

MEN & IDEAS

One Cheer for Mayawati

On July 1, 86 lakh children in class I and II began to learn English in government schools of Uttar Pradesh. It fulfilled a longstanding demand of parents who believe that they have lost two generations to Hindi chauvinists. They know that a child who learns English by age 10 has a natural advantage for the rest of its life. Shortage of English speakers is one reason why software companies, call centres, export oriented industry has been slow in coming to UP and the caricature of the 'bhaiya' persists.

Mayawati's decision on English was hailed by *Dalits*, and for good reason. A study in Mumbai shows that among *Dalit* women, those who learn English rise economically and socially by marrying outside their caste. About 31% of *Dalit* women who knew English had inter-caste marriages compared to 9% who did not know English. This makes sense. Knowing English gives a *Dalit* woman a chance to work in call centres and other modern jobs where there are fewer caste barriers. Is Mayawati finally realising that there may be more votes in meeting people's real needs than in erecting statues to Ambedkar? She has also ordered toilets for girls in 90,000 primary schools.

It must have taken some courage to challenge the teachers' union and the Hindi establishment. So, why do I offer only a single cheer to Mayawati? I would give her three cheers had she attacked the basic disease of teacher absenteeism. The famous Kremer-Murlidharan report shows that one in four teachers is not present in school, and one in four present is not teaching. As a result, 53.1% of UP's children in Class V cannot read a Class II text, according to ASER surveys. Nearly 67.2% of children in urban UP and 29.1% in rural UP are now in private schools. What is the answer? Quite simply, the government should fund students and not schools.

When a child reaches age 5, the government should give parents a voucher (like a scholarship), which can only be exchanged for education at a school of the



school for their kids, vouchers will create competition among schools. As vouchers will be the only source of a school's income, and as teachers will be paid salaries only from vouchers, teachers will show up and even teach with inspiration. Teachers will have an incentive to perform. Good teachers will be able to earn more thanks to higher voucher income earned by their school. Teacher morale will thus rise. They will be accountable to parents rather than remote officials in the state capital.

Competition for vouchers will improve both government and private schools. Bad schools will close down, good ones will flourish. The poorest parents will be able to send their child to a quality school. The ability to exit their children from a bad school is hugely empowering — it is like having a 'voice' in a democracy. The rich have it because of their money power. Vouchers will give them purchasing power and a 'voice'. A poor child will get the same opportunity as a rich one to rise in the world, and we will progress to our dream of equality of opportunity.

Mayawati used to be a teacher. So, she will appreciate this public-private partnership. Teachers' unions will oppose her, of course. She will be scared of losing lakhs of teachers' votes, but she must remember that she will gain crores of votes of grateful parents. I'm convinced that more and more sensible policies will come from *Dalit*/OBC leaders who have fewer vested interests to protect (like teachers' unions).

URL: http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/Opinion/Columnists/One_cheer_for_Mayawati/articleshow/3227306.cms

Gurcharan Das
Trustee,

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"It must have taken some courage to challenge the teachers' union and the Hindi establishment. So, why do I offer only a single cheer to Mayawati? I would give her three cheers had she attacked the basic disease of teacher absenteeism."



**PERSPECTIVE
Three Cheers !**

One step in the right direction...that is all it takes to re-write the destiny of people. Because, just as a nation is but its citizens put together, the progress of people is but the progresses of its individuals put together. Therefore, when a government takes a step in the right direction, especially in the crucial education sector, it is time to cheer. We are talking of the recent initiatives of the governments of Uttarakhand and Rajasthan.

While the other state governments are limiting their education initiatives mostly to building new schools and enrolling more students in their records, the two state governments are busy creating newer options to take education to all its children, thereby setting new trends for others to follow. The Uttarakhand government, in a first of its kind initiative for India, has launched a PPP



(Public Private Partnership) program to bring the rag picker children of the state's capital into the fold of mainstream schooling. Called **Pehel**, the program has benefited 208 children in its first year. The government has used the idea of School Vouchers, the central idea of our School Choice Campaign, to devise a unique PPP model to take schooling to these slum children of Dehradun. While the government, through vouchers, pays only 3000 rupees per child per year, five private schools are providing these children not just regular class room education but also with uniforms, text books and stationery. This year, the schools also provided a two month bridge course to the children and much needed counselling to their parents.

Thus, **Pehel** is praise worthy, not just for utilising private enterprise to build social infrastructure or for involving poor parents in the education of their children, but also for costing the state exchequer less than half the amount it would have cost the government to provide these children schooling in a regular government school.

Basing its PPP models too on the idea of vouchers, the Rajasthan government has launched the **Gyanodaya** and the **Shikshak ka Apna School** schemes. Where the former seeks to involve NGOs and corporate houses in providing secondary schooling to its children, the latter has been created to meet the twin objectives of providing employment opportunity to enterprising trained unemployed teachers and bringing financial prudence in running government schools that cater to just a handful of children.

A good look at these fresh ideas reveal the desire of the policy makers for accountability in and better utilization of government resources. This country will achieve real progress in human resource development only when such desire and similar initiatives can be attributed to the other states also.

Baladeyan Rangaraju
Associate Director,
School Choice Campaign

FACTSHEET

Data for All of India

- % Distribution of classrooms having good condition **72.96**
- % Single Teacher Schools (All Schools) **11.76**
- % Schools having Girl's Toilet in School (All schools) **42.58**
- % Schools having Drinking Water Facility in School (All schools) **84.89**
- % Primary Schools having Pupil-Teacher Ratio \geq 60 **17.44**
- % Primary Schools with \leq 3 Teachers **60.33**
- Retention Rate at Primary Level **70.26**

Source : *Flash Statistics : Elementary Education in India: Progress towards UEE, based on DISE data for the year 2006-07, National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2008.*

IN THE NEWS

RIGHT TO EDUCATION BILL REFERRED TO GoM

The Hindu, 8 August 2008

The Union Cabinet on Friday, August 8, referred the Right to Education Bill 2005 to the Group of Ministers (GoM). Therefore plans to make free and compulsory education a right of every child are likely to be delayed further. The bill seeks to provide right to children in the 6-14 age group to get free education till completion of elementary education in a neighbourhood school. Science and Technology Minister Kapil Sibal said the bill has been referred to the GoM because there was discussion about the extent to which the state governments should contribute. He said Prime Minister Manmohan Singh indicated that the bill was a priority for his government and should be implemented before the term of the UPA government ends.

URL : <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/001200808081523.htm>

INDIA MUST ADDRESS PROBLEMS CONCERNING TEACHERS : THAROOR

The Hindu, 8 August 2008

Speaking at a function to launch 'Guruvar Awards' for teachers, former United Nations Under Secretary General Shashi Tharoor said that right to education will not be a reality in India unless problems concerning teachers are addressed. He further said that right education can only become reality when India addresses the problem of teachers and make teaching an attractive profession.

URL : <http://www.hindu.com/thehindu/holnus/001200808081759.htm>

STAKEHOLDERS NEEDED TO LIBERALISE EDUCATION IN INDIA : MONTEK

The Economic Times, 3 August 2008

Speaking during the inauguration of the Symbiosis School of Economics, Planning Commission deputy chairman Montek Singh Ahluwalia said the education sector needs some "vocal stake holders" to bring about liberalisation. At present, only 11% of Indians pursue higher education. Ahluwalia said that this is not acceptable. The Planning Commission has set a target of 21% in the 11th Five Year Plan. "We need double the number of colleges and this is not possible through public sector participation alone," he said.

URL : http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/Features/The_Sunday_ET/Stakeholders_needed_to_liberalise_education_in_India_Montek/article/eshow/3319817.cms

SCHOOL CHOICE CAMPAIGN
National Campaign Update

Rajasthan >>>>

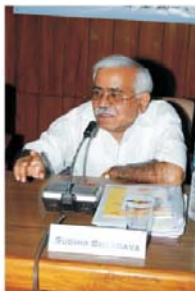


CCS conducted a one day interactive workshop on 30 July 2008 for the Rajasthan Education Department on Education Vouchers in the context of the *Gyanodaya* and *Shikshak Ka Apna School* schemes launched by the Government of Rajasthan in its 2008-2009 Budget. Shri Sudhir Bhargava, Principal Secretary-School Education, Government of Rajasthan, delivered the keynote address and Srimati Veenu Gupta, Secretary, School Education, Government of Rajasthan shared the details of the two schemes with the Directors of Education and the various District Education Officers (DEOs) who would be the on ground implementers and the heads of key NGOs working for education like UNICEF.

The *Gyanodaya* : scheme in which charitable and private institutions will be allowed to establish senior secondary and secondary schools at *panchayat* headquarters with help from the government. The Panchayat headquarters for the pilot phase will be selected based on immediate need and where children have no access currently.



The *Shikshak Ka Apna Vidhyalaya* : scheme will allow trained unemployed teachers to adopt government schools with very less enrolment or to build new ones for which the government would extend help. Both the schemes will be launched in a phased manner and use education vouchers, coupons with which parents will be able to choose their wards' school and play active role in their children's education.



the first copy of the two schemes *Gyanodaya* and *Shikshak Ka Apna Vidyalaya*.

Centre for Civil Society (CCS), soon to become the Knowledge Partner of the Government will share its research findings with Rajasthan and offer technical expertise in the implementation of these two new schemes. The occasion was also used to release

<<<< Uttar Pradesh

The culmination event for the first phase of the School Choice Mass Campaign, which focused primarily on generating awareness and collecting signatures, will be held in September in Allahabad and Lucknow respectively. During these events the demand for school choice right, documented as signed requests from more than 12 lakh citizens will be presented to the political leadership. Volunteers and citizen groups will also meet to consolidate their efforts. These events will also symbolize the launch of the second phase of the campaign, which will focus largely on advocating school choice ideas with the policy makers to find suitable solutions for existing problems in the education sector.

<<<< Jharkhand

The culmination event of the first phase of the School Choice Mass Campaign will be held in September. Citizen group representatives from all the districts will convene at Ranchi where signed requests from more than 3 lakh people will be presented to the political leadership. The event will also symbolize the launch of the second phase of the campaign.

<<<< Orissa

Consultation on Innovative Solutions for Schooling Problems in Difficult to Reach Areas to be organized by the Human Development Foundation of Bhubaneswar in the second week of September. The consultation will be between CCS and SSA (Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan), Education Department and other stake holders.

<<<< Q & A

ARE VOUCHERS ANTI-GOVERNMENT? IS IT PRIVATIZATION OF EDUCATION THAT IS ANTI POOR?

This is not at all anti-government. However it is pro-competition. If the government schools were better than private schools, then parents wanting the best for their children would shift their children to government schools.

It does not involve privatization of any kind. Public and private schools co-exist under this system.



STUDENT FIRST!

SCHOOL CHOICE BULLETIN ISSUE 06, AUGUST '08

WRITE TO US...

"In this day when all we hear of is reservations in education and bloated up education expenditures, which hardly modify the state of school education, an innovative policy such as the school choice is warmly welcome. We have experienced an exponential growth in education after the delicensing of the market. The education policy is still shackled by the unreasonable policies of the state. A free market approach to this problem is definitely right. With parents having the right to choose the school they want to send their children to, the government schools are definitely going to feel the heat. Do keep us updated on the campaign through the student first periodical."

Karan Verma, Student

Please send in your feedback at : studentfirst@ccs.in



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