

**SUMMARY RECORD OF DISCUSSION OF THE STATE EDUCATION MINISTERS'
CONFERENCE HELD ON 22nd FEBRUARY 2012 AT NEW DELHI**

The Conference of State & UT Education Ministers' was held on 22nd February, 2012 with Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister for Human Resource Development, Communications and IT, Government of India in the chair. Dr. D. Purandeswari, Minister of State for HRD, 23 Ministers of Education representing State Governments and Union Territories, Smt. Anshu Vaish, Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy, Smt. Vibha Puri Das, Secretary, Higher Education, Dr. T. Ramasami, Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, Prof. Sanjay G. Dhande, Director, IIT-Kanpur and senior officials of the Central and State Governments were present.

2. In his opening remarks, Hon'ble HRM, Shri Kapil Sibal emphasized the centrality of State Governments both in policy formulation as also in their effective implementation and said that he has made it point in conducting regular consultations with States since 2009. These interactions have been extremely useful in many of the initiatives and policies, ranging from the Right to Education, continuous and comprehensive evaluation as also in various reforms in higher education. In all, a total of 7 meetings (three of CAGE and four of State Education Ministers) have been held since August, 2009. In this regard, Hon'ble HRM especially recalled the contribution of the Committee of State Education Ministers on Vocational Education headed by Bihar Education Minister, Shri P. K. Shahi, which was constituted in January, 2011 and said that the Report of this Group has been extremely useful in framing the National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF).

3. Before starting agenda-wise discussion, the House condoled the sad demise of Dr. V. S. Acharya, Karnataka Higher Education Minister who passed away very recently on 14th February, 2012.

4. A presentation on the reforms proposed in the entrance examinations for admission to engineering institutions was made by Dr Ramasami and Prof Dhande. States felt that there is a need to limit the multiplicity of entrance examinations thereby reducing stress on students and parents. It was clarified to States that the reform would not, in any way, affect reservations followed by States and the Centre. It was also clarified to North-Eastern States that the special pool made available by the Ministry of Human Resource Development would not be affected. It was clarified to that the States could adopt their own weightages for State Board marks and the National examinations for admission to State-level institutions. Accordingly, States could adopt 100% weightage for State Board results as in the State of Tamil Nadu which would not be disturbed by the proposed arrangement. It was informed that the academic component of the Main and Advanced examinations would be handled by IITs whereas the management and conduct of the examination would be done by CBSE in collaboration with State Boards. It was informed that the IITs and other Central Educational Institutions were proposing to adopt a weightage of 40% for State Board marks. Certain States raised the issue of conduct of examination in regional languages. It was clarified that the examinations would be conducted in English and Hindi and where States intend to use the same examination for admission to State engineering institutions, the examination could be conducted in the regional language of the State too. Issues on validity of scores for two years, involvement of the private engineering institutions and revenue sharing with States were also raised.

5. After detailed deliberations, the proposal for a common national examination with effect from 2013 with weightage to State Board results, normalized on the basis of percentiles formula, was endorsed "in principle" by States. The States of Tamil Nadu, Himachal Pradesh, Odisha, Puducherry and West Bengal sought more time to study the proposal in detail. The States may decide on adopting the same pattern for admission to State-level engineering institutions with appropriate weightages as States may think fit. It was decided that the details for the common examination process would be finalized in the next two months in consultation with States.

6. Presentations were made by the Ministry of HRD and AICTE on the National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVEQF) and concept on Community Colleges. While welcoming the development of NVEQF, the State Education Ministers felt that NVEQF will be an important landmark in improving the skills and employability of the youth of this country. The report of State Education Ministers headed by the Hon'ble Education Minister of Bihar on NVEQF was unanimously accepted. After deliberations, NVEQF and the concept on community colleges was unanimously endorsed by States. The need to have a dialogue at the State level with School Boards, Boards of Technical Education and universities to provide a seamless pathway for vocational students was stressed. It was decided to start 100 Community Colleges on a pilot basis in 2012-13 and then scale up gradually. The States were requested to identify local skill requirements linked to local needs which could form the basis of opening community colleges and forward proposals to the Central Government. It was decided to constitute a Committee of State Education Ministers headed by Smt Archana Chitnis, Hon'ble Minister of School Education of Madhya Pradesh, to finalise the scheme of community colleges.

7. Presentations were made on the quality of Elementary Education as also on Grievance Redressal under the RTE Act. The State Education Ministers agreed that the issue of quality of Elementary Education is a matter of deep concern. While many States have developed state vision of quality and also initiated some curricular reform, but a lot of age-inappropriate material continues to form part of the textbooks and teaching learning material used in classrooms. States were requested to initiate steps to formulate age-appropriate curricula and syllabi in keeping with the principles of section 29 of the RTE Act and NCF-2005. States were also requested to institute CCE from the child's perspective to show progress that the child has made with respect to his or her performance. State Governments were also requested to put in place the Grievance Redressal and appellate mechanism taking into account the guidelines prescribed under the RTE Act.