

University/College.....
 Town/City.....Name of the State.....

Date.....

To,
The Chairperson,
 Parliamentary Standing Committee on Human Resource Development,
 Parliament of India,
 New Delhi.

Subject: request to reject and refer to public debate the Bills concerning higher education in the Parliament.

Dear Sir,

The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) has introduced many Bills concerning higher education over the last two years in the Parliament which affect the entire higher education system and are pregnant with serious consequences. Some of them are already referred to your committee and the rest may be referred in due course. We, the under signed draw your attention to the anti-people and undemocratic nature of the Bills and request you to reject the Bills summarily and refer them for wide public debate.

These Bills concerning higher education introduced in the Parliament by MHRD include:

- 1) The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill, 2010
- 2) The Educational Tribunals Bill, 2010
- 3) The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010
- 4) The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Institutions and Universities Bill, 2010
- 5) The Higher Education and Research Bill, 2011
- 6) The Universities for Research and Innovation Bill, 2012.

These Bills have been introduced, ostensibly, to bring about a thorough reform in our higher education system. Of course, these Bills, if enacted and implemented, will bring thorough reform, but only in the interest of domestic and foreign market and not in the interest of the people of the country. The government is bent upon bringing about these legislations at the earliest disregarding the interests as well as the opinion of the people of our country.

The Bills listed above, if enacted, would **a)** Reduce education from a transformative social value to a tradable service; **b)** Open the floodgate of Foreign Direct Investment in higher education; **c)** Tribunalize Justice in the field of education; **d)** Privatize assessment and accreditation process resulting in widespread corruption; **e)** Reduce concept of fairness in education to that of ‘transparency’ which in reality means transparent plunder; **f)** Establish a National Council for Higher Education and Research (NCHER) as the ‘*Independent Regulatory Authority*’ in higher education in line with World Trade Organization (WTO) guidelines. This NCHER will be independent from democratic pressures of the people and regulate the ‘trade in education service’ in the interest of foreign and domestic corporate houses.

The Government of India has already made ‘offers’ to WTO in the higher education sector which eventually will become ‘commitments’ if not withdrawn before conclusion of Doha Round of trade negotiations. The sole objective of the government in bringing about these reforms is to establish such legal and institutional structures necessary to put into effect any commitment flowing out of any agreement under WTO once the Doha Round is complete along with other such agreements.

The idea actively supported by the Central Government that education can be spread among masses only through profit oriented institutions and private (domestic or foreign) investment is based on misconceived and false neo-liberal premises including the following,

- a) the economic capacity of the state is limited, resulting in resource crunch for education, so, there is a pressing need to replace public funding by private (domestic and foreign) investment;
- b) private agencies, compared to public institutions, can render better, efficient and cost effective services, therefore the limited government funding should go to private agencies rather than to public institutions;
- c) the Constitutional principles of *equality* and *social justice* can be replaced by the neo-liberal principle of *inclusion*, therefore, the ideal ‘free education to all’ can be replaced by the scheme ‘reimbursement for few’;
- d) education is a service rather than being a Right or an Entitlement of every child and youth and, therefore, equal provision for all need not be ensured;
- e) Education is a tradable commodity and therefore, profiteering through education is a legitimate objective, just like in any other trade;
- f) education is a private good and therefore, it is valid that quality of education one receives is proportionate to one’s capacity to pay;
- g) education is an industry for producing human resources for corporate and market needs rather than a social process for building enlightened and conscious human beings for a democratic polity and therefore, the character of knowledge should be determined by market, rather than by the internal requirements of the discipline or the developmental needs of the society.

We oppose these misconceived and false premises which are being used by the government to initiate the so-called reforms which in reality means opening education for trade and profit-mongering at the cost of the interests of the people of India.

Reducing education to a tradable service not only denies education to disadvantaged sections of the society, but it also distorts it to an extent that those who get education will not get it worth the name. Devoid of the capacity to promote critical thought and social concern and adapted to the requirements of capital and, such an education can foster only an attitude of social apathy, servility and moral degeneration among the youth who would not be able to protect the country and its democratic polity from internal and external threats. Allowing trade in education amounts to reducing society into a market devoid of humanity.

Opposing the neo-liberal premises, we believe that education should be developed as a process of social development and transformation. We hope you would agree that public educational institutions which

are free from narrow interest in profit can only produce a new generation of youth which the society requires for its all-round development. Keeping this in view the reforms in higher education requires to be directed at,

- a) Abolition of trade in education,
- b) Abandoning the so-called Public Private Partnership designed to siphon public funds and transfer public facilities and assets to private agencies,
- c) Strengthening government universities and colleges by providing necessary infrastructure and appointing qualified teaching and non-teaching personnel,
- d) Democratizing and decentralizing administration in the field of education,
- e) Universalizing school education upto age 18 years and constantly increasing opportunities in higher education to meet the aspirations of the youth and needs of the society,
- f) Building an education system in conformity with the basic values of the Constitution of India, and
- g) Allotting a minimum 6% of GNP for education.

However, the reforms aimed at by the Government of India are just in opposite direction.

We appeal you to recommend the government to immediately withdraw all the referred Bills introduced in the Parliament and to put them for wider debate in the society. It is the Constitutional duty of the government to establish fully public-funded Common Education System from KG to PG in conformity with the values enshrined in the Preamble of the Constitution that directs the State to build an education system for promoting a democratic, socialist, secular, egalitarian and just society in the Republic of India! The education system must be envisioned such that it can foster critical and humane thought, promote pro-people development, respond with sensitivity to the people’s aspirations for equitable distribution of resources, protect socio-cultural and knowledge-related diversity and secure civil liberties and democratic rights, as guaranteed by the Constitution.

With Regards

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Copy to,
 The Chair Person, Rajya Sabha, Parliament of India
 The Speaker, Lok Sabha, Parliament of India
 The Prime Minister, Government of India
 The Minister for Human Resource Development, Government of India
 The Chief Minister, State Government of

The Minister for Higher Education, State Government of

Campaign organised byas a part of country-wide campaign initiated by All India Forum for Right to Education.