Commission.

On this campaign, the AIDSO registered a glorious victory. It won the post of Faculty General Secretary in Faculty of Education and Psychology. There are 13 faculties with a student strength of

about 35,000 students in M.S. University, faculty of Education and Psychology being one of these. This is the first time that AIDSO won the Faculty General Secretary post in that University. AIDSO Candidate Renu Rajput, a B.Ed student, was the victorious candidate.

Apart from this faculty, AIDSO also got two class representatives post in Law and Science Faculties. Pavan Maurya, LLB Student from Law Faculty and Swosti Sangita, M.Sc.(Geology) student from Science Faculty were victorious. AIDSO also fielded Amit Vishwakarma, Secretary of the Baroda Unit of AIDSO for the post of University General Secretary. He got 470 votes.

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