

MINUTES OF 54TH CABE MEETING

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

CENTRAL ADVISORY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The 54th meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education was held under the chairpersonship of **Shri Arjun Singh, Union Minister for Human Resource Development** on 6th and 7th September 2005. The meeting was attended by Dr. Anbumani Ramdoss, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Smt. Meira Kumar, Minister of Social Justice and Empowerment, Dr. Bhalchandra Mungekar, Member (Education) Planning Commission, as also Ministers of Education from the different states in the country. A complete list of members who participated in the meeting is attached.

Smt. Kumud Bansal, Secretary to Government, Literacy and Elementary Education welcomed the members. She stated that the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 has been widely discussed across the length and breath of the country. NCF - 2005 is based on the guiding principles of linking knowledge to life outside the school; ensuring that learning is shifted away from rote methods; enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks and making examinations more flexible. She expressed confidence that the discussion in CABE would help develop road maps to implementation. She also thanked the State Governments for the concentrated efforts to consider and analyze the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 and convey their comments. With this she requested Shri Arjun Singh, Minister for Human Resource Development to make his opening remarks.

At this point Ministers representing the States of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh registered their protest and walked out of the meeting.

Shri Arjun Singh, Union Minister for Human Resource Development informed members that NCERT's Governing Council had approved the NCF – 2005 that morning. He recalled the CABE meeting held on 7th June in which the document was first presented, wherein it was decided that there is need for a nation wide discussion on the NCF – 2005. He also recalled Prof Yash Pal's statement that despite many innovations, the document is not perfect because 'nothing can be perfect'. Shri Arjun Singh stated

that during the deliberations in the Governing Council many States had welcomed the draft NCF – 2005; many others felt that more time and discussion is needed, and several states gave suggestions for incorporation. He informed members that a decision was taken in the Governing Council to bring finality to the discussion, because a larger task of syllabus preparation and textbook development lies ahead. Therefore, he had suggested in the meeting of the Governing Council that all comments and suggestions made during the meeting would become part of the documentation of NCF – 2005 and be made available to groups preparing the syllabi and textbooks. Referring to the walk out by some Ministers, he stated that the ritual of boycott had to be gone through. On the whole the NCF – 2005 is lucid and elaborate in its broad contours. It is a framework; a framework cannot become substance. In our collective wisdom, he said, we must enable people who are qualified to frame syllabi and develop textbooks to proceed with that task. He added that the Government is committed to introducing the new syllabi and textbooks at the commencement of the next academic year. Shri Arjun Singh referred to the mandate given to NCERT through the letter dated 21.7.2005 written by the Ministry of Human Resources Development. Quoting from the letter he said:

“The NCFSE should always be in harmony with the idea of India as enshrined in its Constitution. It could be worthwhile to keep reminding everyone associated with the review of the following words in which the noble idea of India has been given in the Preamble to the Constitution:

WE, THE PEOPLE OF INDIA, having solemnly resolved to constitute

**India into a SOVEREIGN SOCIALIST SECULAR DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC and to secure to all its citizens:**

JUSTICE, social, economic and political

LIBERTY of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship

EQUALITY of status and of opportunity

And to promote among them all

**FRATERNITY assuring the dignity of the individual and the unity and
integrity of the Nation...”**

He added that the Preamble to the Constitution of India conveys the essence of the task required. Prof. Yash Pal and the hundreds of persons involved in the task have worked

within this broad constitutional framework. The textbooks will also be developed in tune with constitutional values. His Government would not succumb to any pressure to include or exclude anything that is contrary to the Constitutional values. With this he opened the NCF – 2005 for presentation and discussion.

Prof Anil Sadgopal intervened at this point to draw attention to the proceedings of the CABE meeting held on 14th and 15th July 2005, stating that the minutes were not recorded in adequate detail.

Shri Sudeep Banerjee, Secretary, Secondary and Higher Education, clarified that the present CABE meeting is in continuation of the meeting of 7th June (not 14/15 July 2005). The minutes of the meeting of 14/15th July will be taken up when follow up on that meeting is taken up.

Shri Sudeep Banerjee presented the proceedings of the meeting of the 7th June for confirmation (agenda 1). In this connection Shri Vinod Raina clarified that he had made an elaborate explanation on the closure of the HSTP in Madhya Pradesh, a programme that was based on the principles enunciated in NCF – 2005, to show that the assumption made in the NCF – 2005 that these principles are universally acceptable is not justified. This point, he said, was not reflected in the minutes of the meeting dated 7th June 2005. Shri Balwant alias Bal Apte stated that his name was not recorded in the list of members who participated in the meeting, and requested that this is done. With these two additions the minutes of the meeting dated 7th June 2005 were confirmed.

Shri Sudeep Banerjee also drew attention to the action taken report on the minutes of the meeting dated 7th June 2005 (agenda 2). The action taken was noted.

With this **Prof Yash Pal** made his opening statement on the NCF – 2005. He stated that the document placed before the CABE is a revised, improved version of the earlier document. The document could, undoubtedly, be further improved, maybe even written differently; it is, nonetheless, even in its present state an important document. He said India claims to be a Knowledge society; by the year 2020 India hopes to be a developed nation. India can launch satellites, her stock markets are doing well and there is hope that India will become a member of the Security Council of the United Nations. But

regretfully, only 9% of India's children pass class XII. The dropout rate is alarmingly high. The examination system drives children to suicide. Many argue that tension is a necessary price to pay for success; but that argument is specious and difficult to buy. Children are burdened to rote learn information, which doesn't constitute real knowledge. This situation obtains not only in cities and private schools, but in all parts of the country, rural and semi urban areas, where children suffer, perhaps not so much from the gravitational load of books, but from the load of non-comprehension. Prof Yash Pal regretted the fact that India's genius lies hidden behind the barriers of her formal education system. Referring to the work of Habib Tanvir with the people in Chattisgarh, he stated that the real genius of India should be coupled with the modern to build a society, which can think, reason and understand. He stated that the time to look for inadequacies is over; the time has come to get involved in the task to be done.

Prof Krishna Kumar expressed his pleasure at the privilege of placing the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 before the CABE. He said the document had been put up for nation wide discussion following the decision in the CABE meeting of 7th June 2005. 17 States had conducted workshops and 11 States had sent elaborate reports to the NCERT. He stated that the suggestions made during the CABE meeting of 7th June, state consultation, as also in the meeting of the National Steering Committee were incorporated in the present document. He expressed the hope that the redrafted document would meet the standards and expectations of all members of the CABE.

He elaborated that the National Curriculum Framework addresses the issue of stress, recalling the late Shri RK Narayan's statement in the Rajya Sabha in the early nineties on the travesty of education - education is a source of burden, rather than a source of joy. This statement in the Rajya Sabha led to the constitution of a Committee in 1993 that submitted the Report on *Learning without Burden*. He stated that the real burden lies in our concept of Knowledge which leads to lack of connection with the realities of life and consequently to lack of comprehension. Recalling the NPE and the POA, which stipulates that "National System of Education will be based on a national curricular framework which contains a common core along with other components which are *flexible*", he emphasized the need for flexibility and relevance of curriculum, which is often given short shrift in favour of uniformity.

Prof Krishna Kumar explained some of the changes incorporated in the revised NCF – 2005 following the suggestions made in NCERT's Executive Committee, Governing Council, in the CABE and those received in the process of state consultations, namely that

1. The idea of peace cannot overlook sources of violence and war; consequently the section on peace was revised
2. Environment related concerns run through the document; however, a separate section has been incorporated to show how environment concerns can be infused in the curriculum
3. HIV/AIDS and sex education aspects of health now dealt with
4. In Social Sciences the idea of the national perspective which needs to be balanced with reference to the local, and the idea that Indian History should not be taught in isolation but in reference to developments in other parts of the world was discussed in the meeting of the National Focus Group on Social Sciences and incorporated in the revised document.
5. On the issue of Work and Education, the idea of Vocational Education and Training (VET) was shifted to the section on systemic reform
6. Sections on examination reform and language were also considerably redrafted.

He further stated that apprehensions have been aroused in recent weeks: any document that suggests reforms is likely to invite apprehensions. He said that our apprehensions at change and reform must not come in the way of recognizing that 53% of our children dropout at elementary stage and barely 9% pass class XII. The issue of indigenous knowledge has received attention. In the revised document the possibility of this idea being misinterpreted is reduced. All forms of local knowledge were condemned by Macaulay. We must move beyond Macaulay, he said. NPE requires that the child must relate to local knowledge. How this can be done is a challenge for teacher training. Textbooks cannot be a source of *all* learning. Values that Gandhiji spoke of, and entrepreneurship that President Kalam speaks of, cannot be inculcated through the textbooks as these are conceptualized today. The CABE meeting on 7th June had mandated NCERT to take steps to initiate the preparation of new syllabi and textbooks and these have commenced.

NCF – 2005 has made attempts to consider all the suggestions that were made by the State Governments. There is agreement on several ideas – but complete unanimity is not possible, or expected. For example, on the issue of making class X examination optional, there are some apprehensions. NCF – 2005 is not prescriptive, and State Boards of Examinations must take considered decisions on this issue. NCF - 2005 arouses new ideas and the consultation process through the length and breadth of the country has thrown up exciting debates. He concluded that it is imperative that we let go those rigid parts of the system that uniformize education.

Shri Balwant alias Bal Apte, Member of Parliament referred to the PIL filed in the Supreme Court of India in 2002 on the grounds that NCFSE – 2000 challenged the rubric of secularism. He pointed out that the Supreme Court decided that secularism is not disturbed by NCFSE – 2000. Despite this the Ministry of Human Resource Development had appointed a Committee vide order dated 12th June 2004 to remove 'biased passages' in the history textbooks. He further stated that even before approvals have been accorded to the present NCF – 2005, NCERT has proceeded with the preparation of syllabi and textbooks development. Secondly, he stated that the NCF – 2005 negates the National Policy on Education, approved during the tenure of Shri Rajiv Gandhi's prime ministership. He said, NPE supports value based education¹. Value based education, enunciated in the SB Chawan Committee Report, he said, contemplates that a student should inculcate satya, prem, ahimsa, shanti and dharma. The UNESCO Department of Intercultural Dialogue and Peace, he said, also affirms the need for spiritual convergence. He further suggested that fundamental duties should be an integral part of the curriculum. Sanskrit is a modern Indian Language, and it is illogical to club Sanskrit with Arabic and Persian. He also stated that reference to Yoga is ignored in the present document and religions are kept away. The present document seeks to alienate the next generation from its roots. He however agreed that textbook writing should be decentralized.

Shri PB Sharma stated that India's children perform very well internationally. Standards in Maths and Science should not be reduced, lest our children do not perform as well as

¹ NPE states: "In our culturally plural society, education should foster universal and eternal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people. Such value education should help eliminate obscurantism, religious fanaticism, violent, superstition and fatalism..."

they have hitherto performed in international forums. He suggested the need to create an enabling environment in schools, and to reduce the burden of the school bag by improving the quality of education. He also emphasized the need to provide more teachers in schools.

Shri Praful Bidwai stated that the critique of NCFSE – 2000 should be much sharper in the present document. He also read out and a circulated a note suggesting alterations and additions in the NCF – 2005.

Minister of Education, Uttar Pradesh stated that there is no need to introduce sex education in schools. Sex education appears to have been introduced under the pretext of addressing issues of HIV/ AIDS. He said that Indian society is not ready for sex education, and its introduction in schools will have serious consequences. He stated that he agrees with the need to introduce activity-based learning, health education, yoga, peace, but not sex education.

Prof. Zoya Hasan stated that while there has been a major public debate on the NCF – 2005, there has been no discussion on the syllabus, which is a critical component of the process of curriculum reform. There is need for greater discussion on the syllabus before embarking on textbook development. Secondly, she stated that the separation of religion and education needs to be vigorously foregrounded in the document. Thirdly, strong emphasis on pedagogy may erode content and the disciplinary orientation of disciplines. Fourthly, she stated that NCF – 2005 argues for a normative post-development approach, which avoids questions of poverty, social privilege, communal biases and inequalities. Fifthly, she argued that NCF - 2005 favours plurality of textbooks, which she stated already, exists in excess of the demands of plurality. The plurality permitted by the system is abused to inculcate divisiveness, prejudice and hatred. The diversity of textual material is potentially enriching, at the same time, educational material must be produced within the framework of the constitution and in accordance with processes that are transparent. Finally she proposed that a Standing committee of the CAGE be constituted to monitor the progress of syllabus preparation.

Shri Ramdoss, Minister for Health and Family Welfare quoted from the Kothari Commission report that the 'destiny of India is shaped in her classroom'. He stated that if

people of India had public health awareness and knowledge, 60% of India's health budget could be reduced. He emphasized the need to strengthen Yoga and make it mandatory in schools. It is scientifically proven, he said, that Yoga increases learning capacity by 20%. Physical fitness is important and all children should play everyday. The incidence of juvenile diabetes, he said, is growing in alarming proportions. HIV/AIDS has become a serious problem in the country. Children must be told about this – 15 year olds are highly susceptible and constitute a high-risk category because of the influence of media. He suggested consultation with NACO in the formulation of the curriculum. Referring to the statement made by Minister of Education, Uttar Pradesh, on sex education, he stated that sex education is critical if we have to control our population growth. In the context of environment education, he focused on the need to inculcate in children the need for water conservation, rainwater harvesting, etc. He appreciated the idea of a burden-less curriculum and stated that mugging and rote learning must be avoided. He also focused on the need to vocationalise education, citing the example of Tamil Nadu, which has 55 lakh graduates enrolled in employment exchanges.

By **Mithu Alur** congratulated the Minister for Human Resource Development for reviving the C.A.B.E. She pointed out however, that children with special needs continue to be neglected. She referred to the recent statement made in Parliament by the Minister making a commitment to zero rejection of children, and said that the concept of zero rejection must be reflected in the NCF – 2005. She also stated that disabled children have also been given short shrift in the section on ECCE. She advocated a change in approach in dealing with children with disability. The old model views children with disability as dysfunctional. The new model is a social model, which provides equal opportunities to these children. The new model views the problem as emanating not from the child, but from the environment. Within the new social model, the NCF – 2005 should address Inclusive Education. She further stated that the NCF – 2005 does not mention key principles teachers must know to prevent dropouts. She suggested that the principle of connecting knowledge to life outside the school, enunciated in the document, needs elaboration. There is need for content specific, culturally relevant and ecologically appropriate curriculum, differentiated to suit the learning pace of each child. She also stated that the NCF – 2005 has an academic, esoteric bent to it. It must be simplified.

Vinod Raina suggested the need to adopt a business like approach to the NCF – 2005. If there is a causal link between the NCF – 2005 and the syllabus, textbooks, then the spirit of the document should be endorsed; as to its form, he stated, suggestions could be incorporated. He referred to the peculiar reaction on the issue of local knowledge and critical pedagogy from some of the more progressive areas as also the argument that this document is seen in the postmodern framework. He linked the approach in the NCF – 2005 to the labour schools in the Soviet Union, which recognized the fatigue of children and hence advocated the need for introducing activities in the classroom, and questioned how this could be seen to be post modern. He added that every person has his/her share of common sense and good sense. The task is to combine common sense and good sense. NCF – 2005 should have been a set of principles. For example, plurality, as a principle, is a complex problem. The caste system, social class is plurality. Critical pedagogy, he said, is the process of purging and assimilation. The document should have set forth plurality as a principle and clarified how critical pedagogy could be applied to identify what need purging and what need assimilation. Similarly, human rights, secularism are complex problems. Ultimately, he said, there is need for a set of principles to guide the teacher. He welcomed the additions to the section on constructivism, but asked if there were multiple interpretations, which interpretation would be valid. Reference points, he said, should be built in explicitly. He also stated that the NCF – 2005 is amenable to academicians, not to a teacher. Finally, he stated that there is an inherent assumption in the document that principles are self-evident and need only to be enunciated. He said the majority of teachers are behaviourists. They are not going to listen merely because the document refers to Bruner, Vygotsky and Piaget. He added that the notion that values spring only from religion should also be contested. There are multiple sources of values, for example Science has values attached to it.

Shri Narendra Singh Bhandari, Minister of Education and Language, Uttaranchal Pradesh stated that Uttaranchal Pradesh would be starting residential Navodaya shalas, which will enable rural children to participate in good quality education. He stated that the burden of examination must be reduced. A semester/trimester system should be introduced to lighten the load. He added that examinations are a means of assessing the work the teacher, and therefore board exams should be instituted in classes V and VIII. Training of teachers is a very critical component of quality education.

Shri Mungekar, Member (Education) Planning Commission, welcomed the document stating that knowledge is a continuous process. No document can be final at any point of time; there is always scope for improvement. Yet, it is necessary to bring discussions and debates to finality in order to proceed further. He appreciated the fact that NCF – 2005 is framed within the objectives of the Constitution of India; it subscribes to diversity, and to unity without subscribing to homogeneity. He stated that it is time to emphasize the value of composite culture to be imbibed by children. Patriotism, he said, should not be based on religious or cultural denomination. Indian elite has not looked at caste. Caste diversity is not a sacrosanct element of plurality. The dichotomy is that the education system has operated as the most powerful segment of differentiation and division. On the issue of work and education, he stated that children should not look at manual, physical work with contempt. Contempt has directly descended from the Varna system. On the issue of English and Maths, the manner in which these subjects are taught is the single most important source of tension and stress. Maths and English should be taught upto the level children want it; there should be no compulsion. He added that making class X exam optional would not make education stress-free.

Shri Basudev Barman, Member of Parliament (LS) suggested that issues of environment, sanitation, health and hygiene should be taught through a variety of methods, including stories and activities in classes 1 – III, and through poems and plays in classes IV – V. In order to inculcate civics and values of responsiveness to society there is need for guided instruction from teachers when children are 7 – 8 years of age. A good environment at school and home is critical. Special care needs to be given to children who are first generation learners. Aesthetic, ethical and moral education should be the joint handiwork of school, parents and guardians. Parents and teachers must avoid double speak and must follow the path of truth and service and live their lives in a transparent manner. People are free to follow religion at home, but religion should not be taught in school. Awareness of the value of work can be generated through cleanliness and performance of household chores in unison. For this purpose special orientation needs to be arranged for head teachers, teachers at block level by Directorates of Education, SCERT, IASEs, DIETs involving all government officers, zilla panchayat representatives, and even representatives of Chambers of Commerce. In-service training should be provided to all teachers on a regular basis till they reach 55 years of age. Games and sports, including yoga and swimming should be compulsory for all

children. On the issue of work education, he emphasized the need to utilize local indigenous expertise so that children learn to work with their own hands. Schools should be authorized to arrange out-of-school programmes, invite local experts to interact with children. The time frame for introduction of NCF – 2005 should be fixed after taking into account all aspects of education, including the syllabi and textbooks. Special attention must be paid to the Social Sciences syllabi and textbooks.

Prof. Mrinal Miri responded to Vinod Raina's statement on the inadequacies of the NCF – 2005, namely that the document does not lay down principles in a clear fashion. He asked: is it possible for a document to lay down principles that are universally acceptable? He stated that there is no such thing as 1st principles, which are eternally true. The insistence that we should clearly articulate principles is neither wise, nor possible. Often, it is not possible to put things, which are complex in a simpler form, because in doing so, there is likelihood of distortion. The apprehension that in Social Sciences there is an over emphasis on the epistemological stance is based on the misunderstanding that we cannot talk content without epistemological stance. Social reality is to be presented through specific perspectives. Each perspective may bring to light a perspective that others may conceal. It is crucial to engage in basic debates in the classroom. Every perspective that the child learns at home should be brought into dialogue in the school experience.

Shri L Faleiro, Minister of Education, Goa expressed his appreciation for the NCF – 2005 as also the fact that the process of syllabus and textbooks development to nullify past distortions had been initiated. He said that Goa is the youngest state with fairly good socio-economic and health indicators. But efforts are required for promoting education. Expressing concern about the low pass percentage in Class X board exams in Goa, he said that the state would like to implement NCERT syllabus and textbooks.

Shri RB Kumar, representing stating views of the state said that the state is already practicing three-language formula. English is the medium of education from Class I and Hindi is being taught as third language from Class II. However, there are 11 more languages in Sikkim. Therefore, the state requires support for teaching in those languages from CILFL, CIIL and CHI. He further said that the local knowledge should be given with local wisdom. Central point of peace education is equivalent to value

education, so this should be taught in place of peace education. Teacher education needs to be improved. Professional ethics must find a place in teacher education.

Shri UR Anantmurthy stated that there should be no further debate and discussion; the NCF – 2005 should be accepted. He stated that both the right and left have adopted peculiar stances on the NCF – 2005. He gave the example of Bahurupi Gandhi, in which Gandhi is depicted as a Baniya, then a spinner - evolving from one identity to another. Identity, per se is not contradictory; politics makes it so. In the process of education and through self-critical evaluation, a child may acquire an identity - may discard it to acquire another. He said children should not be bullied into acquiring one identity. He cited the example of his mother and grandfather – it would never occur to them to use the sentence 'I'm an Indian', he said, because they were *unselfconsciously* Indian. On the issue of value education, he stated, the document gives enough spaces for the child to develop an inner life. In a competitive environment the inner life gets decimated. Wordsworth talks of 'wise passiveness' so that one can receive from the world around. If space is provided the child can become a responsive, non-egoistic self. He also raised the issue of private, elite schools. Private, elite schools should also follow principles and make room for children from the neighbourhood, evolve new identities through the neighbourhood school concept. The NCF – 2005 should be accepted in government and by private managements.

Prof Gopal Guru responded to the inadequacies voiced on the NCF -2005, particularly on the Social Sciences Position Paper. He stated that the NCF – 2005 has been criticised as being (i) not sufficiently secular, (ii) not sufficiently nationalist in orientation, (iii) post-modern, (iv) plurality not sufficiently clarified, (v) scholastic values not sufficiently laid down. He clarified that the Position Paper on Social Sciences, written by distinguished members, was written to provide an alternative to the position that obtains for the last 50 years. He said there are no hierarchies in the arrangement of values; there can be not privileging of some values over others. Secularism, he said, has been dominating the curriculum. He made an earnest plea to rotate values – to bring in values of social justice, self respect and self esteem. On the concern raised by Vinod Raina that the document was too scholastic, he stated that this is an old complaint of activists against scholars. But today activists are becoming even more scholastic than scholars.

themselves. Similarly, teachers should also become scholastic. Scholarship should not remain the monopoly of some people in Universities.

Shri Maan Pal Singh, Minister of Education, Uttar Pradesh endorsed the guiding principles enunciated in the NCF – 2005. He stated that it is matter of concern that out of 100 children entering class 1, only 7 children pass class XII. In order to promote girls' education the Government of Uttar Pradesh is providing free education upto graduation. He stated that entrusting non-academic tasks to teachers is affecting the quality of education. He endorsed the introduction of environment education in school, and stated that national integration, inter-communal harmony should be given priority. He did not support the idea of making class X examination optional. He also regretted the fact of excessive school holidays, which he felt should be cut down.

Prof HP Dikshit, Chairman Distance Education Council, IGNOU referred to the idea of two levels of Maths and expressed the apprehension that two alternatives may deprive some children of opportunities. He said Maths is essential knowledge for entering different fields. The pass percentage in Maths is poor because teacher education in Maths was never good. He stated that there should be one level of Maths only. In the International Olympiad of Maths, Indian children perform exceedingly well.

Prof Nigvekar Chairman UGC stated that the NCF – 2005 emphasis on Science Education is not explicit enough. He said that Science and Maths are difficult, but it is very important that children go through these disciplines. He stated that NCF – 2005 makes no mention of scientific temper. This must be cultivated at a young age. He also stated that basic core subjects of Physics and Chemistry are not mentioned.

Shri Kireet Joshi, Chairman ICPR endorsed the document, stating that it is a very professional document. He said that the NCF – 205 is inspired by sense of excitement, wonder and joy. The introduction of four new curricular areas of Work, Art, Health and Peace are very welcome. He stated that the section on peace is a very good analysis of what is normally called value education. He suggested that NCERT develops pedagogy, especially for Social Sciences and Language with a view to reducing the burden. He also stated that teachers must be enthused for transacting the curriculum

Prof GP Deshpande stated that we should not expect complete agreement on all aspects of the document. Disagreement is a good starting point. Differences in opinion and approach emerge from whether we believe that knowledge should be 'given' to children, or whether we believe that children can be enabled/ facilitated to learn by providing learning situations and environments. He said the NCF – 2005 is not a prescriptive document. It puts together ideas that can be used. This document, he said, should not be seen as a response to the immediate past. It is a futuristic document. Education reform should begin immediately, without thinking about it in immediate terms. Further, he stated that work should be undertaken in order to put together the financial implications of implementing the ideas in the document.

Dr R Lalthangliana, Minister of Education, Mizoram emphasized the need for budgetary allocations of 6% of the GDP in order to realize the NCF – 2005. He stated that vocational education should be strengthened. Physical Education should be given focus and adequate funding must be made available. He stated that Navodaya shalas must be sanctioned for districts in Mizoram. He also informed members that the State Government has incorporated environment education in the curriculum in accordance with the directions of the Supreme Court – without increasing curricular load on children. The State Government is in favour of introducing computer science only at secondary stage. He emphasized that teacher availability and infrastructure are necessary pre-conditions for quality education. He congratulated the MHRD for bringing out the NCF - 2005.

Shri Habib Tanvir stated that there is a constant effort to change education to promote selfish interests. There is need to change education to our needs. NCF – 2005 is basically calling for fresh air to move away from career-oriented education. There is a huge disconnect between rural and urban India. Rural children who are not in school are in a sense lucky – they know their traditions, their folklore, their herbs and trees. They know their culture much better compared to the average middle class child. We have not learnt from rural people. Violence has become a way of life. The NCF – 2005 is asking for a sense of wonderland. He pleaded for freedom for the child, saying: *udega to saaton aasmaano ki khabar le aayega. Udaaoge to chhat pe jaakar baith jayega.*

Shri Gupta, Ministry of Tribal Affairs stated that there are more than 700 tribes. Their arts and culture should be included in the curriculum.

Shri Damodar Dongaonkar, Chairman AICTE Health and Physical Education should be treated as separate subjects. He said health, sanitation, nutrition, water and RCH is the fundamental right of every child. Ayurvedic principles should also be incorporated. He suggested that the curriculum need not directly lay stress on sex education and HIV/AIDS, but these topics must be included as a component of family health. Mixing Yoga with physical health, he said, is a wrong concept. Yoga is the science of spirituality; it is not a system of exercises as physical education is. On the issue of entrance examinations, he said the stress removal mechanism should be transparent. He suggested a 2 level testing system – at state and national level. In respect of tribal children, he stated that the dropout rate is very high. The policy on inclusion should study the causes of their dropout. Finally he stated that we live in a multicultural society. Children should be introduced to religions practiced in the country.

Shri JJ Irani: stated that as a document NCF – 2005 reflects a breath of fresh air. The tricky part, he said, will be in the interpretation of its principles at the time of implementation. He expressed satisfaction that the section on teacher education had been revised. He observed that TV and media have very great influences on the young mind. Bollywood images are unreal. Children should be enabled to distinguish the real from the unreal to understand that life is different from what they see on TV.

Prof Anil Sadgopal stated that as a pedagogic document, NCF – 2005 has made progress over all previous curriculum framework documents. It looks at creativity, sources of knowledge that children bring to the classroom, constructivism. Therefore, the NCF – 2005 needs to be commended. He however stated that NCF – 2005 should be situated in the complex reality of the school system in India. The school context should be explicit; the role of the teacher - especially in the context of inordinately high PTR - in construction of knowledge should be clarified, and the availability of resources indicated. He stated that the NCF – 2005 makes no reference to para teachers; without a clear stand on this issue, the document remains incomplete. He further referred to the CAGE reports on Universalisation of Secondary Education, which supported the common school system. He said the NCF – 2005 negates the Kothari Commission Report in its

advocacy for two level examinations at class X. The label of 'lower level course' will attach a stigma to children who opt for the course. He added that the ideas in the document should have been placed in a historical perspective. Without going into the historical perspective, one cannot give a fresh perspective. He stated that the NCFSE – 2000 had also made reference to secularism. But the NCF – 2005 stand on secularism² and the sources of values are not clearly stated. He further stated that NCF – 2005 is inspired by the vision of neo-liberalism, stating that the change from the concept of 'mother tongue' to 'home language' was determined by the need to adhere to neo-liberal policies. In reference to Panchayat Raj, he stated that decentralization is the agenda of the World Bank and we need to exercise caution. He welcomed the idea of a Monitoring Committee.

Prof Ashok Ganguly, Chairman CBSE referred to the many interactive sessions at NCERT that he had participated in, and stated that implementation of the NCF – 2005 will have far reaching effects in changing the school system. The document proposes a curriculum design, as also transaction and evaluation framework. The CBSE has already initiated measures for bringing about flexibility in the examination system, by providing time and space and changing the typology of questions. He said 48% children fail the class X exam annually resulting in a loss of Rs 9000 crores annually. Failure rate even in the compartmental examination is high. Maths, he said, is the main reason for this high failure rate. Children have multiple intelligence. While core competencies in Maths are a must, this does not mean that the system should ignore their intelligence in other areas. On the issue of two levels of courses in Maths and language, he suggested that the courses need not have nomenclature that will make one level inferior to the other. He expressed satisfaction that the section on Science has been sufficiently detailed. He also appreciated the idea of not overloading the child with homework upto class III. He endorsed the NCF – 2005.

Ms Teesta Setalvad stated that the NCF – 2005 does not fulfill the mandate given to it by the MHRD in its letter dated 21st July 2004. She stated that it only emphasizes and

² NCF -2005, sec 1.7 categorically states: The guiding principles...provide the landscape of social values within which we locate our educational aims. The first is a commitment to democracy and values of equality, freedom, concern for others' well being, secularism, respect for human dignity and rights. Education should aim to build a commitment to these values which are based on reason and understanding. The curriculum therefore should provide adequate experience and space for dialogue and discourse in the school to build such a commitment in children."

reemphasizes the curricular burden aspect of this letter, avoiding critical issues of addressing how books emanating from the new curriculum framework can be insulated from distortions. She also referred to the Report submitted by the Delhi Government, which refers to 'boring learning' not 'burdened learning' that children face. She stated that the overemphasis on decentralization and local knowledge is dangerous. It is an open invitation to communal and sectarian schemes and agendas in education. Referring to the guiding principles outlined in the NCF – 2005 she stated that these do not reflect the constitutional right of every child to access quality education based on the principles of egalitarianism, non-discrimination and democracy. The link between access and quality needs to be articulated in the NCF – 2005³. She stated that the processes followed in the CBE vis a vis NCF – 2005 are not conducive to renewal of genuine democracy, exemplified by the fact that NCERT's website does not reflect dissenting voices on NCF – 2005 and that there was no response to her offer to participate in the state consultations in Maharashtra and Gujarat from those state governments. She also questioned the status of Azim Premji Foundation⁴ in the overall scheme of things in conducting workshops, while smaller organizations that petitioned NCERT were not provided support. She urged that all documents, letters, minutes, agendas, dissenting notes related to NCF -2005 be published and displayed on the website.

Shri Sandeep Pandey stated that NCF – 2005 is not deliberating well on examination as well as poor children. He further said that education should be free from examinations. No competition leads to quality. There is a need to change thinking. Text on common school also does not reflect any stand for poor children. There is a need to make solid efforts.

Prof Krishna Kumar: regretted the fact that NCERT and the processes initiated for formulate NCF – 2005, syllabi and textbooks continue to be under suspicion, resulting in a desire to control it. Syllabus and textbook development as parallel processes is not intended to be surreptitious. He referred to the letter dated 2nd May 2005 in which MHRD had indicated that NCERT should bring out textbooks based on the revised curriculum

³ NCF- 2005, sec 1.5 states: "The greatest national challenge for education is to strengthen our participatory democracy and the values enshrined in the Constitution of India. Meeting this challenge implies that we make quality and social justice the central theme of curricular reform"

⁴ Azim Premji Foundation conducted workshops at its own initiative in Bangalore, Jaipur, Bhopal and Kolkatta. The Government of Madhya Pradesh subsequently sent an official communication to treat the findings of the Azim Premji Foundation Workshop as the official report of the Government.

framework in time for the academic year 2006. MHRD had recognized that syllabus and textbook development process is a long, not an overnight, process. NCERT is a professional body mandated to study children, train teachers and develop material. The meaning of curriculum framework will change when we visualize it in the syllabus, as it will evolve when we visualize it in the textbooks, in the classroom, in the examination system, and indeed in life. This is the fundamental chain of educational philosophy. He stated that the MHRD has not interfered with NCERT's institutional autonomy; other sources regretfully have been questioning NCERT's professional integrity. NCERT and NCF – 2005 stands committed to Constitutional values – there need be no doubt on that score. He referred to Prof. GD Deshpande's statement that NCF – 2005 cannot be seen as a response to the immediate past, and reiterated that CIBE must have trust in NCERT's institutional autonomy. Issues relating to globalization, financial resources, common school system are indeed very significant issues. NCERT is a research body, a clearinghouse of ideas, and will commission research on these issues. He stated that NCERT is committed to publishing all the Position Paper contained in the 3 volumes circulated in the meeting of 7th June 2005 to members of the CIBE. It will also bring out a shorter version where ideas are put more succinctly for ready use.

On the issue of language raised by Prof. Anil Sadgopal, he clarified that the matter had been referred to the Chairpersons of the Groups on Teaching of Indian Languages and Teaching of English, who advised that 'Home' language is a better way to address that situation, rather than 'Mother tongue'. He asserted that there is no need to read a conspiracy into this change. The revised version of the NCF – 2005 had been placed before the National Steering Committee on 29th August 2005, in which it was approved. He clarified that Prof. Anil Sadgopal was present in that meeting.

On the issue of class X examinations being made optional, there has been much debate. NCF - 2005 is an important document, but not a prescriptive one. Education is in the concurrent list and the responsibility for introducing this reform in the examination system lies with the State Boards of Examinations.

Since 1920 CIBE has been a forum for discussion of ideas across the board. CIBE has never in its history attempted to impose ideas. NCF – 2005 is not a substitute for the National Policy on Education or the Programme of Action. It is merely an attempt to

update the body of ideas in the country. 48% children fail – their failure should not be seen only in financial terms, but in terms of psychological costs. This should have become apparent with the mounting suicide rates in the country. A system of education that instills depression, rather than hope, needs to be reformed.

On the note circulated by Shri Praful Bidwai, he clarified that the comments made by him in the meeting of 7th June 2005 were very carefully taken into account and the section on Education for Peace revised. As for other ideas, now circulated, he clarified that the story of Sadako is being included in the textbook. NCERT has initiated a training programme on Peace Education. It will also attempt a serious monograph on the subject of Peace.

Regarding the introduction of Maths at two levels, he explained that NCERT has no intention of enhancing disparity. NCERT will study why the idea brings about so much apprehension.

On the issue of local knowledge, he reiterated that NCF – 2005 supports local knowledge mediated through constitutional values and principles. He endorsed Habib Tanvir's statement that a system of education that tends to control is detrimental to children's freedom.

Prof. Yash Pal expressed his gratitude for the comments, criticisms as well as the good words. NCF – 2005, he said, is the work of hundreds of people – the kind of people in the group that are impossible to 'steer'. He stated that he believes firmly in the concept of the common school system. It is under discussion and government must come to a decision on children from various categories being and studying together. We must adapt and contextualize our teaching, reach down and start teaching in tribal languages and then move on to neighborhood languages. Some people claim, he said, that knowledge and constructivism is not genetic. But our genes carry an 'unbearable curiosity' – that of language. He referred to the questions children ask – questions such as 'how is it that my father beats my mother, and not vice versa?' must be addressed in the classroom. The NCF – 2005 attempts to bring about fresh thinking – not to raise doubts about finances and the capability of teachers. He stated that the crucial thing is to enable children to think and understand. If they learn to understand, they can become

impervious to all kinds of fundamentalism. He commended the document – along with all comments and suggestions – for approval.

Shri Arjun Singh, Minister for Human Resource Development: In his concluding remarks Shri Arjun Singh stated that for two days we have been grappling with something that each one of us saw in our own way. That is the essence of a free society. He said constitutional responsibilities cannot be shrugged off. Prof Yash Pai, Prof Krishna Kumar and all the others in the NCERT team are committed to the constitutional mandate. Ultimately, he said, the responsibility for syllabus and textbooks is his as Union Minister, but he has no hesitation or reservations in accepting this responsibility with the support of the people entrusted with this task. He thanked all members for their beliefs, their arguments and their contributions, all of which have gone into enriching the experience.

He said that there is much debate in the air – some loud and clear, some in the form of insinuations. What is or is not in the NCF – 2005 is hardly the point. It has been prepared by a group of dedicated professionals with dedicated effort and will survive because of its innate beliefs.

Everything said in the debate during the CABE will become part of the documentation of NCF – 2005, he said.

Education is a big subject – every parent is an Education Minister in his/her own right. We take note of what they say, because we are a democracy. But there is need to be sparing and respectful of those with whom we do not see eye to eye.

In the next stage – syllabus and textbook preparation – he said that we hope that we do not hear comments of the kind we hear that morning, namely that NCF – 2005 violates the spirit of NPE – 1986 and the values of Rajiv Gandhi. Rajiv Gandhiji was the most liberal of political leaders and had deep and abiding beliefs. His attachment to education was not perfunctory.

The NCF – 2005 conforms to NPE, 1986 in spirit and values. Arguments that it has not said enough about secularism, nationalism, etc are trite.

The second stage is this task is very difficult. To ensure that all the syllabus and textbooks conform to the NCF -2005 and the NPE a Coordination Committee comprising members from CAGE, NCERT and officers from states will be set up. On the apprehension of Ms Teesta Setalvad that there is an attempt to suppress information, he assured her that he could never be guilty of suppressing facts. This characteristic is alien to him.

He stated that road maps to implementation must be drawn out. There is enough freedom of action and enough space for all who want to participate.

With this he proposed that the house adopts the NCF -2005 and mandates NCERT to proceed with syllabus and textbook development. A coordination committee will be put in place to ensure that the textbooks do not have any flaws.

The CAGE approved the NCF – 2005.

Minister for Human Resource Development thanked all members and declared the meeting closed.