



GOVERNMENT OF INDIA MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION

THE ROLE OF GOVERNMENT OF INDIA IN EDUCATION

By
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1. One of the major educational controversies today refers to the role of the Government of India in education. *Prima facie* education is a State subject. Entry 11 of the List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution lays down that “education including universities, subject to the provisions of Entries 63, 64, 65 and 66 of List I and Entry 25 of List III” should be a State subject. But there are some other provisions in the Constitution itself which contradict the almost absolute delegation of authority suggested by this entry in the State list; and what is even more significant, the Central Government has since shown an unprecedented activity and interest in the field of education ever since the attainment of independence. In 1947, it appointed a University Commission and has since been engaged in evolving common policies in Higher education such as the introduction of the three-year degree course. This was followed by a Secondary Education Commission which tried to introduce a number of uniform trends in a field where the Centre has had hardly any constitutional authority. No Commission was appointed in the field of Primary education. But the scheme of Basic education was declared to have gone beyond the stage of experimentation and was also adopted as the national pattern at the Elementary stage. The interest of the Central Government in Technical education and scientific research has been too obvious to need any illustration. Besides, an innumerable number of Committees and Reports have tried to iron out an all-India thought, policy and programme in almost every sector of education. Of still greater importance is the revival of the Central grants for education which had been discontinued in 1918-1919. In the period of post-war reconstruction as well as in the first and second Plans, substantial grants were given to the States towards the implementation of a large variety of educational programmes. With the adoption of the technique of Five Year Plans and the creation of the Planning Commission, the real authority to determine policies, priorities and programmes has now passed on from the States to the Centre in most sectors of development; and as a corollary to this major shift in all developmental activity, it is alleged that the educational progress in the States is now more dependent upon the financial allocations and priorities decided at the Centre by the Planning Commission and the Ministry of Education than upon any decision taken by the States at their own level. In short, the trend to centralisation in policy-making in all fields of education has been the most dominating note of this period and it has had hardly any parallel in our educational history except for the brief spell under Lord Curzon.

2. The reactions at the Centre and in the States to these developments have been extremely divergent. On the one hand, the State Governments have grown more and more critical and resentful of this policy. They claim that Education is essentially their preserve; that they understand their educational needs much better than the Centre itself; and that the attempt of the Centre to cut into their sphere has generally done more harm than good to the cause of education. They also plead that Central grants should be placed at the disposal of the States without any strings attached and they are extremely critical of the manner in which their proposals are scrutinised, modified or amended by the Centre while grants are being sanctioned. On the other hand, the Centre also is not happy about the situation. It has assumed the role of dominant partner without having any constitutional authority to compel the States to conform to its dictates and without even having a machinery to report on the implementation of its programmes through the State Governments. Its main complaint is that its genuine desire to help the States is misunderstood as interference; that the reasonable minimum safeguards which are and should be adopted in all financial sanctions are misinterpreted as ‘indirect pressures’ or as ‘leading strings’; that the States do not appreciate the larger interests of education underlying the policies and programmes proposed by it; that the States do not often implement the sanctioned schemes in the manner in which they ought to be implemented; and that it often finds itself helpless to enforce the directives given by it. During the last ten years, therefore, education has developed practically into a ‘joint responsibility’ of the Central and State Governments. But unfortunately, neither partner is satisfied with the

present position and each one of them has a number of charges to make against the other. It would be no exaggeration to say that it is this conflict and contradiction in the present position which is at the root of most of our administrative difficulties and it is for the solution of these troubles that the role of the Government of India in education has to be properly defined as early as possible.

3. In order to pose correctly the complex problems involved in this issue and to arrive at some tentative solutions, it is necessary to consider the problem from three different points of view. The *first* approach would be historical and it would show how the role of the Government of India in education has varied from time to time and why; the *second* would start with the analysis of the relevant constitutional provisions and explain what the Constitution expects the Government of India to do in education; and the *third* would compare and contrast the role of the Government of India in education with that of some other federal governments in the world. It is only in the light of the findings of these three specific studies that it may finally be possible to draw up some kind of a picture of the role of the Government in education as it ought to be.

*The view expressed here are the personal views of the writer.-*Editor*.

II

Historical Survey

(1773-1950)

4. *From 1773 to 1833.*—The Government of India may be said to have been born with the Regulating Act of 1773 which designated the Governor in Council of Bengal as the Governor-General in Council of Bengal and gave him a limited authority over the Governors of Bombay and Madras. This authority was substantially increased by the Pitt's India Act of 1784. But prior to 1833, education in India had made but little progress (it has, in fact, been accepted as a State responsibility only as late as in 1813) and the Governor-General of Bengal did little to control or direct the educational policies of the other parts of India. At this time, therefore, 'education' may be said to have been a 'provincial' matter, subject only to the distant coordinating authority of the Court of Directors in England.

5. *From 1833 to 1870.* —The Charter Act of 1833 introduced a unitary system of Government. Under this arrangement, all revenues were raised in the name of the Central Government and all expenditure needed its approval. The Provincial Governments could not spend even one rupee or create a post, however small, without the approval of the Government of India which also was the only law-making body for the country as a whole. In other words, all executive, financial and legislative authority was exclusively vested in the Central Government and the Provinces merely acted as its agents.

6. As may easily be imagined, education thus became a purely 'Central' subject in 1833 and the entire authority in education and responsibility for it came to be vested in the Government of India. This excessively centralised system, which became more and more inconvenient as education began to expand and the territories of the Company began to grow, remained in force till 1870. As administrative difficulties began to grow, some small powers were delegated to Provincial Governments from time to time and their proposals, as those of the 'authority on the spot', carried great weight. But the character of the system remained unaltered throughout the period and education continued to be a Central subject in every sense of the term.

7. *From 1870 to 1921.*—In 1870, however, Lord Mayo introduced a system of administrative decentralization under which the Provincial Governments were made responsible for all Expenditure on certain services—inclusive of education—and were given, for that purpose, a fixed grant-in-aid and certain sources of revenue. Education thus became a 'provincial subject' for purposes of day-to-day administration. But it has to be remembered that the Central Government still retained large powers of control over it. For instance, both the Central and Provincial Legislatures had concurrent powers to legislate on all educational matters. It was because of this concurrent legislative jurisdiction, that the Government of India could pass the Indian Universities Act in 1904 and could also legislate for the establishment of new universities. Of the new universities established during this period of British India, only one—Lucknow—was established by an Act of the U.P. Legislature. All others—Punjab (1882), Allahabad (1887), Banaras (1915), Patna (1917), Aligarh (1920) and Dacca (1920) were established by the Central Legislature. It was for the same reason that Gokhale could then introduce his Bill for compulsory Primary education in India in the Central legislature, although it failed to pass. In administrative matters, the sanction of the Government of India was needed to the creation of all new posts above a given salary and in 1897, the Indian Educational Service was created and placed in charge of all the important posts in the Provincial

Education Departments. In financial matters, the powers reserved to the Central Government were very wide. Its approval was required to all expenditure above a given figure and to the over-all budget of the Provinces. These large powers of control and supervision were justified on the ground that the Provincial Governments were responsible to the British Parliament through the Government of India. But whatever the cause, the net result of these powers was to make education not so much a 'provincial subject' as a 'concurrent subject' with two reservations: (1) the authority delegated to the Provincial Governments was fairly large; and (2) the interest shown by the Government of India in education was very uneven and depended mostly upon the personalities of the Governor-Generals—a Ripon or a Curzon could make education look almost like a 'Central subject' while, at other times, it became almost a 'provincial subject'.

8. It must also be noted that the interest and authority of the Government of India was not restricted to any particular field, although it naturally showed very great interest in University education. It appointed the Indian Universities Commission of 1917-19. As stated earlier it passed the Indian Universities Act in 1904 and also incorporated most of the new universities created in this field. It sanctioned large grants-in-aid for the improvement of Secondary and Primary education and for the introduction of science teaching. It also reviewed and laid down policies in such matters as the education of girls, or Anglo-Indians and the establishment of schools of art. The Indian Education Commission of 1882 and the Government Resolutions on Educational Policy issued in 1904 and 1913 covered almost every aspect of education. In short, the view taken in this period was that education is a subject of *national* importance and that the Government of India must hold itself responsible for the formulation of over-all educational policy; and this view was particularly strengthened in the period between 1900 and 1921 because educational developments were intimately connected with the growth of nation; consciousness and the struggle for Independence. The main function of a federal government in education—to decide national policies in education—was thus clearly understood and accepted during this period.

9. The need of expert technical advice in education at the Government of India level was also felt during this period and the post of a Director-General of Education—who was to be an educationist and not a civilian and whose duty it was to advise the Government of India on educational matters—was created by Lord Curzon and at the present time, when the very need of an advisory educational service at the Centre is being challenged in certain quarters, it may be well to recall Lord Curzon's defence of the creation of this post :

“My last topic is the desirability of creating a Director General of Education in India. Upon this point I will give my opinions for what they may be worth. To understand the case we must first realise what the existing system and its consequences are. Education is at present a sub-heading of the work of the Home Department, already greatly overstrained. When questions of supreme educational interests are referred to us for decision, we have no expert to guide us, no staff trained to the business, nothing but the precedents recorded in our files to fall back upon. In every other department of scientific knowledge—sanitation, hygiene, forestry, mineralogy, horse-breeding, explosives—the Government possesses expert advisers. In education, the most complex and most momentous of all we have none. We have to rely upon the opinions of officers who are constantly changing, and who may very likely never have had any experience of education in their lives. Let me point to another anomaly. Under the system of decentralisation that has necessarily and, on the whole, rightly be pursued, we have little idea of what is happening in the provinces, until, once every five years, a gentleman comes round, writes for the Government of India the Quinquennial Review, makes all sorts of discoveries of which we know nothing and discloses shortcomings which in hot haste we then proceed to redress. How and why this systemless system has been allowed to survive for all these years it passes my wit to determine. Now that we realise it, let us put an end to it for ever. I do not desire Imperial Education Department, packed with pedagogues, and crusted with officialism. I do not advocate a Minister or Member of Council for Education. I do not want anything that will turn the Universities into a Department

of the State, or fetter the Colleges or Schools with bureaucratic handcuffs. But I do want some one at headquarters who will prevent the Government of India from going wrong, and who will help us to secure that community of principle and of aim without which go drifting about like a deserted bulk on chopping seas. I go further, and say that the appointment of such an officer, provided, that he be himself an expert and an enthusiast, will check the perils of narrowness and pedantry, while his custody of the leading principles of Indian Education will prevent those vagaries of policy and sharp revulsions of action which distract our administration without reforming it. He would not issue orders to the local governments; but he would be to advise the Government of India. Exactly the same want was felt in America, where decentralisation and devotion are even more keenly cherished, and had been carried to greater lengths, than here; and it was met by the creation of a Central Bureau of Education in 1867, which has since then done invaluable work in coordinating the heterogeneous application of common principles. It is for consideration whether such an official in India as I have suggested should, from time to time, summon a representative Committee or Conference, so as to keep in touch with the local jurisdictions, and to harmonise our policy as a whole.*

10. The creation of this post, and the further creation of a separate Education Department in the Government of India in 1910 and the establishment of a Central Bureau of Education in 1915 made it possible to develop some other federal functions in education. For example, it is the duty of Government of India to collect educational data from the Provinces and to publish periodical reviews on the progress of education in the country - the *Clearing House function*. The Indian Education Commission (1882) recommended that the Central Government should bring out Quinquennial Reviews on the progress of education in India. Consequently, the first Quinquennial Review on the progress of education in India was published in 1886-87 and subsequent reviews were brought out in 1891-92, 1896-97, 1901-02, 1905-06, 1911-12, 1916-17 and 1921-22. Annual reviews of education were also published from 1913-14 onwards in all years in which the Quinquennial Reviews were not published.

11. Similarly, it is the duty of a Federal Government to carry out studies in educational problems (as part of its responsibility to provide leadership in educational thought) from time to time and to publish their findings. In particular, it is the responsibility of a Federal Government to study such educational developments in other countries as are likely to be of help in developing education at home. That both these responsibilities were understood, accepted and even fulfilled with a great competence in certain areas, can be seen from the publications issued by the Government of India during this period. Moreover, 'the Government of India also published reports on important events of the period. In short, the research and publications function of the Federal Government was fully accepted and established during the period under review.

12. *The coordinating function* of a Federal Government was also recognised during this period. A reference to that has already been made in the speech of Lord Curzon quoted above. It was he who convened the first Conference of the Directors of Public Instruction in India at Simla in 1901. Then started a regular practice of convening such Conferences for taking a periodical review of educational developments. An Educational Conference was held at Allahabad in 1911 and another Conference of the Directors of Public Instruction was held in 1917. With the passage of time, the need for such coordination was felt all the more keenly and a Central Advisory Board of Education was organized in 1920 with a view to assisting the Provincial Governments with expert advice.

* *Lord Curzon in India*, Vol. II, pp. 54-6.

13. Another function of a Federal Government to be recognised during this period was grant of financial assistance for educational development in the Provinces. Reference has already been made to the financial decentralisation introduced by Lord Mayo in 1870. That system continued to be in force up to 1876-77 when a system of 'shared revenues' was introduced. Under this system, certain revenues were exclusively designated as 'Central', certain others were designated as exclusively 'Provincial'; and the remainder were designated as 'Divided' and their receipts were shared between the Central and Provincial Governments according to an agreed contract which remained in force for a period of five years at a time. Thus the quinquennial contracts were revised in 1882-83, 1886-87, 1891-92 and 1896-97. In 1904, they were declared to be *quasi-permanent*, i.e., not liable to be changed except in a grave emergency, and in 1912, they were declared as *permanent*. It will thus be seen that, under these financial arrangements, the entire expenditure on education was to be borne by the Provincial Governments within the resources allocated to them.

14. As may be easily imagined, these arrangements made the Provincial revenue fairly inelastic and they were unable to keep pace with the rapidly growing commitments of an expanding educational system. The Government of India, therefore, started the practice of giving grants-in-aid to Provincial Governments for educational development over and above the agreed contract arrangements. Thus the fifth important function of the Federal Government, viz., *financial assistance*, also came to be accepted during this period. Fortunately, the period between 1900 and 1921 was a period of boom in world finances and the Government of India had large surpluses in its budgets. It was, therefore, comparatively easy to allocate a share of these surpluses to the Provincial Governments for expenditure on education. The magnitude of these grants was fairly large and it may also be stated that most of them were *specific purpose grants*, i.e. the Government of India decided the developmental policies to be adopted and earmarked the grants given for the implementation of specified approved policies. Only a few of these were *general grants* which were at the disposal of the Provincial Government were they free to spend in any manner they liked.

15. *From 1921 to 1947.*—Between 1870 and 1921, therefore, the day-to-day administration of education was delegated to the Provincial Governments and the Government of India continued to function as a Federal Government with five distinct functions, which came to be recognised, viz., the functions of (1) policy-making, (2) clearing house of information, (3) research and publications, (4) coordination and (5) financial assistance.

16. With the coming into force of the Government of India Act, 1919, however, the position changed completely. The basic idea underlying this Act was that the Government of India should continue to be responsible to the Secretary of State for India that the functions of the Provincial Governments should be divided into two parts— the reserved part being responsible to the Government of India and the transfer being under the control of elected Ministers responsible to the Provincial Legislatures. As a corollary to this decision, it was also agreed that the Government of India have very little or no control over the transferred departments because the Ministers could not be simultaneously responsible to the Government of India as well as to their elected legislatures. These were basic political decisions and it was rather unfortunate that the division of authority in education between the Government of India and the Provincial Governments had to be made on these political considerations and no fundamental educational issues involved. One would have preferred that problems such as the following should have been raised and discussed on this occasion:

(1) To what extent is education a national problem?

- (2) What should be the role of a Federal Government in education? and
- (3) What should be the relationship between the Government of India and provincial Governments in educational matters?

But, unfortunately, all such basic problems were ignored and the only questions discussed from a political angle were the following: —

- (1) Should education be a transferred subject or not? and
- (2) What should be the control which Government of India should have over education?

17. The Montagu-Chelmsford Report suggested that the 'guiding principle should be to include in the transferred list those departments which afford most opportunity for local knowledge and social service, those in which Indians have shown themselves to be keenly interested, those in which mistakes which may occur, though serious, would not be irremediable, and those which stand most in need of development.* In pursuance of this principle, it was but natural to expect that education would be classed as a transferred subject, although one does not feel very happy to be told that mistakes in education are not really very important. It was, therefore, decided that, excepting for the following few reservations, education should be a Provincial subject and transferred to the control of the Indian Ministers:

- (1) The Banaras Hindu University and such other new universities as may be declared to be all-India by the Governor-General-in-Council were excluded on the ground that these institutions were of an all-India character and had better be dealt with by the Government of India itself;
- (2) Colleges for Indian chiefs and educational institutions maintained by the Governor-General-in-Council for the benefit of members of His Majesty's Forces or other public servants, or their children were also excluded on the ground that these institutions ought to be under the direct control of the Government of India; and
- (3) The education of Anglo-Indians and Europeans was treated as a provincial but a *reserved* subject.

The authority to legislate on the following subjects was reserved for the Central legislature, mainly with a view to enabling the Government of India to take suitable action on the report of the Calcutta University Commission: —

- (a) Questions regarding the establishment, constitution and functions of new universities;
- (b) Questions affecting the jurisdiction of any university outside its province; and
- (c) Questions regarding the Calcutta University and the reorganization of Secondary education in Bengal (for a period of five years only after the introduction of the Reforms).

As a corollary to this decision, it was also decided that the Government of India should have no control over education in the Provinces.

18. Thus came about what the Hartog Committee has rightly described as the 'divorce' of the Government of India from education. As could easily be imagined, the results were far from happy. The Central interest in education disappeared almost completely after 1921; and when the need for retrenchment arose in 1923, the first victims were (1) the Education Department of the Government of India which lost its independent existence and was amalgamated with other departments, (2) the Central Advisory Board of Education which was dissolved, and (3)

* *Montagu-Chelmsford Report*, Para. 238.

the Central Bureau of Education which was closed down. The Central grants to the Provinces for educational development also disappeared, even the few powers of legislation reserved under the Act of 1919 were not exercised, and the Government of India did little beyond the clearing house function of publishing the annual and quinquennial reviews of the progress of education in India.

19. The Hartog Committee strongly criticised this unhappy position and said:

“We are of opinion that the divorce of the Government of India from education has been unfortunate; and, holding as we do, that education is essentially a national service, we are of opinion that steps should be taken to consider anew the relation of the Central Government with this subject. We have suggested that the Government of India should serve as a centre of educational experience of the different provinces. But we regard the duties of the Central Government as going beyond that. We cannot accept the view that it should be entirely relieved of all responsibility for the attainment of universal primary education. It may be that some of the provinces, in spite of all efforts, will be unable to provide the funds necessary for that purpose, and the Government of India should, therefore, be constitutionally enabled to make good such financial deficiencies in the interests of India as a whole.”*

It is also interesting to know that, for some time after 1921, there was an outburst of strong provincial feelings and the divorce of the Government of India from education was even welcomed in some quarters. But it did not take the Provincial Governments long to realise that this was a mistake and that something had to be done to create a national agency and machinery for the development of education. It was, therefore, possible to revise the earlier decision and the Government of India revived the Central Advisory Board of Education in 1935; the Central Bureau of Education was also revived, on a recommendation made by the Central Advisory Board of Education, in 1937; and finally the old Education Department was also revived as a Ministry of Education in 1946. The decisions of 1921 were, therefore, very largely undone by 1947.

20. Between 1935 and 1947, therefore, the role of the Government of India in education was again broadened and the several functions which had fallen into disuse between 1923 to 1935 were again resumed. For example, the coordinating function was resumed with great vigour and the Central Advisory Board of Education addressed itself to the study and discussion of almost every field of educational activity and finally prepared, and presented to the nation, a plan for the educational development in India during the next 40 years (1944). The publication function was also resumed and the reconstituted Central Bureau brought out a large number of publications on different aspects of the educational problem in India. The clearing house function was continued and its extent and efficiency were improved. The only functions developed in the earlier period and not resumed now were two—research and financial assistance. In spite of these limitations, however, the larger and more significant role that was now being played by the Government of India was appreciated all over the country; and the general feeling was that this role needed to be further strengthened and extended.

21. This brief historical survey of the role of the Government of India in education will show that it has passed through a number of stages. Prior to 1833, it had hardly any role to play; between 1833 and 1870, education was virtually a Central subject; between 1870 and 1921, the day-to-day administration was vested in Provincial Governments, but the Government of India discharged five distinct functions, *viz.*, the functions of policy-making, clearinghouse of information, research and publications, coordination and financial assistance; between 1921 and 1935, the wheels of the clock were turned back and there was an almost total divorce between education and the Central Government; but fortunately, more progressive policies were adopted after 1935 and the Government of India began to play, once again, a larger and a more fruitful role in education.

* *Report*, p. 346.

III

The Role of the Government of India under the Constitution and in Actual Practice (1950-60)

22. Soon after the attainment of Independence, the problem of the role of the Government of India in education came up for discussion again when the Constitution was being framed. The thinking of the framers of the Constitution on this subject seems to have been influenced by two main considerations: (1) The general model adopted in the U.S.A.; and (2) The recommendations of the Hartog Committee. As in the U.S.A., therefore, a fundamental decision was taken to treat education as a State subject and also to vest the residuary powers in education in the State Governments by making a specific enumeration of powers reserved to the Government of India in this field. Entry 11 of List II of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution, therefore, lays down that “education including universities, subject to the provisions of Entries 63, 64, 65 and 66 of List I and Entry 25 of List III” should be a State subject; and the entries which give authority to the Government of India in education were worded as follows:

List I—Union List

63. The institutions known at the commencement of this Constitution as the Banaras Hindu University, the Aligarh Muslim University and the Delhi University, and any other institution declared by Parliament by law to be an institution of national importance.

64. Institutions for scientific and technical education financed by the Government of India wholly or in part and declared by Parliament by law to be institutions of national importance.

65. Union agencies and institutions for—

(a) professional, vocational or technical training, including the training of police officers; or

(b) the promotion of special studies or research; or

(c) scientific or technical assistance in the investigation or detection of crime.

66. Co-ordination and determination of standards in institutions for Higher education or research and scientific and technical institutions.

List III—Concurrent List

Vocational and technical training of labour.

23. In respect of Primary education, however, the Constitution has made an exception on the lines recommended by the Hartog Committee. The intimate relationship between the provision of a minimum of free and compulsory education for all children and the successful working of a democracy which the Constitution decided to create, is obvious. The Constitution, therefore, makes the following provision as a directive principle of State policy under Part IV:

“45. The State shall endeavour to provide within a period of ten years from the commencement of this Constitution, for free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.”

The expression ‘State’ which occurs in this article is defined in Article 12 to include “the Government and Parliament of India and the Government and the Legislature of each of the States and all local or other authorities within the territory of India or under the control of the Government of India.” The Federal Government is, therefore, under a constitutional obligation to participate in the programme of providing free and compulsory education for all children until they complete the age of 14 years.

24. Similarly, the Constitution also makes it an obligatory responsibility of the Government of India to promote the educational interest of the weaker sections of the people and makes the following provision:

“46. The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.”

The expression “weaker sections of the people”, as used in this article, is general and is *not* restricted to the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes only. For example, it will obviously include women and consequently the development of the education of girls and women becomes a special responsibility of the Government of India. In the same way, the expression also means people living in those areas where economic and cultural development lags behind. This article, therefore, makes it a responsibility of the Government of India to bring about an equalisation of educational opportunities in all parts of the country and, to that end, to give special assistance to the backward areas or States.

25. There is yet another provision in the Constitution which has an indirect but significant bearing upon the role of Government of India in education. Entry in the List III is “Economic and Social Planning” and this implies that the Government of India has a constitutional responsibility for the economic and social development of the country as a whole. Now, it is a well-known sociological principle that economic and social development is intimately connected with education and it is in this sense that the White Paper on Education in the United Kingdom said : “Upon the education given to the children of this country, the future of this country depends.” It is function of the schools to define the objectives of a national economic and social planning although they can, and should, to some extent, direct and influence their definition. But once the objectives of economic and social planning are decided upon by the powers that be, education has a very important role to play in assisting the nation to realise these objectives. For instance, the schools will never be able to decide whether democracy should or should not be a national way of life, whether socialism should or should not be accepted or whether rapid industrialisation should or should not be resorted to. But if the nation were to decide to accept these goals, education will help very greatly in creating and stabilising a social order based on these values by developing the necessary aptitudes, skills and interests in the rising generation. As Brubacher has observed, “schools can complete and consolidate a change decided elsewhere—whether by bullets or by ballots.” The implication is obvious: an authority like the Government of India which is responsible for the economic and social planning of the country, cannot divest itself of a major responsibility in determining corresponding educational policies to realise its economic and social objectives. In spite of the limited direct authority which the Constitution gives to the Government of India, therefore, practices have actually grown up, as a part of the formulation and implementation of the Five Year Plans of the country, under which the major educational policies are being decided; more at the Centre than in the States and the distribution of resources to education in general for the different sectors of education in particular, is becoming more a matter for a decision at the Central level than at the State levels.

26. On a very close examination of all the provisions of the Constitution which have a bearing on education, one cannot help the feeling that there is an element of basic contradiction in the role which the Constitution attempts to assign to the Government of India in education. On the one hand, the Constitution takes the simple stand that education, with all residuary powers, is a state subject *except* for a few special aspects specified within the Constitution itself. But the real trouble starts when the enumeration of these ‘exceptions’

begins. For instance, free and compulsory education is made an obvious exception on account of its cost and significance and Centre is given a specific responsibility for it (Art 45). Similarly, the responsibility of the Centre to equalise educational opportunities between different areas or different sections of society had also to be recognised and duly provided for (Art. 46). Then the responsibility of the Centre to safeguard the cultural interests of the minority and to see that they have adequate facilities to receive at least primary education through their own mother-tongue (Art. 350 A) as well as the special responsibility of the Centre to develop the national language (Art. 351) had also to be provided for. The need for controlled development of Higher education made it necessary to authorize the Centre to coordinate and determine standards in universities and scientific, technical, or research institutions (Entry 66 of List I) and, on account of such factors as high cost, difficulty of securing suitable personnel, the need to obtain foreign assistance, etc. Scientific research, technical education, and the higher types of professional and vocational education had also to be assigned to the Centre (Entries 64 and 65 of List I). Certain educational problems which have a large significance at present such as securing of foreign assistance (in men, materials or money) for education, training of Indians abroad, relationship with international organisations like UNESCO, participation in bilateral or multi-lateral programmes of educational assistance like the Commonwealth Cooperation Scheme or the T. C. M. had also to be left to the Centre under Entries 10 and 12 of List I. Finally, a very powerful means of central control was created when 'Economic and Social Planning' was made a concurrent responsibility (Entry 20 of List III). These exceptions are so large that they circumscribe the State authority for education very materially and make education look more like a 'joint' responsibility than like a State preserve. But this is not all. It has to be remembered that the Constitution was out to create a 'strong' Centre. It has, therefore, rested most of the important resources in the Government of India and the result is that no State has adequate resources of its own to develop education—the costliest of welfare services. Consequently the Centre, which controls the purse-strings, necessarily has the most dominating voice in the overall determination of policies, priorities and programmes. From this point of view, therefore, education begins to look, not only as a joint responsibility, but almost like a 'partnership' in which the Government of India plays the role of the 'Big Brother'. This implied constitutional role of the Government of India in education, therefore, is directly opposed to the explicit role as stated in Entry 11 of List II; and it is this basic contradiction inherent in the Constitutional provisions that leads to most of the controversies on the subject.

27. The situation is further complicated by another consideration. The role of a federal government in education is determined, not so much by the provisions of the Constitution as by conventions and practices evolved through historical developments. Perhaps the finest example of this is the Constitution of the U. S. A. itself. As is well-known, the tradition of local control in education is extremely strong in the U. S. A. and both in history and in law, education is specifically a State subject. The country has consequently developed a highly decentralized system of educational administration and it is worthy of note that the federal constitution does not even contain a reference to 'schools' or 'education'. All these factors should tend to make the role of the U. S. federal government in education extremely weak. But the facts are that federal aid to education is older than the federal constitution; and the present functions and responsibilities of the U. S. federal government in education are far heavier and more important than in several other countries where even the Constitution makes the federal government responsible for education in some way or the other. Today the U. S. Federal Government conducts a U. S. Office of Education which serves as a clearing house of ideas and information. It is also directly responsible for a number of educational programmes such as education for national defence (inclusive of the programme of the schooling of the veterans of the second World War), cooperation with other nations in a

world-wide educational endeavour, in education in union territories and the education of the children of federal employees residing in government reservations, in dependencies and at foreign stations. Almost “every branch of the federal government conducts several educational activities. . . Congress has its Committees on education in both the House and the Senate. The Supreme Court renders its interpretations in the form of decisions, as in the Dartmouth College Case, the MacCollum and Zorach decisions on public schools and religious instruction, the opinions on segregations in schools and colleges, and the interpretations on loyalty legislation affecting educators. Independent federal establishments that furnish educational service include the library of the Congress and its Copyright Office, the Government Printing Office, the Pan-American Union, the Smithsonian Institution, the National Museum, the National Gallery of Art, the National Academy of Sciences, the Commission of Fine Arts, the Atomic Energy Commission and the National Science Foundation. Much educational research is conducted in the Nation’s Capital and sponsored by the Congress of the United States”.* In times of national crises, such as the depression of the 1930’s, the federal government assisted a number of emergency programmes such as the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), National Youth Administration (NYA) Works Progress Administration (WPA), and other agencies. It has also assumed certain responsibilities for the education of backward groups like the Red Indians or Negroes. But above all, it has made large funds available for educational development without any idea of imposing federal control in education. As stated above, this tradition of federal financial assistance’ without ‘federal control’ is very old and goes back to 1785 while the Constitution itself was ratified in 1788. The first grants to education were in terms of land, but very soon money grants were also introduced. The purposes for which federal grants were or are being given include: (1) agricultural education through the development of land-grant colleges with experimental farms and extension services attached; (2) vocational education in Secondary schools; (3) vocational training in distributed occupations; (4) vocational rehabilitation of the handicapped; (5) vocational guidance and placement; etc. All this, it must be said, is being done when the Constitution does not refer to education at all and the legal basis of all this huge and significant activity is the ‘general welfare’ clause in the Constitution.** Hardly any other proof is needed to show that it is the historical background, and not the explicit provisions of the Constitution, that ordinarily determine the actual role of a federal government in education.***

28. Assuming this thesis for the sake of argument, the relevant question is: what have been the developments in Indian education since the adoption of the Constitution and how have they affected the constitutional roles of the Government of India and the State Governments in defining and implementing educational policies? In this context, attention may be specially invited to three significant developments. The first is the growing desire to evolve a national system of education for the country as a whole. This desire found an expression as early as 1906 when the Surat Congress passed a resolution on national education. It was given a great fillip by Mahatma Gandhi in his Non Cooperation Movement of 1921. But at this time, the idea

* *De Young* : Introduction to American Public Education, pp. 32-33.

** We the people of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, insure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defence, *promote general welfare*, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America.

*** In the Australian Constitution also, Education is left to the States, there being no express power of the Commonwealth in this respect, in the Constitution. The Commonwealth has, however, assumed control over education under its powers of grant-in-aid, and under its powers over Defence, Trade and Commerce—*Nicholas*, Australian Constitution, p. 49.

was mainly restricted to few non-official agencies. When the popular Ministries came to power in 1937, the movement also assumed an official form and an attempt was now made to reorient all educational institutions to the concept of national education. This desire naturally became even stronger when popular Governments came to power both in the Centre and the States. Such a desire obviously implies the assumption of a leading role in the formulation and implementation of educational programmes by the Government of India. The same implication has been further strengthened by the growing realization of the fact that education has a *national* significance, that it would be almost fatal to the future of the nation to treat it as purely local, that a group of States each of whom is sovereign to decide its own educational policies may even do more harm than good to national solidarity, and that a Central agency to coordinate and develop a national system of education is inevitable in the present conditions when education is generally backward in all parts of the country and very unevenly developed in its different parts. It is this realisation of the national significance of education and the growing desire to create a national system of education that have led to the unprecedented activity of the Government of India in education during the last ten years and, to that extent, diminished the constitutional responsibility of the States for education.

29. A second development of the period which has also helped to give the Government of India a dominant voice in the formulation of educational policies is the revival of central grants for education to which a reference has already been made. This revival was of course inevitable in the financial and administrative set-up created by the constitution which vests all the best resources in the Centre and makes the States responsible for all the expensive social services. If the surplus resources at the Centre could have been passed to the needy States with little or no controls, the responsibility of the States for the development of education would have been strengthened. But this did not happen. The attempts of the Centre in policy-making often got mixed up with its attempts at financial assistance and thus arose the charge that Central grants are being used as levers to secure acceptance of Central educational policies. That this charge is largely unfounded will be shown later; but one result of the large Central grants for education has to be admitted: they created a situation in which a very large part of the funds needed for educational development came from the Centre through grant-in-aid. Consequently, the States have tended to lose their spirit of self-reliance and self-confidence and are developing a habit of looking up to Delhi for almost everything.

30. The third development of this period which undermined the responsibility of the States for education and this was a development which has done the greatest damage in this sector—came from outside the educational field, *viz.*, the adoption of centralized planning and the creation of the Planning Commission. In the new technique of planning that has now been adopted, more and more decisions tend to be taken at the Centre than in the States. The decision on national targets, the fixation of priorities, the allocation of resources to different sectors of development or even to different programmes within the same sector of development, the allocation of resources to different States, the fixation of the Central assistance to each State—these and such other problems are mainly decided by the Planning Commission and all these affect educational policies so largely that a State Government is very often required, not to prepare an educational plan, but to fill in the blanks or details of a structure whose broad irrevocable outline has already been decided elsewhere. Even the Ministry of Education finds itself in the same weak predicament as the States *vis-a-vis* the Planning Commission. It is these developments that have contributed most to the trend to centralization in education during the last ten years and it is because of them that the responsibility of States for education has been most weakened.

31. It will thus be seen that the inherent contradiction in the constitutional position has been

still further accentuated by the developments of the last ten years and the role of the Centre has now become far more important in actual practice than in the cold print of the Constitution. It must also be remembered that these developments are not necessarily deplored. They are, in fact, welcomed in several quarters and today, a strong section of opinion in the country favours a proposal to amend the Constitution and to make education a concurrent subject. The lack of adequate leadership which is sometimes conspicuous at the State level and the frequently noticed distortion of State educational policies under immediately political or parochial pressures also tend to emphasize and strengthen this viewpoint. This equivocal position has given rise to a bitter controversy regarding the correct role of the federal government in education; and as suggested in the opening paragraphs, this problem will have to be satisfactorily solved at an early date.

IV

The Role of the Federal Government in Education—A Comparative Study

(Australia, Canada, the U. S. A. and the U. S. S. R.)

32. The main object of this paper is to discuss the role of the Government of India in education *as it ought to be*. But before taking up this issue, it would be of advantage to make a brief comparative study of the role of the federal government in education in four selected countries—Australia, Canada, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.

33. *Australia*.—Of all the countries mentioned above, Australia is an example of the weakest role that a federal government can ever play in education. The reasons for this peculiar situation are purely historical. The States of Australia were founded and grew as independent colonies and it was only as late as in 1901 that the federal government was created. By this time, every State had developed its own educational system and such a strong local sentiment and tradition for education had been created that the people did not think it necessary to invest the federal government with any authority in education. Nay, there was even a feeling that federal control and intervention in education would do great harm; and this explains why the Australian Constitution makes no reference to education and why the federal government took no steps for educational development for several years after its formation. The Australian Council for Educational Research began as a voluntary enterprise with a grant from the Carnegie Foundation; and the first attempts to form a federal agency in education were restricted to periodical meetings of the Directors and Ministers of Education of all the States for the discussion of common problems. In 1943, a Universities Commission was established and its functions were defined as follows: (a) to arrange for the training of ex-soldiers in universities or similar institutions; (b) to assist students studying in universities or similar institutions; (c) to advise the Minister with respect to such matters relating to university training and associated matters as are referred to it by the Minister for advice; and (d) to assist other persons, in prescribed cases or classes of cases, to obtain training in universities or similar institutions. It is easy to see that this Universities Commission is quite different from the Indian University Grants Commission. In 1945, the Commonwealth Office of Education was established and its functions were listed as follows: (a) to advise the Minister on matters relating to education; (b) to establish and maintain liaison on matters relating to education, with other countries and with the States; (c) to arrange consultation between Commonwealth authorities concerned with matters relating to education; (d) to undertake research relating to education; (e) to provide statistics and information relating to education required by any Commonwealth authority; (f) to advise the Minister concerning the grant of financial assistance to the States and the other authorities for educational purposes; and (g) such other functions in relation to education as are assigned to it by the Minister.

In spite of the general attitude to keep the federal government out of education as far as possible, certain educational functions had to be taken up. For instance, responsibilities for scientific and industrial research had to be assumed by the federal government and the *Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation* was set up with the object of placing “at the service of producers throughout Australia, both in primary and secondary industries, the highest ability and the most advanced knowledge in order to reduce the cost and increase the volume of production”. As a further development of the same trend, the National Australian University was established at Canberra in 1948. It has been empowered to establish research schools, including a School of Medical Research, a Research School of Physical Science, a Research School of Social Science, and a Research School of Pacific Studies. The University is exclusively engaged in research and the benefit of its work extends to

the whole of Australia and all the countries and Island of the Pacific. Similarly, the federal government has had to assume responsibility for the education of the Maoris. It has also established one model pre-school centre in each State capital and has taken upon itself the responsibility to organise a National Fitness programme.

Some explanation is needed about the power of the federal government to give financial assistance. In the first place, the federal government in Australia has the sole power to levy major taxes and the proceeds are distributed to the States on some general principles which have no relationship with the scale of State expenditures. These financial allocations cannot, therefore, be described as 'grants' or 'assistance' in the proper sense of the term. But off and on, the federal government does give grants for some educational purposes from its own resources. For example, grants were given for the establishment of a School for Aeronautical Engineering in the University of Melbourne and a School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine in the University of Sydney. As an aid to the National Fitness programme, the State Grants (Milk for School Children) Act was passed in 1950 and provision was made for supply of milk to children under 13. The scheme is to be administered by the States and the expenditure is to be reimbursed by the federal government.

34. **Canada.** The role of the Canadian Federal Government in education is similar to that in Australia with two major differences: (1) the problem of linguistic and religious minorities is acute in Canada and needs special safeguards, and (2) it is more influenced by the developments in the U.S.A.

As is well-known, the present Dominion of Canada arose out of a fusion of British and French colonies. The French-speaking people who are mostly Roman Catholics are a minority in the Dominion as a whole but a majority in certain parts such as Quebec and the position of the English-speaking people, who are mostly Protestants, is just the opposite of this. Special safeguards for the interests of minorities had, therefore, to be provided in the federal constitution—the British North America Act of 1867—which lays down that the educational rights enjoyed by the religious minorities prior to their entry into the Dominion shall not be abrogated and, in cases of dispute, provides appeals to the Governor-General-in-Council and to the Privy Council in London. Safeguarding the educational rights of minorities is thus an essential federal responsibility in Canada.

The federal government in Canada is also constitutionally responsible for the education in the territories, for the education of Red Indians and Eskimos, and for training for national defence. As in Australia, scientific and other research has become a federal responsibility and the "National Research Council, in conjunction with the national research laboratories in Ottawa, maintains laboratories, offers scholarships to research students, and pays grants-in-aid for investigations conducted at the University level by Provincial Departments of Education".* As in the U.S.A., Canada also has made large land and money grants for education and assists programmes of vocational and technical education in schools. There is, however, no Federal Ministry or Department of Education, not even an Office of Education as in the U.S.A. or Australia. There is a Dominion Bureau of Statistics which publishes, as one of its multifarious duties, an Annual Survey of Education in Canada. There is also a Canadian Education Association which collects and publishes research studies and generally functions as a clearing house for information and ideas. Recently, the federal government has given financial assistance for increasing staff salaries in universities and it also bears the expenditure on school broadcasts. All things considered, therefore, the general opinion is "that the part played in education by the Dominion Government in Canada is important, but neither extensive nor expending".*

* *Cramer and Browne* : Contemporary Education p. 145.

* *ibid.*, p. 146.

35. *The U.S.A.*—A reference has already been made in paragraph 25 to the different activities of the US Federal Government in education and it is, therefore, only necessary to refer briefly here to the modern trends in the US education which will ultimately result in a substantial increase in the federal participation in educational development.

One of the most important modern trends of thinking in the USA is that education is also a national responsibility and that, whatever justification there may have been for leaving it exclusively to the States in 1788 when the Constitution was framed, the entire position has to be examined afresh in the light of present day requirements. In fact, it is readily pointed out that the position of exclusive State responsibility for education adopted in 1788 has already become obsolete and that the federal government has, during the last hundred and seventy years, developed a number of very significant and large-scale educational functions to meet the demands of changing times. The most pointed example of this is the recent federal effort to scout for talent in scientific studies and to improve science education when it was realised that the USSR was probably outstripping the USA in the development of science; and all that is now urged is that the federal role in education will have to be expanded still further if the USA has to hold her own in the modern world.

Assuming that the federal government shall expand its educational activities, the direction in which this expansion should take place is the next important issue to be discussed in this field. One important area suggested is federal grants for 'general education'—which corresponds to the free and compulsory education visualised in Article 45 of the Indian Constitution—with a view to 'equalising educational opportunities'. In no country of the world has so much research and study been carried out on this problem as in the USA. The work really started with a study of educational facilities provided by the local communities on whom, not very long ago, the entire responsibility for general education was made to rest. It was discovered that the 'educational load' of communities, as shown by the number of children to be educated, varied largely from place to place—rural and agricultural districts generally had more children per 1000 of population than urban and industrialised districts. Secondly, the 'ability' of the communities to support education, as measured by their taxable capacity also showed large variations and very often, a community with a poor 'ability' to support education was required to carry larger 'educational load'. Thirdly, the 'effort' of the community for education, as measured by the percentage of its taxable capacity raised and devoted to education, also showed large variations; and finally, the educational 'achievements' of the different communities showed extreme variations—some communities providing a very high standard of education to all the children, while others could neither enrol all children nor maintain adequate standards in schools. What is worse, it was found that several communities made the greatest 'effort' to provide education and yet, either because of poor 'capacity' or heavy 'educational loads' or both, they could only show a poor standard of 'achievement'. Such disparities are increased rather than decreased by the system of 'matching grants' which give more to the rich than to the poor. To remove all these shortcomings and to provide equality of educational opportunity for all children, which is a fundamental need of democracy, the State Governments have given up the idea of grants-in-aid on the basis of matching funds alone and have supplemented it by a new system of grant-in-aid on the basis of equalization. The process is complicated but it works out somewhat on the following lines: In the first instance, the State prescribes what is called a 'foundation programme' that is to say, a minimum programme below which no community can be allowed to fall. The programme includes targets for enrolments, teachers' salaries, school buildings, provision of health services (inclusive of school meals) and other contingent expenditures so that it is both a qualitative and a quantitative programme. The second step in the process is to

work out the total cost of this programme for each community; and the third step is to determine the 'reasonable' effort which the local community is expected to make. The difference between the total cost of the foundation programme and the reasonable effort expected of the community.

These ideas which have now come to stay at the community level are being naturally extended to the State level and studies made so far have shown that the States themselves exhibit wide variation in 'educational loads', in 'abilities', in 'efforts' to support education and in 'achievements'. Consequently, a demand is now being put forward to the effect that 'equalization of educational opportunity' must be accepted as a Federal responsibility. The federal government, it is said, must lay down a minimum foundation programme for all States and must give equalisation grants where necessary on principles similar to those mentioned above. It is also evident that the support for this concept of federal aid to education is rapidly gaining ground and that it is only a matter of time when federal grants for equalisation of educational opportunities would be generally available.

The main argument against this wholesome and urgent reform is the fear that federal aid to education will necessarily be followed by federal control. There are several thinkers who would rather refuse federal aid than have federal control. But an equally strong argument is now being put forward that federal aid can and should be given without federal control. "According to many fiscal experts," writes De Young, "no sound programme of local or state taxation can be devised and established which will support in every community a school system that meets minimum acceptable standards. Time can never efface the inequalities in natural resources that exist between states. Therefore, unless the federal government participates in the financial support of the schools and the related services the less able areas, several million children in the United States and the outlying territories and possessions will continue to be denied the educational opportunities that should be regarded as their birthright. Most recommendations and recent proposals for federal aid stipulate positively that such grants shall not entail federal control over education. They also specify that the money shall be apportioned to the states, except that for cooperative educational research, which shall be administered by the United States Office of Education. Several decades ago Rutherford B. Hayes, then President of the United States, sent to Congress a message in which he said: "No more fundamental responsibility rests upon Congress than that of devising appropriate measures of financial aid to education, supplemental to local action in the states and territories and in the District of Columbia. This challenge has not yet been adequately met. Federal aid to public education is one of the moral 'musts' of America."*

Apart from this major 'equalisation' aid for general education, the following programmes have also been suggested for federal assistance:

- (1) Scholarships and Fellowships in Higher education to be made available to undergraduate, graduate and professional students (scheme to be administered by the States);
- (2) Scholarships for talented youth in Secondary Schools;
- (3) Improvement of teacher education; and
- (4) Educational experimentation and pilot projects.

36. **The U.S.S.R.**—The three examples given so far are those of countries which have accepted democracy as a way of life and which also have a federal form of government. The

* *De Young*: Introduction to American Public Education, p. 519.

U.S.S.R., on the other hand, is a totalitarian state with a federal form of government and it would be interesting to compare the role of the federal government in education under such a system.

There is no federal Ministry of Education in the U.S.S.R. and this may lead one to suppose that the Soviet Union has a decentralized system of education. Nothing can be farther from the truth; and in no country of the world is education so rigidly controlled by a central authority as in the U.S.S.R. This paradox, therefore, needs some explanation and it can be understood only in terms of Soviet philosophy and administrative techniques.

Under communist philosophy, the most important objective in education is to create the “new Soviet Man” which means a person who is fully imbued with the philosophy of communism and who becomes an efficient and loyal worker of the State in the field to which he may be ultimately assigned. In the Soviet system, therefore, the highest significance is attached to the control of the contents of education and of all the media which influence the thinking of men such as films, radio, television, concert-hall, the theatre, press, books, lecture platform, etc. The determination of the contents of education and the control of all media of communication in such a manner as to produce the one effect desired on the minds of all men becomes, therefore, a responsibility of the highest Soviet authority. It is the authorities at the federal level, therefore, that determine the curricula and methods of instruction to ensure that education is in line with Party and State Policy. Once decided, these curricula and methods are adopted in *every* school in order that a uniform education could be planned and implemented for the nation as a whole. All the different agencies that administer education at lower levels—from the State to the local Soviet—have no control over these fundamental issues and their main responsibility is to provide the necessary facilities to give effect to these Central decisions.

Secondly, the communist philosophy attaches the highest significance to the provision of free and compulsory education for every child and for the provision of Higher education to every gifted child according to his capacity because it is only under such a system that the new Soviet Man can be created. In the planned and centralized economy of the U.S.S.R., therefore, all the necessary funds required for the educational programme are provided from the common financial pool and then allocated to the different subordinate units. In other words, the federal financial resources of the U.S.S.R. are fully pledged for the support of education and for ensuring equality of educational opportunity for all.

It has also to be remembered that the U.S.S.R. is an example of educational control by a single party. Speaking from a purely technical point of view, it is possible to describe the different levels in Soviet educational administration to which specific functions have been allocated by law. But as the Communist Party alone controls every administrative unit from the lowest to the highest, the entire control of education is centralized in the Communist Party and delegations of administrative authority to lower levels makes no difference in this respect.

Subject to these three general observations in which the situation in the U.S.S.R. is not strictly comparable to other countries, the role of the U.S.S.R. federal government in education may be stated as follows :—

(a) There is a Union-Republic Ministry of Higher Education in Moscow (known briefly as the RSFSR Ministry of Higher Education). It exercises supervisory control, including control of general academic standards over *all* Soviet Higher educational institutions and semi-professional schools. It controls teaching staff, curricula, textbooks, enrolment quotas and the assignment of graduates. The Soviet Universities have no autonomy as we understand it—they are merely departments of the State.

(b) The RSFSR Ministry of Higher Education is also charged with the task of anticipating and

meeting *all* needs for man-power in the USSR. In the planned economy that the USSR is trying to build up, it is of the highest importance to train the manpower and to discover the new techniques required for the expanding economy and it is, therefore, an important objective of Soviet Higher education to prepare qualified specialists for all branches of national economy and culture. A very elaborate procedure has also been evolved to discharge this responsibility. Each Ministry works out its requirements of personnel in precise detail and these form an integral part of its development plan. When the national plan is finalised, therefore, it also includes the total requirements of man-power of all categories and it becomes the main object of the educational plan to train and supply this personnel. This most significant task, as stated above, is mainly entrusted to the RSFSR Ministry of Higher Education.

(c) The RSFSR Ministry of Higher Education also conducts an Academy of Pedagogical Sciences and through it, takes a lead in formulating standard study programmes, working out new procedures, setting up criteria for academic attainment, conducting educational experiments or broadcasting their results, etc.

(d) At the federal level, there is also a RSFSR Ministry of Culture which deals mainly with cultural-educational establishments for adults including those concerned with music, art, drama, movies, ballet, public libraries and lectures, houses of culture, museums, rural clubs, etc. In the democratic countries, recreation is a purely private enterprise. In the USSR, it becomes, in keeping with the communist philosophy, a controlled and significant activity of the State and both its content and method, like those of education, are severely controlled from the federal level.

(e) The USSR federal government also performs the usual non-controversial functions assigned to this level, such as (1) collection of statistics and data and (2) arranging for consultations between State Ministries of Education and co-ordinating their activities.

But as may easily be imagined, these consultations do not have much significance. The most effective discussions in policy-making take place at Communist Party Congresses and “resolutions having significance for the general educational development of the whole country are promulgated by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR and the USSR Council of Ministers. Such decrees specify, *inter alia*, the types of schools to be established, basic organisation, academic programmes to be followed and general provisions regarding compulsory education”.*

37. There are, it is true, a number of other federations in the world. But a detailed examination of education in all or even some of them is not very essential to this study. The four States examined here illustrate all the important issues involved and the study of other federations would only repeat them in various combinations.

38. The foregoing studies show, apart from the general characteristics of federal functions in education and the manner of implementing them, a few other interesting principles useful to an examination of the problem under review. To begin with it may be said that Australia stands at one end of the ladder as having the weakest role in education while the USSR stands at the other as having the strongest one while intermediate positions are occupied, in order of an increasingly important role, by Canada and the USA. India, it may be noticed, stands somewhere between the USA and the USSR. Having accepted democracy as a way of life, it would not centralise education under the federal government as has been done in the USSR. The Constitution, therefore, had to adopt a model more in keeping with democratic traditions and it is not surprising that the model of the USA where education is a State subject was selected for the purpose. But no country can solve its problems by mere imitation and the

* U.S. Office of Education : Education in the U.S.S.R.,p.21

general model of the USA had to be modified on account of three reasons: (1) The American Constitution provides for strong State Governments with residuary powers vested in the States while the Indian Constitution wanted to create a strong Centre with residuary powers vested in the Centre; (2) Education in the USA is fully developed and the States are doing so much for it and so well that the need of federal action does not arise in most matters, while in India education has yet to be developed and the States would not be able to do so unless the Centre played a more prominent role of leadership and assistance; and (3) Allowance had to be made for the conditions peculiar to India and for the fact that the role of the federal government in the USA itself was expanding in certain directions which it would be very advantageous for India to copy. These basic considerations, which appear to have led the framers of the Constitution to deviate from the USA model and to endow the Indian federation with more powers and responsibilities in education, are still applicable and it is quite clear that, in the ultimate solution of the problem, India will be found to be holding a position intermediate between the USA and the USSR.

V

The Role of the Government of India in Education—as it is and as it ought to be

39. In view of the studies made in the preceding sections—the historical study in Part II and the comparative study in Part IV—it is now possible to take up the thread of the argument where it was left in Part III—the analysis of the contradictions and conflicts in the existing educational role of the Government of India—and to discuss how this role could be reorganised in the near future.

40. When one examines the role which the Constitution assigns to the federal government in education (or the role which it has now come to play in actual practice) and compares it with the role which other federal governments play in education, or even with the role which the Government of India itself played in the earlier years of our history, one can easily conclude that the following activities may be undoubtedly regarded as “federal functions in education”:

- (1) Educational and cultural relations with other countries;
- (2) The clearing house function of collecting and broadcasting ideas and information;
- (3) The coordinating function of harmonizing the educational activities of the Centre and the States;
- (4) Education in the Union Territories;
- (5) Scientific research;
- (6) Technical education;
- (7) Propagation, development and enrichment of Hindi;
- (8) Preservation and promotion of national culture inclusive of patronage to national *art*;
- (9) Patronage to the study of ancient Indian culture in general and the study of Sanskrit in particular;
- (10) Education of the handicapped;
- (11) Promotion and coordination of educational research;
- (12) Special responsibility for the cultural interests of the minorities;
- (13) Responsibility for the weaker sections of the people *i.e.* the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes;
- (14) Responsibility for strengthening national unity through suitable programmes and

particularly through those of emotional integration;

- (15) Grant of scholarships in an attempt to scout for talent, especially at the University stage;
- (16) Advanced professional and vocational training; and
- (17) Maintenance of Central Institutions or agencies for education; and
- (18) Provision of free and compulsory education up to the age of 14 years.

41. These eighteen functions may be broadly divided into two groups—the exclusive and the concurrent. The first four functions obviously fall in the ‘exclusive’ group since no State Government can perform them. The remaining fourteen functions fall into the ‘concurrent’ group in the sense that every State Government will have to participate in these programmes both on its own initiative and as an agent of the Government of India; but the over-all responsibility for these matters whose national significance is universally recognised would be on the Government of India.

42. ‘A few explanatory remarks are perhaps necessary in support of the federal character of these eleven functions. In so far as *scientific research* and *technical education* (the fifth and sixth functions), are concerned, it may be stated that they have been accepted *as* federal functions everywhere. In India, the Federal responsibility for them is far more significant at the present moment, partly because scientific and Technical education is not adequately developed in the States and partly because a good deal of finance and technical help is being made available by a number of advanced countries to assist educational progress in India. The seventh function, *viz., the development of Hindi*, the national language, is naturally a peculiar and special responsibility of the Government of India. It has hardly any parallels in the western world; but a similar problem has to be faced in Asiatic countries with a multi-lingual population such as Malaya or Philippines. The eighth function, *viz., the preservation and promotion of national culture*, inclusive of patronage to national art, is an important federal function in almost all the countries. In India also, this function was assumed fairly early and its significance has increased very largely in the post-Independence period owing to the disappearance of the Indian Princely order which was well known for its patronage to art. The ninth function, *viz., the study of ancient Indian culture in general and that of Sanskrit in particular*, also becomes a federal responsibility in India. These studies, which have no immediate utilitarian value, are likely to be pushed to the background in the stress of present day demands and it is, therefore, a duty of the federal government to conserve this heritage of centuries and to pass it on to the successive generations as a source of inspiration.

43. The Government of India has also had to assume some responsibilities for *the education of handicapped children*, the tenth function. This is both a philosophic and a practical need. The handicapped children are ‘a weaker section of the people’ and their education and economic improvement thus becomes a responsibility of the federal government also under Article 46 of the Constitution; and even from the strictly practical point of view, it would not be feasible and financially worthwhile for every State Government to provide the necessary trained personnel and costly equipment required for the purpose. The decision of the Government of India to enter this field to do some pioneer work and to assist the State Governments and the voluntary organisations working for this cause has, therefore, been generally welcomed. In fact the demand is for a much larger expansion of the federal activities in this sector than what is visualised at present.

44. The eleventh function, *viz., the promotion and coordination of educational research* is a federal function in Australia and the U.S.S.R. but not in the U.S.A. or Canada where well-organised non-official agencies attend to it. But in the peculiar conditions of India at present, this has to be a federal function. Hardly any effort has been made so far to set up Research Bureau in

the State Education Departments or to develop strong centres for research in the training colleges or University Departments of Education. Very little has been done to collect data on the research that is going on and still less of it is being published. There is not a single journal in the country devoted to educational research and hardly any measures are being taken to count for research talent and to develop research techniques in education. Since the formulation of correct and progressive policies depends very largely on the development of research, it goes without saying that this function would have to receive much more attention in the near future than it has ever had in the past and that early measures will have to be taken to remedy all the deficiencies pointed out above. It is only a vigorous central action in this sector that can achieve these objectives.

45. With regard to the twelfth function, *viz., the special responsibility for the cultural interests of the minorities*, reference has already been made to the Canadian Constitution where the federal government is specially charged with the responsibility of protecting the educational and cultural interests of the minorities. In India, the position is even more difficult than in Canada which has to deal with only two sub-sects of a religion and only two languages. The protection of the cultural and educational interests of the minorities is, therefore, a very important responsibility of the Government of India and the success of our democracy will very largely depend upon the extent and the manner in which this function is discharged and confidence is created in the minds of the minorities concerned.

46. The Constitution already provides certain safeguards for the cultural and educational interests of minorities. For instance, Article 29(1) guarantees that any section of the citizens having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same. Article 30(1) gives the minorities, whether based on religion or language, the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice, and clause (2) of the same Article further provides that such institutions shall not be discriminated against in respect of grant-in-aid on the only ground that they are under the management of a minority. Article 29(2) provides that no citizen shall be denied admission into any educational institution maintained by the State or receiving aid out of State funds on grounds only of religion, race, caste, language or any of them. Article 350A directs that it shall be the endeavour of every State and every local authority to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother-tongue at the Primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups; and Article 350B provides for the appointment of a Special Officer for linguistic minorities with the specific object of investigating into all matters relating to safeguards provided for linguistic minorities under the Constitution.

47. While these provisions are generally welcomed, a common criticism is that they are not adequate and that some additional measures are necessary. For instance, it has been suggested that the educational institutions conducted by linguistic minorities at the Primary stage of education should have a right to receive grant-in-aid from State funds, at least to the extent of the expenditure per pupil incurred by the State Government concerned for its own primary schools. It has also been claimed that the educational interests of the linguistic minorities at other stages of education need some special consideration which is not given at present. It has further been suggested that it is the responsibility of the Government of India to maintain, in all parts of the country, a sufficient number of institutions of Higher education teaching through the medium of Hindi or English in order to provide for the educational interests of the children of its own employees who are liable to be transferred to any part of the Union and also for the legitimate protection of the educational interests of small and scattered linguistic minorities. The whole problem is delicate and difficult and it is not possible to suggest any simple and clear-cut solution to it, but the need for the exercise of vigilance by the federal government in this regard is obvious.

48. The thirteenth function refers to the federal responsibility for the *education of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes*. Under Article 46 of the Constitution, the Government of India is responsible for the economic and educational development of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and, as has been pointed out earlier, similar responsibilities have been adopted by other federal governments also—the Federal Government in the U.S.A. having special responsibility for Red Indians and Negroes, in Australia for Maoris and in Canada for Red Indians and Eskimos. Under the present set-up, this responsibility has been vested in the Ministry of Home Affairs which is assisted, in its turn, by all the Ministries of the Government of India, wherever necessary. The Ministry of Education has thus to look after the problems of education of these weaker sections of the community; and the Ministry of Home Affairs has made it clear, time and again, that it looks forward to the Ministry of Education for guidance in all technical aspects of education and every now and then, references regarding special intricate problems in this sector are made to the Ministry.

49. The fourteenth function refers to the *federal responsibility for strengthening national unity*. One of the most important problems which faces the country at present is to strengthen the ties of national unity through programmes of emotional integration and to negate the fissiparous tendencies which have become so prominent, especially after the reorganization of States on a linguistic basis. This responsibility is so fundamental to the very existence of democracy and the defence of our freedom that it is hardly necessary to emphasise it. But unfortunately, very little is being done at present in this sector. The basic responsibilities in this programme will have to be that of the Government of India and the State Governments will have to cooperate whole-heartedly in their implementation. This is, therefore, an area where a good deal of fundamental thinking and intensive effort is immediately called for.

50. The fifteenth function is the provision of *scholarships*. One of the principal purposes underlying educational development is social justice and the provision of equality of educational opportunity for all. A liberal scheme of scholarships to help the talented and poor children thus becomes a very significant programme in educational reconstruction. Obviously, such a programme will have to be implemented jointly by the Government of India and the State Governments. The Federal Government admittedly has a special responsibility for the institution of scholarships at the University stage; but it is also argued that, unless an adequate provision for scholarships is made at the Secondary stage, poor and deserving children would never be able to qualify themselves for University admission. Both in the first and in the second Plans, very little has been done in this sector. It is, however, obvious that, for several years to come, this would be an important programme of educational reconstruction. The Government of India would have to play a leading part in its implementation by helping in the determination of right policies and by providing necessary financial assistance to State Governments.

51. The sixteenth function refers to *advanced professional and vocational training*. Under Entry 65(a) of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, the Federal Government is authorised to set up agencies and institutions for professional, vocational or technical training. Obviously, the State Governments are also competent to set up such institutions under Entry 11 of List II of the same schedule. It is, therefore, necessary to draw a dividing line between the Federal and State functions in this respect. If Entry 65(a) of List I is literally interpreted, it may be made to cover any course of professional, vocational or technical training from a tailoring class at one end to a post-graduate course for Plant Pathologists at the other. But obviously, this is not the intention of the Constitution. It should be assumed that the State Governments would make all the necessary provision for professional and vocational education; but there are advanced courses of professional and vocational education which are very costly and which could not possibly be

maintained by every State. It is in this sector that the Government of India has a special role to play by providing such *advanced* courses as would be needed by the country in general or by more than one State in particular. Another objective for the organization of such courses would be to develop the highest type of professional and vocational education within the country itself and, to that extent, to reduce the necessity of sending students abroad for Higher education. For instance, it is not the responsibility of the Government of India to conduct an institution for pre-service training of teachers at the B.T. or B.Ed, level. It should rather concentrate itself on providing post-graduate courses of in-service training for higher grades of educational administrators and teacher educators.

52. The seventeenth function refers to *the establishment of Union institutions and agencies for education*. The federal government is required to establish and maintain educational institutions for a number of reasons. For instance, educational institutions have to be maintained for employees of the Central Government. They have also to be maintained in important commercial undertakings of the Government of India in order to meet the requirements of the population of the new towns which have been established for such undertakings. Military cantonments which are under the control of the Government of India are also required to maintain educational institutions, not only for defence personnel, but also for the general population living in cantonment areas. Apart from such special purposes, it is also the responsibility of the Centre to conduct educational institutions with two definite objectives: (1) to serve as experimental institutions in comparatively neglected or more significant fields; and (2) to cater to the needs of more than one State or for the country as a whole.

53. The eighteenth function refers to *the provision of free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 years* as directed in Article 45 of the Constitution. If this Article is read with Article 12 of the Constitution, it will be evident that the provision of universal, free and compulsory Primary education is a joint responsibility of the Government of India, the State Governments and the local authorities. The role of the Government of India would obviously be restricted to the formulation of national targets to be reached, to the grant of financial assistance to State Governments for implementing this programme and to the maintenance of an equal standard of attainment, both in quantity and quality, in all parts of the country. The role of the State Governments would mainly be restricted to the provision of teachers, their training, and supervision. The local authorities will have to take responsibility for all the expenditure on the remaining items and will have to implement the programme satisfactorily with the help of grants-in-aid from the State Governments. Just as the grants-in-aid given by the Centre to the State Governments will have to be based on the principle of equalisation, the grants-in-aid given by the State Governments to the local authorities also will have to be passed on the same principle. In other words, the grants-in-aid to richer local authorities would be proportionately less and those to the poorer local authorities would be proportionately greater.

54. The eighteen functions of the federal government in education discussed so far may be regarded as fairly non-controversial. The first four functions, as stated earlier, belong exclusively to the federal government and there can be no controversy about them. The remaining thirteen functions fall into the concurrent group. But it is universally agreed that the federal government has some responsibility with regard to each one of them, although there might be some slight difference of opinion regarding the extent and nature of such role.

Over and above these seventeen functions, however, there are three other functions which are very important and which at present, have become highly controversial, *viz.* (i) the education of women, (ii) policy-making and (iii) financial assistance. It is therefore, necessary to discuss them in some detail.

55. *Education of Women.*—The National Committee on Women’s Education, it may be recalled, has recommended that the Government of India should assume a *transitional* special responsibility for this subject until the existing wide gap between the education of boys and girls is materially bridged. In the opinion of the Committee, women come under the expression “weaker section of the people” used in Article 46 of the Constitution. The Backward Classes Commission set up by the Government of India also recommended that women should be regarded as ‘backward classes’ and this strengthens the claim of treating their education as a responsibility of the Government of India under Article 46. The Committee has also put forward another strong argument in favour of its proposal. The Government of India admittedly has a special responsibility for providing free and compulsory education up to the age of 14. This responsibility is not being implemented at present mainly because the education of girls has lagged behind that of boys; and the Committee, therefore, claims that the responsibility of the Government of India under Article 45 cannot be fulfilled unless it also assumes some special responsibilities for the education of girls.

56. Those who do not accept this view argue that, under the proposal made by the Committee, education becomes almost a central subject. Since women form about half of the total population, the State Governments would be deprived of 50% of their responsibility if the education of girls becomes a special responsibility of the Centre; and if the other sectors for which the Government of India is also responsible are taken into consideration, the responsibilities of the Government of India would be far larger than those of the State Governments themselves. Secondly, it is also argued that it will not be possible for the Government of India to discharge this responsibility to any extent unless the willing and enthusiastic cooperation of the State Governments is obtained by making them constitutionally responsible for the programmes and providing them with the necessary financial assistance.

57. The only logical conclusion under these circumstances seems to be that the responsibility of the Government of India for the education of girls should cover, not the *entire* programme for the education of girls, but only the small quantum of a *special* programme which is needed to give it a fillip. Even the special programmes should not be directly implemented by the Centre. They should rather be included in the “Centrally sponsored” sector under which the programmes are planned by the State Governments on the lines of some general principles laid down by the Centre and also implemented by them through their own agencies. The provision for their expenditure, however, is made in the Central sector and the funds are made available to State Governments on a 100% basis, outside their plans and ceilings. If such a clear-cut policy is defined and adopted, even the States would welcome it; and it would obviously go a very long way in expediting the programmes of Women’s education, particularly in the backward States.

58. *Policy-making function.*—The policy-making function of the Federal Government in education has now become one of the most controversial issues in education. Under entry 66 of List I the Government of India is required to coordinate and maintain standards in University education. Obviously therefore, it does get a right to make policy decisions in University education and these will be binding upon State Governments under Article 257(i) of the Constitution which lays down that the executive power of the State Government shall be so exercised as not to impede or prejudice the exercise of the executive power of the Union. Should any State Government not accept these decisions, it would be open to the Government of India to take action under the same Article which also authorises the Union to give such directions to a State Government as may appear to be necessary for this purpose. But what about policy-making in Secondary or Primary education or in fields which are not specifically covered by Entries in List I of the Seventh Schedule? From the strictly legal point of view, it can be argued that the Government of India has no authority to make any policy decisions in these sectors and that even if it did make any policy decisions they cannot be

enforced against the State Governments under Article 257(i) of the Constitution. Of course, it is possible to argue that the standards of University education are dependent on those in Secondary education and that the standards in Secondary education are, in their turn, dependent on those in Primary education and to deduce therefrom that the Government of India can also take policy decisions in the fields of Primary and Secondary education. Such an interpretation appears to be plausible; but one cannot say how the Courts would react to it if it is challenged. At best, it appears to be a slippery position on which it would be dangerous to take a firm stand.

59. It is true that the Government of India has been taking decisions in all fields of education in the post-independence period and these decisions are mostly being accepted by State Governments. This result, however, is accidental and is due to two extraneous circumstances—(1) the political fact that the same party is in power at the Centre and the States and (2) the financial fact that most of these decisions have been sugar-coated with liberal financial assistance. But it would be wrong to assume that this political situation will always continue and it would be equally difficult to justify the use of financial pressures for inducing States to accept policies to which they would not otherwise have agreed to. The present constitutional position, therefore, presents an impasse. On the one hand, education must be treated as a whole and it is neither possible nor desirable to break it up into two compartments—University education and other sectors. On the other hand, Government has only a limited authority for making policy decisions in the sector of University education while it is not at all empowered to take any policy decisions in other fields; and even if it were to take any such decision, it does not have the legal authority to enforce it against the State Governments.

60. What is the way out of this impasse? Three suggestions are being put forward and discussed in this context. The first and the most radical suggestion is to amend the Constitution and to make education a 'concurrent' subject. In support of this view, a number of weighty arguments are put forward and although some of these have been briefly referred to in the earlier discussion, it may still be desirable to sum up the whole case here. It is argued, for example, that the 'economic and social planning' for which the Union is primarily responsible cannot be attempted successfully unless the Centre is also empowered to plan education. Secondly, it is claimed that educational policy is a *national* rather than a State or local concern and that, although the administration of education may be left to the States and local authorities, the major decisions of State policy must be taken by the Centre. Thirdly, it is pointed out that the Directive contained in Article 45 of the Constitution implies that the provision of free and compulsory education is a joint responsibility and that the Centre will not be in a position to play its role in this sector unless it has also the authority to take policy decisions in Primary education and to compel the State Governments, if necessary, to adopt them. Fourthly, it is pointed out that it is a fundamental responsibility of the Centre to maintain an equal standard of social services in all parts of the country and as education is the most significant of all social services, the Centre will have to provide an equality of educational opportunity for *all* children in the country. This can only be done if education is amenable to Central planning and control. Fifthly, it is pointed out that the educational leadership available in the States is often below par and, as no chain can be stronger than its weakest link, the Centre must often provide effective leadership from above—a function which can hardly be discharged satisfactorily unless it is empowered adequately to deal with recalcitrant cases; and finally, it is pointed out that the Centre is responsible to Parliament for all the funds it gives to State Governments for educational development and that it cannot really be answerable to Parliament in this behalf unless it also has the authority to take firm policy decisions and to implement them. The burden of the song is, therefore, clear; amend the Constitution and make education a concurrent subject. It must also be stated that there is a fairly large support for this view and in almost every Parliament session, the notice of a resolution to this effect

is given by some member or the other.

61. As against this extreme view in one direction, there is a second group of thinkers who would prefer to go to an extreme in the other direction. They suggest that education is and should be a State subject and that the modern trend towards centralization must be resisted as forcefully as possible in the larger interests of the country. They demand decentralization in general—even in planning—on grounds of democracy and warn that centralization, which brings some immediate gains, is extremely harmful in the long run because it saps the self-confidence, initiative, responsibility and even the competence of State Governments. In their view, a still greater need for decentralization in education is the possibility it affords to every linguistic minority to preserve its own culture and to progress in its own way. It is also argued that the varied mosaic pattern which Indian culture has evolved through centuries past can be preserved only if State Governments have real authority over education and that it can be destroyed in no time under a centralized control of education which would always tend to introduce dead uniformity. It is further urged that centralization of education would make it increasingly bureaucratic and thus deprive it of the healthy direct contact with the public. This group of thinkers, therefore, would not only preserve the sovereign authority which State Governments have over education at present, but they would even go a step further and cut at the very root of all trends of centralization by abolishing the Ministry of Education itself or by constituting a single small ministry for all social welfare services.

62. Between these two extreme views—one of which is close to Australia and the other to the U.S.S.R.—there is a third view which represents the latest thought on this subject in the U.S.A. and which may also be regarded as the ‘golden mean’ proposal of reform. According to this view, centralization of educational authority—and this is exactly what all the talk of making education a concurrent subject really means—is definitely harmful while a weak or inactive Centre is hardly better than cultural anarchy. What this group of thinkers recommends, therefore, is that the federal government should provide strong and competent leadership of a ‘stimulating but non-coercive character’.*

63. This leadership is to be provided in three ways—in ideas, in personnel, and in programmes.

- (a) The leadership in ideas is provided in two ways—through the development of research and through the coordinating and clearing house functions which cross-fertilise educational thinking by making known the good work done in one area of the country to the remaining areas.
- (b) The leadership in personnel is generally provided in three ways—the maintenance of an advisory service, the training of educational administrators, and experimental work in the training of teachers. It is a fundamental responsibility of the Centre to scout for talent and to maintain an advisory service of the best people available in the country and to make them available to State Governments for advice and assistance in all matters. Secondly, it is also a responsibility of the Centre to arrange for advanced professional training in educational administration and to provide for the in-service training of educational administrators through such programmes as seminars and workshops, special training or refresher courses, deputations for studies in the country or abroad, and production of necessary literature. Thirdly, the federal government has also a responsibility in the attempt to provide better teachers by advising and assisting the State Governments to adopt such measures as improving

* *Federal State Relations in Education, N.E.A. (1945), p.7.*

the remuneration and service conditions of teachers, conduct of experiments in teacher education, etc.

- (c) Finally, the leadership in programmes can be provided through the conduct of pilot or experimental projects.

It is claimed that if the Central Government can thus provide a competent professional leadership through ideas, men and programmes, the willing consent of the State Governments would be secured to whatever common policy the Federal Government desires to adopt and that such persuasion of the States is infinitely better than coercion under a constitutional authority. It is obvious that a conscious adoption of this policy is probably the best course to be followed in India.

64. *Financial Assistance*.—Then comes another of the most significant federal functions in education, *viz.*, the provision of financial assistance for programmes of expansion and improvement of education. That the federal government must give such assistance is universally admitted; and the task is of special significance in India where the most elastic and productive sources of revenue are vested in the Centre. The main controversies, therefore, relate to two issues—the objectives of assistance and the form and conditions of grants-in-aid.

65. With regard to the first of these issues, it is generally suggested that there should be three types of grants. The first is a transfer of additional revenues in order to enable the State Governments to plan their programmes in all welfare services with greater confidence and self-reliance; the second is the institution of a general grant for educational purposes but not earmarked for any specific programme; and the third is a specific purpose grant which is intended for a programme organised and implemented with the approval of the Centre. It is obvious that if the autonomy and independence of the States is to be respected in the educational field, greater reliance will have to be placed on the first two of these grants. The mistake of the first Five-Year Plan was that innumerable specific purpose grants were created and they naturally led to a tremendous increase in administrative work and red tape. The mischief has been considerably undone in the second Five-Year Plan by introducing four main groups of grant-in-aid, by authorizing the States to reappropriate within the same group, and by introducing the system of ways and means advances. But even now, a good deal remains to be done and it would be worthwhile to simplify the system and to reduce the specific purpose grants still further during the Third Plan.

66. Another point of extreme importance is that of special financial assistance to backward States or what is called ‘an equalization grant’ in American parlance. As pointed out earlier, it is a basic responsibility of the federal government to maintain a uniform standard of social services in general and to equalise educational opportunities in particular. In this respect, our States show immense differences. They differ in the level of development reached at present due mainly to historical accidents; their ‘educational loads’ *i.e.* the number of children still outside the school also vary greatly; and even the social and economic conditions show equally wide variations so that the States are far from comparable in terms of ‘ability’ to support education and the difficulty of the task to be performed. The advanced States have a bigger and a more difficult task to perform with more limited resources. Today, the conditions are so diverse that the expenditure on Primary education in the single city of Bombay is greater than that in the entire State of Orissa. It is for the Government of India to adopt an equalization grant and level up such differences to the extent possible.

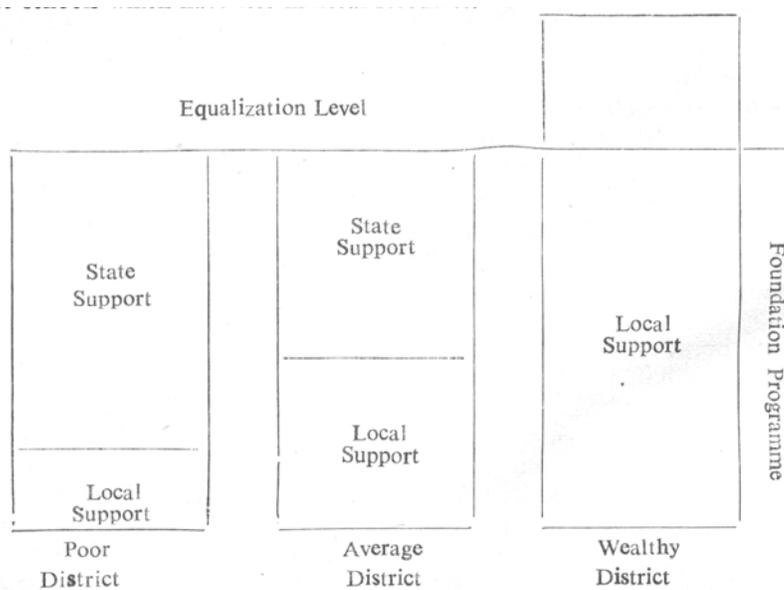
67. It should also be stated that it is not the object of the equalization programme to bring all developments to a dead level of uniformity. This need not and cannot be done. What is suggested is a three-fold programme: (1) the federal government should prescribe, from time to time, minimum or foundation programmes below which no area should be allowed to fall; (2)

the freedom of individual States to go ahead should be retained; and (3) the gap between the advanced and the backward States should be continually narrowed down.

68. It is obvious that this principle of grant-in-aid is diametrically opposed to that of matching grants which gives more to him that hath. Under this concept, some States may get no grant, others may get a medium one and still others may get a large one. Its operation can probably be best described in the following passage from De Young:

“The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States made education the primary responsibility of the individual states. Hence the support of public education became mainly a matter of state concern. Today every state makes some contribution from its revenues for the support of public schools through many types of funds, some of which are described later. An inconsistency exists, however, between the legal intention to provide state support and the many cases of neglect and inadequacy. For the nation as a whole, state governments supply only about 40 per cent of the cost of schools. Furthermore, the method of distributing such aid is an important factor. Despite favourable arguments for federal support of public education, the fact remains that the individual states will have to give more assistance to schools, particularly through the application of the next principle.

Strayer and Haig in 1923 were the first to give a clear-cut picture of the equalization principle. Their analysis interpreted this principle as the complete equalization of the burden of a satisfactory minimum educational programme below which no locality could be allowed to go, but above which any locality would be allowed to rise by means of local support. In contradistinction to the payment-for-effort or matching principle, the operation of the equalization plan tends to shift to more able communities some of the undue burden carried by the less wealthy localities (*see* Fig. below). Most states today have a state-local “partnership foundation programme” in which the commonwealth bestows more on these schools which have less in fiscal resources.



How state equalization works in three types of districts. In the poor district, local effort to support schools produces only a small fraction of the cost of a state-guaranteed minimum or foundation programme. In the district of average wealth, the same effort produces about half the needed fiscal support. The wealthy district receives no state equalization aid because the local wealth back of each child is great enough to more than finance the minimum programme. The district serves as a lighthouse to indicate better practices.

In brief, the equalization principle means that governmental agencies collect educational funds where the money is and spend the money where the pupils are. Every man’s property and income must be taxed to educate every man’s child. Even though a man chooses to send his own children to a paro-

chial or private school he is not exempt from contributing his support to the education of all children. The golden rule in educational finance is : “Thou shalt educate thy neighbor’s children as thine own.”

At first this idea of equalization was applied to small areas, as the county and state. Now the old slogan “the wealth of the state must educate the children of the state” is being supplemented with the clause “and the wealth of the United States must be used to equalize the education of all the children in the nation”. Furthermore, the phrase “all the children in the nation” implies that more adequate educational opportunities and greater financial support be provided for exceptional or a typical children, since their learning opportunities, as in the case of the blind, are below par, and the costs of their instruction are above average. American public education will not be genuinely democratic until there is nation-wide application of the principle that opportunity and burden shall be equalized for all learners.”*

69. The second issue refers to the conditions of grant-in-aid. Here strict adherence to certain general principles is necessary. To begin with, the tendency to use grants-in-aid as indirect pressure levers for policy decisions should be discouraged as far as possible. Secondly, the quantum of specific purpose grants should be restricted to the very minimum and confined to basic programmes of national significance only or schemes in the nature of experimental or pilot projects. Thirdly, the procedure for sanctioning these grants will have to be simplified to the utmost. And lastly, a suitable machinery will have to be devised to obtain, from the State Governments, a report on the utilization of grants and the results obtained thereof. This can probably be effectively done by appointing high level advisers who should pay visits to States and submit reports after a special study on the spot.

70. Another useful suggestion to be made in this context is that the specific purpose grants should be included in the Centrally-sponsored sector. In a Centrally-sponsored scheme, ‘planning’ should be a joint responsibility in which the fundamental principles are laid down by the Centre, but a large initiative and freedom is left to State Governments to make the Plan suit its local needs and conditions; ‘implementation’ would be through the State Government; and ‘finance’ would come from the Centre on a hundred per cent basis and outside the State Plan and ceiling. This will ensure that the programme is most effectively implemented and also that such implementation does not interfere with any other schemes.

VI

Summary and Conclusions

71. In the present study, an attempt has been made to examine the various issues concerning the role of the Government of India in Education. The problem was approached from three angles, historically, constitutionally and comparatively from the point of the role which the federal governments of some of the foreign countries are playing in education.

72. In the historical survey which covered the period 1773—1950, it was shown that prior to 1833 the Centre had hardly any role to play; between 1833 and 1870 education was virtually a Central subject; between 1870 and 1921, while the day-to-day administration was vested in the provincial governments, the Government of India discharged five distinct functions, *viz.*, (1) policy-making, (2) serving as a clearinghouse for information, (3) promotion of research and publication of suitable literature, (4) coordination and (5) financial assistance; the years 1921- 35 saw a virtual divorce between education and Central Government with disastrous consequences; but more progressive policies were evolved and the Government of India again began to play a more leading role.

73. In the next section, the Constitutional provisions relating to education were subjected to a

* *De Young*: Introduction to American Public Education, pp. 502-504,

close examination and it was shown that the present position is somewhat anomalous. On the one hand, the Constitution takes the simple stand that education, with all residuary powers, is a State subject; while in a number of important fields (such as the provision of educational facilities for children up to the age of 14, the promotion and safeguarding of the cultural interests of the minorities, the need for controlled development of Higher education etc.,) education appears to be more of a joint responsibility than an exclusive preserve of the States.

74. The study of the role of the federal government in education in certain other countries showed that the interest and activities of a federal government are not always guided by the provisions of the Constitution and that, in many instances, the federal government is taking a very definite and positive interest in the formulation and implementation of educational programmes even in the absence of any constitutional obligation for that purpose.

75. In the concluding section of the study, it was suggested that, without trespassing on the autonomy of the States, the Centre had a useful role to play in evolving suitable educational policies for the country and that in view of the greater elasticity of the Central tax structure it had a very definite responsibility for rendering financial assistance to the States towards the expansion and improvement of educational facilities.

76. Finally, I would humbly like to state that I am fully aware of the complexity of the issues raised in this paper that I have had no illusions about the finality of the suggestions made herein. My main object in writing and publishing this paper has been to arouse interest in the discussion of the basic questions relating to the role of the Government of India in education. If this fond hope were to materialise, my labours would be more than adequately rewarded.