

Kothari Commission Report on Indian Education: A Critical Review

Dr. Goutam Patra
Principal (WBSES)
gtmpatra21@gmail.com

The Commission was set up by the Government of India on 14 July 1964 under the chairmanship of Daulat Singh Kothari, the then chairman of the University Grants Commission. The Commission's aim was to examine all aspects of the educational sector across the country. Among other objectives behind setting up of this Commission also included evolution of a general pattern of education. The commission, under the chairmanship of D. S. Kothari, submitted its Report on 29 June 1966; its recommendations were accommodated in India's first National Policy on Education in 1968.

Education and National Objectives:

The recommendations of the Commission cover almost all aspects and all stages of education. The commission suggested for urgent reforms needed in education to transform it, to endeavour to relate it to the life, needs and aspirations of the people and thereby to make it a powerful tool of social, economic and cultural transformation necessary for realisation of our national goals.

For this purpose, education should be developed as to increase productivity, achieve social and national integration, accelerate the pace of modernisation and to strive to build character by cultivating social, moral and spiritual value

These are popularly four-fold tasks of reformation in education.

(a) Increasing Productivity:

The link between education and productivity can be created through the development of the following programmes:

(i) Science Education:

Every primary school should have a science corner to keep specimens, models and charts with necessary storage facilities. Every higher primary school should be provided with one laboratory-cum-lecture room.

Science education must become an integral part of the school education and ultimately study of science should become a part of all courses in the humanities and social science at the

university stage. Science and mathematics should be taught on a compulsory basis to all pupils as a part of general education during the first ten years of schooling.

(ii) Work-Experience:

Work-experience should be introduced as an integral part of all education; general and vocational. Work experience means participation in productive work in the school, at home, in work shop, in a factory or in any other productive situations.

(iii) Application of Science to Productive Process:

Every effort should be made to link programmes realistically to technology, industrialization, and the application of science to productive processes including agriculture.

(iv) Vocationalisation:

Secondary education should be largely vocationalised and in higher education, a great emphasis should be placed on agriculture and technical education.

(b) Achieving Social and National Integration:

The following are the recommendations of the commission for achieving unity and solidarity of the nation:

(i) Common School System:

In the words of commission, “If the educational system is to become a powerful instrument of national development in general, and social and national integration in particular, we must move towards the goal of a common school system of public education—which will be open to all children irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, economic conditions or social status”.

Therefore, a common school system of public education should be introduced in a phased manner spread over twenty years.

(ii) Social and National Service:

In order to remove the gulf between the educated and uneducated or between the intelligentsia and masses, some form of social and national service should be made obligatory for all students at all stages of education. This can become an instrument to build character, improve discipline, inculcate a faith in the dignity of manual labour and to develop a social responsibility.

For making it a success, the commission suggested two forms:

(i) Encouraging and enabling students to participate in community living on the school or college compounds.

(ii) Providing opportunities of participation in programmes of community development and national service.

(iii) Development of an Appropriate Language policy:

Suitable arrangement should be made for teaching mother-tongue, Hindi and other modern Indian languages. The study of English should be promoted right from the school stage. Efforts to be made to spread Hindi in non-Hindi speaking areas, as it are the official language of the union and the lingua-franca of the people.

(iv) Promotion of National Consciousness

It should be an important objective of this school education system. This should be attempted through the promotion of understanding and re-evaluation of our cultural heritage and the creation of a strong driving faith in the future.

(c) Accelerating the pace of Modernisation:

In a modern society knowledge increases at a terrific pace and social change is very rapid.

In order that India should keep pace with modernisation, driven by science based technology, the commission suggests the following:

(i) Education should be concerned with awakening of curiosity, the development of proper interests, attitudes, and values and the building up essential skills as independent study and capacity to think and judge for one self.

(ii) Education must try to create an intelligentsia of adequate size and competence, which comes from all strata of society and whose loyalties and aspirations are rooted in the Indian soil.

(d) Cultivating Social, Moral and Spiritual Values:

Conscious and organised efforts are needed for imparting education in social, moral and spiritual values with the help, whenever possible, of the ethical teaching of great religions. Towards making these values as integral part of school programme, some period should set apart in the time-table.

A syllabus giving well chosen information about each of the major religion should be included. The central and state governments should adopt measures to introduce education in moral, social and spiritual values in all the institutions under their direct control.

2. Equalisation of Educational Opportunity:

The commission says, "One of the important social objectives of education is to equalize opportunity enabling the backward or under-privileged classes and individuals to use education as a lever for the improvement of their condition..... It observes, ' The education of the backward classes in general and of the tribal people in particular is a major programme of equalisation and of social and national integration. No expenditure is too great for the purpose".

It recommended that common school or neighbourhood schools should be set up which should be open to all living in one neighbourhood. Common school is a powerful step towards equalisation of educational opportunity.

3. Educational Structure:

The commission proposed the following:

1. The structure consists of:

(i) One to three years of pre-school education.

(ii) A Primary Stage of 7 to 8 years dividing into lower primary (4 to 5 years) and higher primary stage (3 or 2 years).

(iii) A lower secondary stage of 3 or 2 years.

(iv) A higher secondary of 2 years of general education or one to three years of vocational education.

(v) A higher education stage having a course of 3 years or more for the first degree and followed by a course for second degree of varying durations.

2. Age of admission to class I not to be less than 6 years.

3. First public examination to come at the end of first ten years of schooling.

4. The streaming system to be made beyond class X in case of general education.

5. Two types of secondary schools—high schools providing a ten year course and higher secondary schools providing a course of 11 or 12 years.

6. Bigger and more efficient schools about 1/4th of the total number to be upgraded and attempts to upgrade every secondary school to the higher secondary to be abandoned.

7. New higher secondary course at class XI to be instituted and class XI and XII to provide specialised studies in different subjects; existing higher secondary schools with integrated courses in classes IX, X, XI running satisfactorily to be continued until class XII is added.

8. Transfer of the PU course from the universities and affiliated colleges to secondary schools by 1975-76 and the duration of the course to be lengthened to two years by 1985-86; UGC would be responsible for the transfer of the above course.

9. Starting of higher secondary class or classes in selected schools by state education departments as self-contained units and assisted with adequate recurring grants.

10. Reconstituting Boards of Secondary Education to accept the onus for the higher secondary stage also.

11. Vocationalisation at the secondary stage at the end of class VII or VIII and of the end of class X and provision to be made for the introduction of different types of vocational courses at the lower and higher secondary stage, the duration of these courses varied from one to three years which would prepare young person's for employment.

12. Ten years of schooling should cover a primary stage of 7 or 8 years and a lower secondary stage of 3 or 2 years providing a course of general education without any specialisation.

13. Classes XI and XII should provide for specialised studies in different subjects at the higher secondary stage.

14. The higher secondary stage should be extended to cover a period of 2 years and to be located exclusively in schools.

Steps should be taken to implement these through a phased programme spread over the next 20 years (1965-85).

4. Curricular Improvement:

Broad Areas of curricular studies at secondary stage as recommended by the Kothari commission are meant for two stages:

1. Lower secondary stage (class VIII to X):

(a) Three languages: In Hindi speaking areas,

(i) The mother-tongue or the regional language,

- (ii) English or Hindi (if English has already been taken as the mother-tongue)and
- (iii) A modern Indian language other than Hindi.

In non-Hindi speaking areas:

- (i) The mother tongue or the regional language.
- (ii) Hindi at a higher or lower level.
- (iii) English at a higher or lower levels.

A classical language may be studied on an optional basis besides the above three:

- (b) Mathematics;
- (c) Science;
- (d) History, Geography and Civics;
- (e) Art,
- (f) Work experience and social service,
- (g) Physical education and
- (h) Education in moral and spiritual values.

2. Higher Secondary stage:

- (i) Any two languages including any MIL, modern foreign language and any classical language.
- (ii) Any three subjects from the following:
 - (a) History,
 - (b) Geography,
 - (c) Economics,
 - (d) Logic,
 - (e) Psychology,
 - (f) Sociology,
 - (g) Art,

- (h) Physics,
- (i) Chemistry,
- (j) Mathematics,
- (k) Biology,
- (l) Geology, and
- (m) Home Science.
- (iii) Work Experience and Social service
- (iv) Physical Education,
- (v) Art or Craft
- (vi) Education in moral and spiritual values.

As a part of reform in curriculum, the commission suggested the following:

In view of the explosion of knowledge in various fields, school curriculum should be upgraded through research in curriculum development undertaken by university department of Education, Training Colleges, State Institutes of Education and Boards of School Education. Research is needed in the preparation of text books and teaching learning materials.

Teachers should be oriented to the revised curricula through in-service education. Schools should be given freedom to devise and experiment with new curricula suited to their needs. State Board of Education should prepare advanced curricula in all subjects and introduce them in a phased manner in the schools. Science and mathematics should be compulsory in the first ten years of schooling.

An effective programme of social studies is essential for the development of good citizenship and emotional integration. Work experience, social service programmes, physical education and education in moral and spiritual values, co-curricular activities etc. should form integral parts of the school curriculum.

The three-language formula after due modifications should be included:

- (a) The mother tongue or the Regional Language,
- (b) The official language of the union so long as it exists, and

(c) Modern Indian or European language not covered order (a) and (b) and other than that used as a medium of instruction.

Further, the principles of basic education, viz. productive activity, correlation, contact with local community etc. should guide and shape the educational system at all levels and this is the essence of the proposals made in the report.

5. Improvement in the Methods of Teaching:

The commission viewed that the main factors responsible for the dull, monotonous and uninspiring school teaching are the rigidity of the education system, poor competency of the teacher, lack of research on teaching methods and failure of administrative machinery to diffuse new and dynamic methods of teaching.

Therefore, the commission suggested that elasticity and dynamism in the educational system will help the institutions and teachers to proceed along different levels of development.

The educational administration can hasten diffusion of new teaching methods for bringing out elasticity by combining permissiveness and persuasion, approaching new methods according to the ability of schools, giving necessary in-service training to teachers through workshops, seminars, refresher courses, demonstrations etc. and providing revised guide materials.

Besides, lists of minimum teaching aids and equipment needed by each category of schools should be prepared. Teachers should be helped and trained to use in-expensive and local available improvised teaching aids. Teaching aids and equipment will be prepared through workshop.

The commission recommended sharing of costly equipment's with neighbouring schools. Research should be undertaken in the problems and techniques of multiple-class teaching

Above all, it was suggested that there should be the co-ordination between Education Department and All India Radio for maximisation of teaching and optimisation of learning.

6. Quality of Text Book:

The commission felt that in order to raise standards of education, quality text books should be written by a qualified and competent specialist in the subject and produced with due care as far as printing quality and general get up and illustrations are concerned.

At the national level, it is essential that the best talent available in the country should be mobilised to produce the text books and other literature needed both at the school and at the

university stage. The Ministry of Education should take steps to establish, in the public sector, an autonomous organization functioning on commercial lines for the production of text books.

The ministry should set up a small committee to work out the modalities for the preparation of text books.

At the state level, the following are the chief recommendations:

- (i) The effort at the national level should be augmented by the state efforts.
- (ii) The preparation, try out and evaluation of text books should be the responsibility of State Education Department.
- (iii) The sale and distribution of text books are better to be left to student co-operatives.
- (iv) The production of text books and teaching aids should be entrusted to an autonomous agency functioning in close alliance with the Education Department.
- (v) There should be continuous revision and up-to-date of text-books.
- (vi) Provision of multiple choice of text books even for a given class and even if, there is a common syllabus for all the schools.
- (vii) There should be the adoption of liberal policies for remuneration for attracting the best talents to write books.
- (viii) The entire organisation of state production of text books should run on a no-profit or no-loss basis.
- (ix) Manuscripts should be invited, evaluated and approved by a high level committee of professional persons.
- (x) Special encouragement should be given to teachers to write text-books.
- (xi) Text-books should be supplemented by teacher's guides and other instructional materials.
- (xii) The programme of text-book production should consist of three aspects—academic, production and distribution. Academic aspect includes the preparation of text books, try out and evaluation by State Education Department.

Every institution should establish student co-operatives for the storage and sale of text books.

7. Teacher Education:

The commission remarked, "A sound programme of professional education of teachers is essential for the qualitative improvement of education". For streamlining teacher education, the commission recommended that there should be removal of isolation of teacher education from university life, from schools and among the institutions.

For the qualitative improvement of teacher education, there should be reorientation of subject knowledge both independently and in collaboration with university departments, and where necessary, with the arts and science colleges doing post-graduate work. There should be two years duration of the programme for the primary teachers and one year duration for the secondary teachers.

Vitalisation of professional studies should be done to purge its off inadequacy.

There should be the necessity of improving methods of teaching and evaluation in training institutions. Individual library work, preparation of review report, case studies, project work, discussions and seminars should form an integral part of the work of training institutions. The examination system needs continuous reform. There must be a comprehensive programme of internship instead of block teaching.

The pupil teacher should be given opportunities to observe good teaching. There should be continuous practice teaching for a period of at least eight weeks under actual school conditions.

Special courses for teacher educators of primary and secondary training institutes should also be developed and untrained graduate teachers, who are being employed in the schools, need to be oriented in special courses. Further, curriculum should be revised at all levels of teacher education keeping in view the emerging needs of the society.

8. Status of Teachers:

The commission emphasised that necessary efforts should be taken to raise the economic social and professional status of teachers and to feed back talented youth into the profession. Therefore, there is the urgent need of reform to upgrade the scale of pay of teachers. At the school stage, the Govt. of India should lay down the minimum scales of pay for school teachers.

The states and Union Territories should then adopt equivalent or higher scales to pay to suit their local conditions. There should be parity in the pay scales irrespective of difference in management. Liberal central assistance should be given to state governments for improving the salaries of school teachers.

For the promotion, trained graduate teachers having outstanding work should be promoted to the next posts carrying salaries of teachers with post graduate qualification. Advance increment may be given to such teachers.

The UGC should give grants to such teachers to do research in various fields. Normal retirement age for teachers should be 60 years and there should be the provision for extension up to 65 years provided the person is physically fit and mentally alert to discharge his/her duties efficiently.

Retirement benefits should be extended to all the teachers in the service of the State Governments. There should be encouragement of women teachers at a stages of education and teachers working in tribal areas should be given special training and allowance, assistance for the education of their children and residential accommodation.

9. Better School Buildings:

The commission realised that the provision of school buildings is extremely unsatisfactory at present and felt that it is necessary to take steps to clear the backlog of unconstructed school buildings as well as to provide additional buildings for new involvement. The commission suggests earmarking of funds in the budget of centre and states, mobilising community resources, encouraging loans and grants-in-aid for construction of building and on the formation of educational buildings development groups.

10. Establishment of School Complexes:

Each primary school should be integrally related to ten lower primary schools that exist in the neighbourhood so that they form one complex of educational facilities. The headmaster of the higher primary school should provide extension service to the lower primary schools in this system.

The second tier would be a committee under the chairmanship of headmaster of the secondary school which will plan the work and give guidance to all the schools in the area.

11. Development of Talent:

The search for talent must be a continuous process which should be pursued at all stages. A variety of extra-mural programmes should be organised for the talented boys and girls such as summer schools, visit to place of educational interest, provision of hostels and day centres for those whose home environment is not conducive for study.

12. Guidance and Counselling:

Guidance and counseling should be regarded as an integral part of education, meant for all students and aimed at assisting the individual to make decision and adjustments from time to time it should help in the identification and development of the abilities and interests of adolescent pupils.

The ultimate objective should be to introduce adequate guidance services in all secondary schools with a trained counselor in charge of the programme.

13. Identification of Gifted Students:

Steps should be taken immediately to devise suitable techniques for identifying talent at this stage. Each state should organise a testing service at the end of the primary stage (class VII or VIII) and also at the end of lower secondary stage and make the assistance available to all the schools.

14. Evaluation System:

According to Kothari Commission, evaluation is a continuous process, forms an integral part of the total system of education, and is intimately related to educational objectives. It exercises a great influence upon the pupil's study habits and the teacher's method of teaching.

Thus, it helps not only to measure educational achievement but also to improve it. There is the necessity of improving written examinations and other methods such as observation techniques, oral tests and practical examinations for assessing the student's performance.

The commission made the following suggestions with regards to evaluation at different stage education:

(a) At lower primary stage:

1. It would be desirable to treat the lower primary stage covering class I to IV as an ungraded unit, because this would help the children coming from different backgrounds to advance at their own pace.
2. Teachers should be appropriately trained for the ungraded system through regular training courses and orientation programmes.
3. Observation techniques should be used by the teachers in a planned and systematic manner.

(b) At the higher primary stage:

1. In addition to written examinations weightage should be given to oral tests, which should form a part of internal assessment.
2. Introduction of simple cumulative record card in a phased manner for indicating of pupil's growth and development, his/her academic and emotional problems, his/her difficulties in adjustment, etc.

3. There should be external examination at the end of primary stage.
4. By making use of the standardized or refined test material, the district educational authorities may arrange for a common examination at the end of the primary stage for schools in the district.
5. There should be provision for giving certificate along with cumulative record card at the end of the primary class.
6. Special tests may be conducted for the award of scholarships or certificates of merit and for identification of talent.

(c) At the secondary stage:

1. External examinations should be improved by raising the technical competence of paper-setters, objective-based question papers, adoption of scientific scoring procedure, mechanizing the scoring of scripts and the processing of results.
2. The certificates issued by the State Board should give the candidate's performance in different subjects and there should be no remark or the effect that he/she has passed or failed in the whole examination. Permission should also be given for re-appearance or improvement in subjects.
3. A few selected schools should be given freedom of assessing their students themselves and holding their own final examinations at the end of class X, which will be considered as equivalent to the external examination of the State Board.
4. Internal assessment by schools should be comprehensive and should evaluate all aspects of student growth including personality traits, interests, attitudes which cannot be assessed by the external examination system. It should be descriptive as well as quantitative.

The use of standardized achievement test is strongly recommended. There is need for developing tools for internal assessment such as interest inventories, aptitude tests and rating scales. The internal assessment should be shown separately in the mark-sheets and certificates.

5. The commission recommended that the first external examination should be held at the end of class X and the second after class XII which will be end of the higher secondary stage.
6. For the evaluation machinery at the state level, the present secondary boards of school education will be earn its sobriquet 'State Boards of School Education' with enhanced powers and functions. At the centre, there will be a National Board of School Education which will deal with evaluation programmes at the central level.

15. Administration and Supervision:

The commission emphasised an imaginative system of administration and supervision which would be essential for accelerating education reform. For this, it has suggested the common school system of public education, a nation-wide programme of school improvement, re-organisation of the education department and revitalizing the system of supervision.

16. Adult Education:

There should be streamlining of adult education to liquidate illiteracy in the country.

As such, the Commission recommended the following:

(i) There should be a nationwide, coherent and sustained literacy campaign with the involvement of central, state, and local governments, all governmental agencies, all voluntary agencies and private organisations and industries, all educational institutions from universities to primary schools and above all educated men and women in the country.

(ii) The programme should be very carefully planned and that all necessary preparations should be made well ahead in time.

(iii) Early efforts should be taken to liquidate illiteracy within a time-frame. Two-fold strategy should be taken to combat illiteracy.

(1) Under selective approach, programmes should be adopted for specific groups of adults which could be easily identified, controlled and motivated for intensive literacy work.

(2) Under mass approach, all available educated men and women should be mobilised for raising a force to combat illiteracy. The commission recommended that the students from all educational strata should be required to teach the adults as a part of compulsory national service programme. Teachers should be required to teach and participate in the campaign.

(iv) In order to promote literacy among women, condensed courses for women sponsored by the central social welfare board should be adopted. Appointment of village teachers should be encouraged to teach the village women.

(v) The mass media of communication should be effectively used for liquidating illiteracy.

(vi) In order to retain the literacy achieved, literacy campaigns must have adequate follow-up.

(vii) All types of educational institutions should be encouraged and helped to open their doors outside the regular working hours to provide such course of instruction to the people desirous of receiving education.

(viii) Ad-hoc courses should be organised by the leading institutions to help people understand and solve their problems; and acquire wider knowledge and experience.

(ix) Special institutions as run by the central social welfare board for adult women should be set up to spread education among the illiterate people.

(x) The universities should assume responsibilities for educating the adults by resorting to a heap of programmes and they should be adequately financed for establishing department of adult education and Board of Adult education.

17. Correspondence Courses:

Kothari commission strongly recommended that distance education through correspondence courses should be organised in a big way to provide education to the millions:

(i) In order to bring education to those who are unable to attend even part time courses, wide-spread organisation of correspondence courses should be organised.

(ii) Students pursuing courses through correspondence mode should be provided opportunities to meet the teachers occasionally.

(iii) These courses should be supported by well coordinated radio and television programmes.

(iv) These courses should not be confined to preparing students for the university degree but also provide agricultural, industrial and other workers such special courses of instruction as would help them to improve production,

(v) Correspondence courses should be made available for those who desire to enrich their lives by studying subjects of cultural and aesthetic value,

(vi) These courses should be developed for the teachers in schools to keep them abreast with new knowledge and new methods of teaching,

(vii) The Ministry of Education in collaboration with other Ministries should establish National Council of Home Studies,

(viii) Opportunity to take examination conducted by Education Board and Universities in the country should be made available to those who wish to work on their own without any assistance.

18. Education of the Handicapped:

It should be possible to have at least one good institution for the education of handicapped children in each district. The NCERT should have a cell for the study of the handicapped.

19. Pre-primary Education:

The commission said that pre-primary education is of great significance to the physical, emotional and intellectual development of children, especially those with unsatisfactory home background.

(i) The target to be set as an enrolment of 5% in the age groups 3 to 5 and 50% in the age group 5 to 6 in pre-school classes will be a reasonable target by 1986.

(ii) For the development of pre-primary education during the next twenty years, it was suggested that pre-primary education development centres should be set up one in each of state institutes of education and one in each district for the development, supervision and guidance of pre-primary education in the area.

Private enterprise should be made largely responsible for setting up and running pre-primary centres. Encouragement should be given to experimentation in devising less expensive methods of expanding pre-primary education. Children's play centres should be attached to as many primary schools as possible.

The state should maintain at state and district level play centres, train pre-primary teachers, conduct research, assist in the preparation and development of material and literature, provide supervision and guidance to pre-primary schools and training institutes, assist private agencies with liberal grant-in-aid and run model pre-primary schools.

The programme should be flexible and consist of various types of play, manual and learning activities having sensory experiences. Proper co-ordination should be maintained among different agencies that work in the field of pre-primary education.

20. The Indian Education Service:

The creation of the Indian Education service is a step in the right direction and if organised on a proper lines, such a service would help the progress of education.

21. Instructional Days in Institutions:

The number of instructional days in a year should be increased to about 234 (or 39 weeks) for schools and 216 for colleges and pre-primary schools.

22. Academic Year to Begin on the Same Day:

It is desirable to begin the academic year on the same day throughout India. The report of the commission is a milestone in the annals of development of education in post-independence phase in India which is revolutionary in nature and original in its character. The report is truly called the 'magna-carta' of education in India.

Conclusion: The recommendations are unique and draw our attention to the development of education at all stages and in all aspect in order to give a national pattern on education using it as a weapon for the progress of our nation.