

Topic: ONE NATION, ONE EDUCATION BOARD

Humans, the most evolved species, have eventually developed a very sophisticated way of verbal communication through the use of words. Thus language is the most advanced form of communication.

India is a Land of Diversity. In the words of Raj Thackrey, *“India is like Europe. This means there is one currency and numerous languages and cultures. This is “Europe” made up of various cultures.”*

There is no single language that the whole of the nation speaks or a single language that has been declared as the “National Language.” India has a total of 122 major languages and 1599 other languages. Hindi and English are used by the central government while each state has the freedom to choose its official language. A total of twenty two languages have been declared as the scheduled languages. It can be correctly quoted for India and Indians that **“Languages connect us and break down barriers when we unite to nurture the best in us and help each other succeed.”**

At present the language problem has become so acute that it has posed a major threat to national integration. Most often linguistic tensions are being manifested in the borders which are bilingual.

In 2011, a three-judge Bench led by Justice J.M. Panchal, in an appeal filed by the Tamil Nadu government, had held that a common syllabus, especially for children aged between six and 14, and would achieve the “code of common culture”.

Six years apart, the Supreme Court has now come up with self-contradictory views on common syllabus and curriculum in schools.

The judgment had even viewed the idea of a common syllabus as a precursor to the Uniform Civil Code and an antidote to fanaticism and divisiveness.

On December 8, 2017, a three-judge Bench led by the Chief Justice dismissed a petition filed by primary school teacher Neeta Upadhyay for **‘one nation, one education board’** to end disparity in knowledge dissemination during the formative years of a child.

Ms. Upadhyay said that the current education under multiple boards did not provide equal opportunity to all. The fundamental right to free and compulsory education under Article 21A includes a common education system where the “rich and the poor are educated under one roof”.

“Otherwise, chasm that has been created between rich and poor, reign of terror that has set in, events of looting and snatching that have started and crime against women that has taken the form of open threats will continue to rise and expand,” Ms. Upadhyay argued.

The judgment had held that the “right of a child should not be restricted only to free and compulsory education, but should be extended to have quality education without any discrimination on the ground of their economic, social and cultural background”.

“Separate education facilities are inherently unequal and violate the doctrine of equality,” Justice B.S. Chauhan, who authored the judgment for the Court, had referred to the iconic U.S. case of Brown versus Board of Education, which held that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional.



Topic
Introduction

The Court had held that a “uniform education system would achieve the code of common culture, removal of disparity, depletion of discriminatory values in human relations”.

To increase employability of graduates, we need uniformity in school education.

It is admission season, and, once again, cries for quotas and reservations fill the air as students — at every level from playschool upwards all the way to PhD programs — scramble to get a place in the more sought-after courses and institutions in India’s ferociously competitive education system.

The twin issues of accessibility and affordability combine into a deadly double whammy for parents struggling to educate their children. For the poor, access to affordable (free or subsidized) government education is limited due to the absence of anything like the requisite physical and soft infrastructure.

For those who can afford to pay, the challenge of finding a seat for their wards in one of the sought-after schools leads to ridiculous scenes of hysterical parents protesting in the streets and plethora of court cases every year.

At the higher education level, the situation gets even worse. The Centre has targeted to achieve a 30% enrolment level in higher education by 2020. If one in every three eligible students who have completed high school actually wants to join college in three years from now, we need to create 40 million university seats.

Despite the spectacular growth in private sector education — the education sector had gross revenues of Rs. 7,80,000 crore as of last fiscal and is growing at a clip of 20% per year according to research by India Ratings — we are still millions of seats short of the target.

Last week, we saw an interesting new wrinkle added to the whole quota debate. In Tamil Nadu, the State government decreed that as much as 85% of engineering and medical college seats in the State will be reserved for students who had completed the qualifying exam — the XII standard or equivalent certificate — under the State’s own board of secondary education. The move followed a dismal showing by State-board students in the National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test for admission to engineering/medical degree programmes.

Simultaneously, in Delhi — where Delhi University college seats, particularly the top-rated ones, are arguably the world’s most difficult to get into, with cut-offs in some colleges approaching a ridiculous 100% — the Aam Aadmi Party government passed a resolution in the State Assembly demanding that Delhi University reserve 80% of its seats for students from Delhi.

The simple solution, of course, is to create adequate seats so that everybody who wants a degree can get one. Like all simple solutions, this is not as simple as it appears.

So, some filters will have to be applied in sieving out candidates, which is why these quota and reservation demands pop up in the first place. The trouble is that our education system, whether at the school or college level, has never been able to convince stakeholders that it performs its human resource development function of equipping a candidate with the appropriate skills and knowledge uniformly enough, so that potential employers/admissions officers do not need to apply additional filters.

They simply do not buy the argument that anyone with a high school degree is good enough to become a doctor or engineer or manager or lawyer, which is why we have an alphabet soup of other filtration exams like NEET, JEE, CAT, CLAT and so on.

Using the eminent domain powers of the state to ramrod quotas is simply not going to work in such a situation. The only workable solution is to ensure uniformity in the quality of education, at least at the school level to start with.

This means, for instance, going for a nationwide CBSE system, instead of State boards of varying quality. The UPA government had even proposed this. Perhaps, like many of its other good ideas like Aadhaar, DBT and MGNREGA, the Modi government can pick it up and execute it.

The events got me thinking about something that I have always lamented about – Why is it not possible for us to have a uniform system of education – One Board, One Nation? Here we are talking in terms of equanimity of curriculum, pedagogy, concepts, and skills. In reality, if one were to consider – the content does not change much in any one subject from one board to the other. The student's cognitive levels are all same – their ability to absorb is the same, had they been exposed to the same levels prior to the teaching- learning process. So can we as a nation, have one uniform board, which equips students with the necessary skills, concept and content? So we can at least begin this process at the school level – wherein there is one curriculum through the nation.

So will this not bring in all students at the same level of learning? This can avoid the pressures of additional exams like the NEET, CLAT, JEE, GRE. Similar to the GST and ADHAR, a uniform board across the Nation is the need of the hour.

Read further:

<https://rightlog.in/2017/07/educational-boards-unification-01/>

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/lucknow/activists-moot-one-nation-one-education-system/story-1vtnYLF6IDfEcoHj8a1rAO.html>

<http://www.dnaindia.com/academy/comment-one-nation-one-education-board-2269108>