

An Appeal

All India Forum for Right To Education

To whomsoever concerned

Dear Madam/Sir

This is to draw your attention to pressing problems of education system.

WTO: You are aware that Government of India has made 'offers' to General Agreement on Trade in Services (an integral agreement of the World Trade Organization) in higher Education Sector. If the 'offers' are not withdrawn well before conclusion of The Doha Round, the offers would be deemed to be 'Commitments on part of our Country. The commitments includes a) unrestricted market access to all educational traders across member countries, b) allowing trade and unbridled competition in education sector, c) supporting foreign education traders on par with native public and private universities and professional colleges, d) changing our legal and administrative system to suit the interests of the foreign traders and e) the most dangerous provision of the commitments may be that no country can withdraw the commitments made to the agreement unless it is ready to compensate in trade terms in a very big way. Many countries denied making offers in education sector with an apprehension of losing their educational and cultural autonomy leading to the erosion of national sovereignty. Government of India seems do not mind the bartering of sovereignty for few perks to the ruling classes. But, you would agree that the people of India can not afford losing the sovereignty of the nation.

PPP: The public private Participating (PPP) is the new buzz word of the union and provincial governments throughout the country. Actually, it is a World Bank proposed policy. One can find the governments world over are pursuing this very policy at the instance of WB in all countries and people are resisting this policy. We can find this PPP in 12th five year plan, 'Right to Education Act-2009', Sam Petroda reports, Yash Pal Committee report. The PPP, in essence is nothing but siphoning of public funds (budget allotments) and transfer of public assets and facilities to private agencies. The very purpose of the PPP policy is to expand the market of the private agencies. The provision for reimbursement of fee of the children admitted against 25% reservation under 'Right to Education Act, 2009', who make only 6% of total disadvantaged, would lead to siphoning of public funds to private agencies. The children admitted under reservation provision would not only be humiliated in corporate schools but also would be provided inferior education there in is a point in order.

Trade in Education: you would agree that allowing trade in education is the basis for all melodies in the field of education. It does not only deny education to the students from SC, ST, BC, Cultural, Linguistic and Religious minorities, disabled and women in all sections, it on the other hand distorts the purpose, content and process of education. We know that the objects of producing sensitive and creative young men and women are alien features to the market forces. The whole cultural future of the society will be at stake. Is it not time for us to seriously ponder over to ban trade in education altogether? If the trade in education is banned, the ruling classes and middle class would take more interest in public education system rendering it all support. Abolition of trade in education would liquidate the basis for GATS-WTO and PPP and would create necessary condition for building up of a democratic, secular and egalitarian education system as enunciated in our constitution which would pave path for elimination of inequalities and protection and democratization of diversities.

False Premises – Our Opposition: Even in the post independent period, the rulers of this country have been opposed to the spread of knowledge. [‘rulers fear knowledge of the people and would like to keep them in darkness’.....Tolstoy]. Education has been restricted in quality, quantity and diversity. While majority of the population is denied education, the rest few were only given education which suits the needs of the ruling classes. The democratic process of building of knowledge by the people in their diversified conditions has been always discouraged and sources of knowledge restricted either to religious texts or European books. Even, the languages of people are pushed back and humiliated. Now, rulers are speaking about spread of education. But, they propose that the same shall be in the medium of commerce and trade. Education is a social process and cannot be advanced in the medium of commerce and trade. The Right To Education Act passed and the higher education Bills introduced in the Parliament are based on certain set of false premises which requires to be thoroughly exposed.

- a) the economic capacity of the state is limited, resulting in resource crunch for education; there is thus no option but to depend upon private (and foreign) sources for funding education;
- b) private agencies, compared to public agencies, can render better, efficient and cost effective services;
- c) the Constitutional principles of *equality* and *social justice* can be replaced by the neo-liberal principle of *inclusion*;
- 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 private good and a tradable commodity, making profiteering through education a legitimate objective, just like in any other trade; therefore, it is valid that quality education is proportionate to one’s capacity to pay; and
- f) Education is an instrument for producing human resources for corporate and market needs; therefore, the character of knowledge should be determined by market, rather than by the internal requirements of the discipline or the developmental needs of society.

All these premises are false and refuted time and again by forces of democratic mass movement over the last two decades. Now, masses of people, from their own experience have understood how false the premises are.

AN ALTERNATIVE

1. **Purpose of Education:** After abolition of trade in education, both the government and people should set themselves for building a democratic, secular and egalitarian education system. Education shall be a social process for enlightenment of individual and economic, political and civilisational development of society. Education shall empower the people to ensure a democratic polity within and protect sovereignty of the nation from external dangers. Education shall be an equalizing agent across social, economic, cultural, gender and able bodied disadvantages and discriminations and facilitate social mobility. A democratic education system recognizes socio cultural and linguistic diversities as strength of the nation and provides for protection and democratization of the each of the entities.

- 2. Equitable Access:** Basic tenants of an alternative education system, we propose, shall be a) trade in education is to be banned and collection of fee in any form be construed as trade in education, b) Providing education to the people shall be the prime duty of the state (central, state governments and local bodies), c) there can be privately run educational institutions, but, the managements should understand that they are only sharing the responsibility of the state and provide education free of cost, d) there shall be universal provision of equal education to all children upto age 18, e) a goal shall be set and a road plan shall be prepared to universalize higher education within four ‘Five Year Plans’, f) positive discrimination and affirmative action of the state shall inform the distribution of limited education opportunities in all branches of knowledge and at all levels to address disadvantaged, deprived, disabled, discriminated and marginalized sections of the society, g) right to education shall be defined clearly to denote as to not only provision of education without collection of fee, but also, provision of education free of all direct and indirect costs, h) further, right to education shall be defined clearly as to provision of nutritious food, medical services, clothes and secure residence – whatever is required by the student to pursue education, i) trade in teacher education shall be abolished, curriculum and teacher education shall be developed in all aspects to achieve the constitutional goals of education j) all government schools, colleges and universities be developed to meet the curricular goals, k) service conditions and emoluments of the teachers at all levels be higher to suit the dignity and needs of the profession and l) while educational shall be completely financed by, state it shall be free of control from state, market and religion and educational institutions be democratically be administered by the people of its jurisdiction through an appropriate mechanism to ensure their participation.
- 3. Agenda for Struggle:** Those who want to save education from the neo-liberal onslaught are to join hands to fight for withdrawal of ‘offers’ in education given to ‘Council of Trade in Services, a wing of WTO to protect the sovereignty of the nation. We all have to fight against Eight Bills related to higher education introduced in the parliament over the last two years [1.The Educational Tribunals Bill; 2. The National Accreditation Regulatory Authority for Higher Educational Institutions Bill, 2010; 3. The Prohibition of Unfair Practices in Technical Educational Institutions, Medical Educational Institutions and Universities Bill, 2010; 4. The Foreign Educational Institutions (Regulation of Entry and Operations) Bill; 5. The Higher Education and Research Bill; 6. The Universities for Research and Innovation Bill, 2012, 7) The National Commission for Human Resources for Health Bill, 2011 and 8) The Indian Institutes of Information technology Bill, 2013. Let us continue our struggle for democratic, secular and egalitarian education system at all levels from KG to PG and Research.

With regards

All India Forum for Right to Education

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