

Unit 7

Politics of Educational Curriculum

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Learning Objectives

After going through this unit, you will be able to discuss the:

- inextricable link between educational curriculum and politics;
- play of politics and power in colonial education; and
- critical issues in women's education as a means of empowerment.

7.1 Introduction

In the previous units we have read that education and ideology are interrelated with each other. The educational curriculum is not designed just by keeping the child in mind. Several societal, cultural, economic, and political reasons play active roles in shaping the curriculum. Since knowledge defines the identity of a nation to a large extent, education comes to constitute an important part of the political agenda. It is used as an effective tool of indoctrinating people with all that helps political regimes to fulfill their specific political ends.

We begin this unit with a broad overview of major theoretical approaches to the understanding of curriculum from a sociological perspective, then go on to explore how colonialists used education as a means to consolidate their power and exercise control over people. Thereafter, we will delve into the politics of language and medium of instruction on the one hand and the interrelationship between education and politics in a comparative framework on the other.

7.2 Concept and Perspectives on Curriculum Planning

In its original sense, 'curriculum' refers to, 'running' or 'race course'. The term 'course' is derived from the Latin verb *currere*, which means 'to run'. Curriculum, therefore, provides a structure to students and guides them in the process of instruction. "The etymological metaphor can be extended to designate not only a race course but also a journey, expedition, or even privilege" (*Encyclopedia of Educational Research* 1982). The term curriculum should be distinguished from syllabus. Curriculum denotes not just the mere content of a particular subject or area of a study, but the total programme of an educational institution. The curriculum delineates the overall rationale of the educational programme of an institution (Kelly 1982). The concept of the curriculum is present though implicitly in the earliest educational programmes of civilized societies, but curriculum as a field of systematic enquiry emerged only during the early 1920s. Kliebard (1982) identifies the year 1918 as the junction when "curriculum emerged as a self conscious field of study."

Stenhouse (1975:5) defines curriculum as “the means by which the experience of attempting to put an educational proposal into practice is made publicly available. It involves both content and method, and in its widest application takes account of the problem of implementation in the institutions of the educational system.” He suggests that a curriculum should provide a basis for planning a course, studying it empirically and justifying its very basis. According to Rohit Dhankar (2000), a good curriculum framework should be a system of most basic principles and assumptions, capable of providing a rational basis for curricular choices. Curricular choices are not limited to just what should be taught, but indicate choices regarding how to teach, under what conditions, by whom, with what teaching aids, how the evaluation should be carried out, and so on. In other words, the spectrum of choices define what schools should be doing and how. Often, curricular decisions have to do with the choice of knowledge, values, and/or skills to be included or excluded from the programme of education. Alternatively, they relate with the method of developing these abilities in children.

It is important to understand that there are two necessary and complementary ways of looking at the curriculum framework which Posner terms as curriculum development technique and a curriculum conscience. The curriculum development technique is also known as the Technical Production Perspective which refers to the expertise in developing a curriculum, and getting to know its technical and procedural aspects. Curriculum Conscience or the Critical Perspective refers to the ability to identify the assumptions underlying the curriculum, i.e., what is being taken for granted, and its critical understanding comes under curriculum conscience (Posner 1998).

a) Technical Production Perspective

The technical production perspective provides a view of rationality in curriculum planning and outlines the techniques which the curriculum planner should keep in mind while formulating the curriculum. Ralph Tyler uses the technical production perspective. Its prevailing influence on the entire curriculum understanding cannot be sidelined. It is important to note that till date most of the theoretical work on the curriculum revolves around the framework that he developed. Tyler’s work addresses the steps which one should follow while making a curriculum. The four steps suggested by him deal with (i) the selection of the educational purposes; (ii) the determination of experiences; (iii) the organization of experiences; and (iv) the provision for evaluation. Hilda Taba (1962) refines the Tylerian approach, and further subdivides Tyler’s four planning steps. Taba accepts the basic assumption that curriculum planning is a technical or scientific process rather than being a political matter. She favours a systematic, objective, scientific, and research-oriented approach to curriculum development. She too lays stress on objectivity and considers it pertinent for curriculum development. Curriculum designs are to be in accordance with the verifiable consequence on learning or to their contribution to educational objectives. Like Tyler, Taba accepts the assumption that learning is the ultimate purpose of schooling. She focuses on the selection and organization of learning experiences, with emphasis on the learning outcomes and learning objectives in her evaluation approach. Her approach is more prescriptive than Tyler’s procedure of curriculum planning.

Posner (1998) critically looks at the Tylerian framework and finds that schooling is assumed to be a process the main purpose of which is to promote or produce learning. Tyler speaks of students as learners. He treats objectives as desirable learning outcomes. The evaluation of the school’s process is solely measured by the achievement test scores. Tyler also distinguishes between educational goals and non-educational goals by determining if they could be attributed to learning. The framework also defines curriculum in terms of intended learning outcome. Schooling is, therefore, reduced to a production system in which individual learning outcomes are the primary product.

Tyler's framework evinces a scientific approach towards curriculum planning. It is seen as an enterprise in which the planner objectively and scientifically develops the means necessary to produce the desired learning outcomes. He gives no space to personal biases and prejudices and looks at it in a neutral way. He adheres to means-end reasoning and sees the entire process of curriculum planning as embodying rational decisions that are devoid of the personal reflection of the planners. The entire process is seen in a mechanical mode and the scientific inclination of his work is evident in his rationale and in the questions that are posited.

This perspective of curriculum development is found unacceptable on several counts, more so because it negates the complex forms of personal and mental development. Educational objectives are more than the behavioral objectives of intended learning outcomes. This instrumental approach to knowledge and education is largely debunked as it espouses the passive model of the man. In the words of Stenhouse (1975:4) the behavioral, instrumental perception defines the curriculum as, "all of the planned experiences provided by the school to assist the pupils in attaining the designated learning outcomes to the best of their abilities". He found this behavioral objective definition of the curriculum extremely problematic, and suggested that meaningful curriculum seeks to communicate the essential principles and features of an educational proposal in such a form that it is open to critical scrutiny and is capable of effective translation into practice.

b) Critical Perspective

The dominant technical production perspective was put into question by the critical perspective. This perspective takes a more critical approach and questions the authority of experts in curriculum planning. The idea of the value-free curriculum decision is given up in this approach. Hence, it also undermines the technical production assumption that curriculum development involves a purely technical, scientific and rational process. Rather, curriculum development is seen as a political and ideological matter. Underlying this framework is the view that "power, knowledge, ideology, and schooling are linked in ever changing patterns of complexity" (see Beyer and Apple 1998: 194).

7.3 Educational Curriculum and the Politics of Domination

The whole issue of politics of educational curriculum is rooted in the critical appropriation of the culture of those who dominate the people who are dominated. The former seek to deplore and treat as inferior the culture and knowledge system of the latter. One of the means through which the people who are dominated begin to treat their own culture as inferior is the educational curriculum. When this happens, it becomes easy to dominate them completely and strengthen one's own position. This aspect of education may be better understood in the light of the fact that dominant groups often use the educational curriculum as a channel through which the nature and extent of their dominance is communicated while the representation of others is largely enfeebled. Many of us are aware that the charge of designing and executing the curriculum is often in the hands the bureaucracy of education which itself is controlled by the state and political groups. It is, therefore, only natural that the educational curriculum serves the interests of the section of influential group of people.

From a traditional standpoint, schools were treated as places where instructions were imparted by the teachers to the students. They were sites for transmission of knowledge of importance to the existing society. What clearly escaped attention was the viewpoint that schools were also sites of

contestation among different cultural and economic groups. This somewhat simplistic conception of school education in general and educational curriculum in particular was challenged by new sociology of education which emerged forcefully in England and the United States some time in the 1970s. Radical critics argued that knowledge imparted in schools could be best understood as representing dominant culture. This is made possible through processes of selective emphases and exclusions. We know that there are different kinds of schools serving different sections of people in society. Some cater to the elite and the privileged, others cater to the middle class, while yet others cater to the poor and the disempowered. There are also some schools (eg., Delhi Tamil Education Association i.e. DTEA schools) that are established with the purpose of integrating cultural knowledge with school curriculum. It is commonly felt that children from schools for the elite, and the influential, develop cognitive skills and perspective that equips them better and privileged to succeed in life.

Box 7.1: The New Sociology of Education

“Against the claim that schools were only instructional sites, radical critics pointed to the transmission and reproduction of a dominant culture in schools, with its selective ordering and privileging of specific forms of languages, modes of reasoning, social relations, and cultural forms and experiences. In this view, culture was linked to power and to the imposition of a specific set of ruling class codes and experiences. Moreover, school culture functioned not only to confirm and privilege students from the dominant classes but also through exclusion and insult to discredit the histories, experiences, and dreams of subordinate groups. Finally, against the assertion made by traditional educators that schools were relatively neutral instructions, radical critics illuminated the way in which the state, through its selective grants, certification policies, and legal powers, shaped school practice in the interest of capitalist rationality” (Giroux 1985: XV).

The dominant culture gets repeatedly reproduced through specific social practices and texts in which the voices of the oppressed are silenced. Those who hold power are the ones who decide what kind of knowledge is worthwhile enough to be passed on to future generation. Naturally, this entails giving importance to knowledge of certain groups at the cost of others. As students of the sociology of education we need to look into the content of curriculum, social relations between and among teachers and students rigorously. Also, we need to understand how specific ideologies are perpetuated through the curriculum (see Freire 1985, Apple 1990). Is there no hope for the dominated and oppressed? Will their voices never be heard? The working class, research communities, women’s groups and others do possess the potential to develop a critical perspective and to identify the oppression and domination of a group of people. This would lead to the production and dissemination of knowledge that has a bearing on the needs of the people and in doing so resist and counteract cultural manipulation in favour of decentralization of control.

a) Colonial Education in India

All kinds of knowledge cannot be considered worth imparting. Political and economic considerations determine the validity or appropriateness of any knowledge. It is this validity of knowledge that decides its inclusion or omission from the curriculum framework. Educational aims have a historical character, and they change over time. Kumar (2005) effectively points out the ideological roots of colonial education. Education helped the British in dominating Indians ideologically, which strengthened colonial rule. He explains that by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the British Empire had almost won this part of the continent. The main objective then became empire building. The colony was

to be maintained so that it could generate profits for long. In this light the reformist and the educationist attempts came into light. The colony was won with force and coercion, but the long-term sustenance required social order and peace. Education was supposed to replace coercion with socialization since education was an important socializing agent that would turn natives into loyal citizens of the British state.

In colonial India, education provided the great moral agenda of colonialism. The colonial state saw itself as the protector of the 'ignorant masses' given to emotional and irrational behaviour. The colonialists felt that the only effective way of controlling the passions and irrationality among Indians was rationality and scientific reasoning which could be imparted through education. In doing so, the colonialists were able to entrench their position and exercise greater control over the masses.

Box 7.2 : Bombay Report of 1844

"One of the main duties of Government in modern times is to protect one class of its subjects, the weak, the unwary, the helpless, in one word the large majority, from the unprincipled few, and the remedy, acknowledged to be the most available one, is to inspire the bulk of the population with the desire, and to afford them the means, of acquiring as much exact knowledge as possible on the various subjects and idea..." (Kumar 2005 :34).

English administrators of the mid-nineteenth century answered the question of what is worth teaching in terms of their limited understanding of and interest in Indian culture and the local knowledge. Macaulay in his Minutes of 1835 states this ethnocentric attitude in the following words, "a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia" (cited from Young 1935). Macaulay's Minutes also pronounced that any kind of spending on Sanskrit and Arabic learning would be a dead loss. The Minutes stated, "What we spend on the Arabic and Sanskrit colleges is not merely a dead loss to the cause of truth; it is bounty-money paid to raise up champions of error. It goes to form a nest, not merely of helpless place-hunters, but of bigots prompted alike by passion and by interest to raise a cry against every useful scheme of education". On the above grounds we can say that the colonial education strengthened its hold by systematic rejection of indigenous knowledge and replacing it with knowledge as well as the culture of the colonialists themselves. In 1835, the Governor-General William Bentinck, agreed with Macaulay's Minutes and wrote, "the great object of the British Government ought to be the promotion of European literature and science among the natives of India," thus promoting and establishing a permanent position for the use of the English language in Indian educational institutions (Young 1935).

During the early nineteenth century, the East India Company took steps to establish an education system in India. Some of the major decisions taken were the following:

- 1) the new system would be governed by a bureaucracy at every stage from primary schooling onwards, and in all aspects including the structure of syllabi, the content of textbooks, and teacher training;
- 2) the new system would aim at acculturating Indian children and youth in European attitudes and perceptions, and at imparting to them the skills required for working in the colonial administration, particularly at its middle and lower rungs;
- 3) the teaching of English and its use as medium of instruction would be a means of this acculturation and training;

- 4) indigenous schools would have to conform to the syllabus and textbooks prescribed by the colonial government if they wanted to seek government aid;
- 5) impersonal, centralized examinations would be used to assess students' eligibility for promotion and to select candidates for scholarships (Kumar 2004: 25 -26).

This kind of colonial set up ensured that the people at large consumed the knowledge provided by the ruler that would thwart their initiative and confidence to generate knowledge.

Kumar (2004, 2005) presents the argument that the text-book centered character of education in India is related to the historical circumstances under which India's present education system developed. The completely bureaucratized, mechanistic education system that they introduced reinforced culturally what colonial policies were aiming to achieve economically. Education involved training in unproductive skills and socialization in colonial perceptions. Furthermore, the colonial pedagogy, and education continued even after colonial rule. After independence, the education system continues to be based on the colonial policies of examinations and the prescriptions of textbooks. Colonial rule still plays a significant role in deciding what should be considered valid in school knowledge. Kumar asserts that a link exists between the selection of school knowledge that was made under colonial rule and present day pedagogy and curricula. In colonial India the job of deciding, selecting and shaping school knowledge was performed by the 'enlightened outsiders'. In independent India this role is taken up by educated Indians. They have become the 'enlightened outsiders' to the masses. Our educational curriculum is delinked from the people's knowledge and skills primarily because these were considered deficient and worthless by colonialists. The colonialists felt that the introduction of education based on colonial culture and value system was of little use to the people of India. What happened in the process was the widening of the gap between school curriculum and the ethos and home environment of the learner. In the present day too, education continues to play an ameliorative role and remains widely separated from the lived lives of people.

Reflection and Action 7.1

Discuss the role of education in colonial times.

b) Politics of Language

Language is more than a means of communication. The issue of language is highly charged and political. This section will elaborate on the politics that was involved in the Hindi-Urdu divide and the reasons for their adoption in the educational curriculum. The reason for the adoption of Hindi as the language of the future nation was a political question and has been a controversial one. This question has been surrounded by the politics of the freedom struggle, and this gradually was also associated with the idea of nation making. By the mid-nineteenth century two 'distinct' languages had begun to be associated with two 'communities', namely, Hindus and Muslims. By the twentieth century both the communities identified themselves with their own language. They created and used Hindi/Urdu divide to maintain their distinctive nature.

Kumar (2005) makes the point that it was not until the end of the nineteenth century that any writer of Hindi wrote in a style entirely devoid of Urdu. Both the languages were inextricably linked. The differentiation between Hindi and Urdu got deepened as the two languages got increasingly associated with Hinduism and Islam, and were largely used for political ends. It was in the

twentieth century that both the writers had prejudices against each other. Organizations like Arya Samaj took steps to develop the self-perception of the Hindu community with the Hindi language. In the 1920s this Hindi-Hindu association was gaining strength. Formal Hindi, which was developing in this time devoid of Urdu, was the vehicle of upper caste intellectuals. This language was also being used for educational purposes. The use of Hindustani (a mixture of Hindi and Urdu), was referred to as the language of the 'bazaar' or of the common masses, which could not fulfill the requirements of a national language. Though the works of Premchand and Gandhi favoured Hindustani over Sanskritized Hindi works, their arguments were rejected on the grounds that a language like Hindustani would not be able to carry out the important task of nation-building.

Language was getting associated with the politics of nation making. This movement for Sanskritized Hindi was against the use of Hindustani which was spoken by ordinary people. This Sanskritized Hindi was considered as a medium of serious discourse, as it was not amenable to the common people. It was the language of the educated elite people. For the ideology of nation-building they used their own language and suppressed the minority cultures and their dialects. The earlier unit explained how the language of the dominant group is given higher importance by shrouding the control exercised by language under the ideology of nation-building. Urdu, as distinct from the Sanskritized Hindi, became a symbol for Muslims and for the Pakistan also (Kumar 2005).

The politics of the freedom struggle can be seen in the politics of language that got perpetuated through school education. Kumar points out that this divide between Sanskritized Hindi and Urdu strengthened the reproductive role of education. We are aware of the role of education in maintaining and in further perpetuating inequality in society. The politics of the freedom struggle was also assuring this reproductive function of education through language. All children cannot learn and cannot feel comfortable in the school environment and in the school curriculum that relies heavily on Sanskritized Hindi. Only the children of the upper castes would be able to reap the benefits of this kind of education system because in their homes too they speak the same language. This preference for formal Hindi subsided the importance of other regional languages like Awadhi, Bundelkhandi, Chhatisgarhi, Bhojpuri and several others. It is important to note that the 'new' Hindi did not just alienate the Urdu speaking community but also those who communicated in other dialects of the Hindi language. It restricted the fruits of education to a few and so facilitated political control over the masses. The language to be used in the educational curriculum has not much to do with the learner-centered approach. The decisions on educational questions like what to teach, and in which language to teach is devoid of the learner. It is the politics that decides on such educational issues and not a learner (Kumar 2005).

Reflection and Action 7.2

Do you think education should be imparted in regional languages? Discuss with your co-learners at the study centre.

c) Women's Education

We are aware of the socializing role of education. Education works as a deep socializing agent and has indelible effects on young minds and personality. This section asserts how girls' education became an instrument in the hands of awakened men and served their ideology. Women's education, its relevance,

and its curriculum reflect the inextricable link with politics. Women's education is always considered instrumental in serving certain political objectives. In the Indian context, women's education found specific relevance during colonial period, and one witnessed the setting up of institutions of learning for women and girls by the social reformers and the British government. In this section we will critically look at women's education in colonial times and discuss the perspective of the NCF on women's education.

Kumar (2004, 2005) asserts that the nature and content of female education was a matter of grave concern in the late nineteenth century. Modern education that was getting prevalent at that time was causing anxiety among the Indians. On the contrary, the modern education for men was not the cause of concern. Modern education aspired to weaken the forces of oppressive institutions like patriarchy. National leaders as well as social reformers felt that modern education to girls would be a great threat to the fabric of Indian society. The other widespread fear was that the educated, modern women would not be devoted towards their family responsibilities, and would try to be equal to men. Instead of being able to question, women's education was designed to suit the patriarchal ideology. He points that special provision was being made for subjects and items of knowledge appropriate in view of a girl's future role as wife and mother. The curriculum was decided on the logic of appropriateness of knowledge for girls. This reflected the image of home as the primary space for a woman and the family as the essential arena for the exercise of her talent. The knowledge and skills that seemed to be relevant were cooking, music, painting, needlework and first aid.

Kumar (2005) mentions that the 'awakened' men of the late nineteenth century were remarkably conservative in their attitudes towards modern education for women. Girls' education designed by them ensured that patriarchy and the hierarchy in gender relations continue. The curriculum imparted to women was designed in accordance with the interests of males and the patriarchal institutions. The selection of the knowledge and skills like the introduction of cooking and sewing in schools for girls served the patriarchal ideology and restricted the arena of women to the home only. Education, instead of emancipating women, became the tool of maintaining the hierarchy of gender relations. Education was used to socialize girls to become diligent wives and devoted mothers when they grew up.

Chatterjee (1989) looks at the issue of women's education more critically. For him, in colonial India, culture was conceptualized in two realms – the material and the spiritual. Western civilization was powerful in the material sphere, which includes science, technology, and modern methods of statecraft. Through these tools European countries subjugated non-European people and imposed their domination. The nationalist ideology believed that to overcome this domination, the colonized people must learn superior techniques of organizing material life. But this did not imply the imitation of the West in every aspect of life as that would blur the distinction between the West and the East. The Eastern identity in that situation would be completely dissolved and the national culture would be threatened. The Indian nationalist believed that the spiritual domain of the East was superior to the West and the former needed to emulate the latter only in the material sphere. The nationalist ideology identified the need to develop the material techniques of modern civilization and at the same time retain and strengthen the distinctive spiritual vigour of the national culture. He superimposes the material/spiritual dichotomy on gender roles. On that basis, the outside material world was perceived to be the domain of men, while women represented home and the spiritual self. The nationalist ideology felt that though the European people challenged and dominated the non-Europeans because of their (former) superior material power, it failed to colonize

the inner identity of the East, which is the superior, distinctive, spiritual culture of the East. The national struggle felt the crucial need of protecting, preserving and strengthening the spiritual essence. The education of women was selected and modified to suit the nationalist ideology, as the latter believed that women symbolize this spiritual self of the nation.

There was no denial of the fact that India had to catch up with the West, and to achieve that the women of the nation were to be urgently educated. But this education should seethe with traditional and national values, and should not be left to the alien colonial state or the missionaries. Women's education was considered very pertinent for the freedom struggle. Hence it can be said that the nature and content of women's education were highly regulated against modernized education. It was felt that by imparting modern education to women, India would loose its 'distinctiveness' as a nation, which had to be 'created' in the first place, and then had to be 'sustained' through women's education. Men were imparted the role of being contenders for modernity and modernization, and so to take hold of the public domain to fight the white, modern, technocratic counterpart, while women were supposed to be the savior of the tradition and of Indian values. Therefore, national leaders and social reformers conceded on the relevance of education for women, but completely sanctioned the unregulated, western education for them (Bhog 2002).

Tracing women's education, Bhattacharya (2001) writes that there would be a time when natives would realize the benefit of female education as a means to rise in civilization and to advance social happiness and progress. They would understand that women had as much right to exercise and enjoy all the rights, privileges, and duties of this world as men. It is clear that women's education was not so much an end as it was a means to an end - the betterment of the family and the nation. Women's role was reduced the raising sons for the nation. Kumar (2005) points out that the reformers viewed education as the 'means of women's upliftment.' Very few awakened people saw the relevance of education in providing new avenues and a new place to women. Ramabai, for example, was a scholar of high repute, who worked towards women's emancipation, and was against the conservative, patriarchal structure of India. Her conceptualization of education was different from the majority of social reformers and nationalists of that time. She advocated modern education to all the women, as only that could ensure women's liberation from the clutches of patriarchy. The major task that education was supposed to perform was to give women a new self-identity, rather than uplifting her status. It is important for us to note that what needed to be taught to women was not decided by keeping the woman, her aspirations, and her needs in mind. Rather they were decided by having the broader and larger category of nation at the center. It may be concluded that women's education in colonial times suited the nationalist and the patriarchal ideology.

7.4 National Curriculum Framework

Till the year 1976 the Indian Constitution allowed the State Governments to take decisions on all matters pertaining to school education, including the design and development of the curriculum. All the educational matters were within the jurisdiction of the State. The Centre could only provide guidance to the States on policy issues. In 1976 the Constitution was amended to include education in the Concurrent List. For the first time in 1986 the country as a whole had a uniform National Policy on Education. The National Policy on Education (1986) entrusted NCERT with the responsibility of developing the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and review the framework at frequent intervals. Since then, NCERT has taken the initiatives of designing the NCF at intermitent intervals.

The framers of NCF 2000 operated under the assumption that Indians do not recognize the greatness of their glorious past. They pin responsibility for this on those who ruled the country, and made it bereft of its own culture. The NCF laments that though Indian children know about Newton, most of them are ignorant about the contribution of Aryabhata. They do know about computer, but are not aware of the advent of the concept of zero (*shunya*) or the decimal system. The alien rulers did not allow knowledge which related to the country's own ethos, reality, culture and people to be imparted through educational curriculum because they thought that the indigenous knowledge and practices were deficient. Here, reference is made to alien rulers and not to the British specifically. Therefore, it refers to the primordial past which was dominated by the Mughals and then by the British. The NCF 2000 can be questioned on its stand on vocational education. It gives importance to vocational education, but does not make it uniform for the entire society. The NCF 2005 accepts that, work education and vocational education are an integral component of our school education system and that work experience can develop an understanding of facts and principles involved in various forms of work and inculcate a positive attitude towards work. Work experience is treated as purposive and meaningful work organized as an integral part of the learning process. Therefore, we can say that it also aims to work towards merging the gap between mental and manual labor. But the paradox in the above objectives comes when the NCF 2000 segregates vocational education from the mainstream academic stream. The framework widens the gap between the two by introducing separate vocational and academic streams after class X.

The NCF mentions that the vocational stream is designed for the socially disadvantaged groups such as women, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and physically challenged people. Instead of providing equality of opportunity through a uniform pattern of education, NCF 2000 further introduced class divisions into education and further rigidified division of labor. Vocational education was used to widen the gap between the haves and the have nots. The NCF 2000 worked on the assumption that for the majority of students, the higher secondary stage may be the end of their formal education. They could be trained to be part of the world of work, and so should be imparted vocational education. This section of society was not compliant with the education system, and so witnessed higher dropout rate. The NCF provide a solution to this problem by restricting them to vocational education to become efficient workers. There was an equally explicit assumption that the future leadership would emerge from the academic stream, from those who went to the tertiary stage of education (Rajesh 2002). The following two excerpts from the NCF 2000 explain this clearly:

- i) "For the majority of students the higher secondary stage may prove terminal. For them, it would serve as a doorway to life and, more importantly, to the world of work" (pp. 63).
- ii) While the top leadership would be provided by a small minority, to be groomed at the tertiary level, in every department of life. The second or intermediate level of leadership on a much wider scale would have to be provided by the products of the higher secondary stage. They are expected to make a meaningful contribution to our developmental efforts in agriculture, industry, business and various other social services" (pp. 64).

This division in the academic and vocational streams perpetuates the divisions in society, as one section of society is prepared to take up a vocation and make an earning to support oneself and the family while the other section would plan and participate in the development process of the nation. This division, in essence, trains the dominant section of society to rule the rest, and be the future leaders. It envisages different education for the two streams, and instead of putting in steps to narrow the gap between the vocational and

the academic stream, it turns them into two watertight compartments. Rajesh (2002) questions the intention of the NCF in promoting the dual and unequal system. The objectives and the expectations from both the streams are completely different. The academic and vocational distinction crops up from the already existing social divisions in society, and further perpetuates future job divisions. Those who are destined to get vocational education will fit the blue-collar work force, while those who will be endowed with academic training will do white-collar job. The NCF 2004 was intended to build a cohesive society based on pillars of relevance, equity and excellence with thrust on inculcating sense of patriotism and nationalism. This could be achieved by integrating indigenous knowledge and recognizing the contribution of India toward world civilizations and meeting the challenges of information and communication technology (ICT) and globalization squarely. This called for (i) decentralizing the process of curriculum development; ii) providing knowledge about all religions and values at all stages of school education; iii) ensuring the inclusion of learners with various challenges in the mainstream, and mobilizing the resources for achieving the educational goals of the country; iv) confirming the availability of pre-school education to all children in the country and prohibiting formal teaching and testing of different subjects at this end; and v) integrating art-education, health and physical education, and work education into the module of 'art of healthy and productive living' at the primary stage itself. More importantly it recommends available strong vocational stream for enhancing employment opportunities and entrepreneurship at the higher secondary stage. The education system can be made more effective when suitable implementation strategies for the orientation, participation and accountability of teachers, parents, community and managers of the system are adopted.

The National Curriculum Framework 2005 seeks to provide a framework within which teachers and schools can choose and plan experiences that they think children should have. In order to realise educational objectives, the curriculum be conceptualised as a structure which articulates required experiences. For this it addresses some basic questions: (a) What educational purposes should the schools seek to achieve? (b) What educational experiences can be provided that are likely to achieve these purposes? (c) How can these educational experiences be meaningfully organised? and (d) How do we ensure that these educational purposes are indeed being accomplished? NCF 2005 reviewed the NCF 2004, and on that basis proposed five guiding principles for curriculum development: connecting knowledge to life outside the school; ensuring that learning shifts away from rote methods; enriching the curriculum so that it goes beyond textbooks; making examinations more flexible and integrating them with classroom life; nurturing an overriding identity informed by caring concerns within the democratic polity of the country.

Box 7.3: Salient Features of National Curriculum Framework, 2005

- strengthening a national system of education in a pluralistic society
- reducing the curriculum load based on insights provided in 'Learning Without Burden'. It ensures that, quality education is provided to all children which calls for reorientation in our perception of learners and learning
- this sites is on learner engagement for construction of knowledge and fostering creativity
- connecting knowledge across disciplinary boundaries to provide a broader frame for insightful construction of knowledge
- the activities for developing critical perspectives on socio-cultural realities need to find space in curricular practices

- wherein, local knowledge and children's experiences are essential components of textbooks and pedagogic practices
- a renewed effort needs be made to implement the three-language formula
- ability to think logically, formulate and handle abstractions rather than 'knowledge' of mathematics (formals and mechanical procedures)
- science teaching should engage the learner in acquiring methods and processes that will nurture their curiosity and creativity, particularly in relation to the environment
- social science content needs to focus on conceptual understanding
- interdisciplinary approaches, promoting key national concerns such as gender equality, justice, human rights and sensitivity to marginalized groups and minorities
- civics should be recast as political science, and significance of history as a shaping influence on the child's conception of the past and civic identity should be recognized
- school curricula from the pre-primary to senior secondary stages needs to be reconstructed to realize the pedagogic potential of work as a pedagogic medium in knowledge acquisition, developing values and multiple-skill formation
- peace-oriented values should be promoted in all subjects
- it is desirable to evolve a common school system to ensure comparable quality in different regions of the country and also ensure that when children of different background study together, it improves the overall quality of learning and enrich the school ethos
- *panchayat raj* system should be strengthened by evolving a mechanism to regulate the functioning of parallel bodies at the village level so that democratic participation in development can be realized
- reducing stress and enhancing success in examination necessitate a shift from content-based testing to problem-solving and understanding
- development of syllabi, textbooks and teaching-learning resources could be carried out in a decentralized and participatory manner involving teachers, experts from universities, NGOs and teachers' organizations.

7.5 Education and Politics: Comparative Perspective

The influence of politics on education is not just restricted to the Indian context, but can be seen in other countries also. Now we will reflect on the comparative perspective by taking up the Communist Regime of the USSR, and the Nazi regime of Germany. The Soviet Union that emerged after Russian Revolution of 1917 had the communist agenda, and it relied heavily on education to solve its political, economic, and moral problems. All their policies had the aim of Communism, and the educational institutions were to play a leading role in this. Soviet education was riddled with the problem of ideological and moral training. The Soviet system generated deep political loyalty, particularly among the young people, and this can be ascribed to the operation of the schools. The political training given in the schools and universities was designed to foster these virtues among the young people. Great emphasis was placed on raising a new Soviet citizen, and various elements in the character of this new man were supposed to be honesty, courtesy, sexual morality, vigorous intellectual and physical activity. The education system was geared towards these goals (Noah 1965). The Communist regimes needed to facilitate the

ideological indoctrination of the masses, and to establish the supremacy of Russian culture as the only true socialist culture. Communists felt that education could solve their political, economic and moral problems. Shimoniak observes that the Communists realized that the only way to stay in power was to educate their own intelligentsia, their own leaders and their own children. It is for this reason that in the communist regimes, China or (earlier) USSR, the number of schools was increased (Shimoniak 1970).

The Nazis, in Germany, also gave particular attention to education. They completely controlled the German educational system, and private schools were taken over. They were thus determined to mould the new generation to accept Nazi principles. When the Nazis seized power in 1933, they applied their totalitarian principles to all aspects of the German education system. The Nazi authorities had a definitive approach to education. They treated the student as an object and education was not seen as leading to personal and intellectual development, but rather as preparing children to serve the new National Socialist state. Education was not to inspire intellectual thought or cause children to question and seek answers to complicated issues. The schools were designed to mould children and get them to unquestioningly accept the Nazi doctrine. The goal under the Nazis was to consciously shape pupils on National Socialist principles.

The curriculum laid great emphasis on racial science, often termed "racial hygiene". Racial education became an important part of the curriculum. It was presented formally as well as worked into many other curricula materials. Pseudo-scientific works were taught as scientific fact. Racial science was not only introduced as part of biology courses, but was presented to children in one form or another at virtually every grade level. Children learned in school that not only were Aryans superior, but they alone produced civilizations of any cultural importance. Other races were seen as inferior. Jews were depicted as an actual threat to Aryans because they were believed to carry genetic diseases that could be transmitted to Aryans. The Nazi ideology and physical-military training became other important aspects of the school program. A new Nazi curriculum was introduced to promote a new German consciousness. Only teaching material that promoted the spirit of the new Germany was encouraged while material that contradicted German feelings or paralyzed energies necessary for self-assertion was rejected. Teachers were encouraged to teach "right" attitudes or "character". Unlike knowledge which involved intellectual thought, their education involved "feeling" which the Nazis cultivated. The emotional acceptance of the racist, xenophobic nationalist outlook was seen as a prerequisite to character building. The Nazi Party sought to create a religious cult with the various pledges and prayers that they developed for children. Songs and pledges were developed to reinforce the idea of commitment to and sacrifice, even death for the German nation and its Fuhrer-Adolf Hitler. Every lesson had to begin with the "Hail Hitler" salute. Songs were written to the tune of church hymns with words praising Hitler and the German nation.

The Nazis organized mass burnings of books written by Jews or expressing objectionable ideas. Almost all books by Jewish authors were destroyed, and this included both school textbooks and children's literature. This censorship extended to newspapers, magazines, and books. The Nazis used schoolbooks for propaganda purposes, and they also introduced major chauvinist, racist themes in children's books. Children's literature in the Third Reich was geared towards teaching them the evils of the Jewish race. The Nazis also sought to instill the need for physical activity to strengthen and harden the children for life—the boys for the military and the girls for motherhood. Because of this predilection towards ideological indoctrination, academic standards declined. History was one of the subjects most significantly revised after the control of the Nazis over German schools became complete. History books were written describing the degeneration of the world by the mixing of blood.

The foregoing account depicts the attention educational processes have gained. Schools are seen as the chosen instrument to nullify any kind of undesirable legacies of the past. In the Communist regimes schools are seen as a major instrument for building the New Communist Man. Though the same function is attached in other nations also, but in a communist or a fascist regime this function becomes highly significant (Noah 1986).

7.6 Conclusion

The educational curriculum cannot be seen as operating in isolation, as a neutral category. It would be fallacious to assume that the processes involved in curriculum planning are rational. They are influenced by the wider political, cultural and economic domains. Education can be an effective tool to perpetuate and further entrench their power in the society. Education has served different ideologies. This unit and the earlier unit have depicted how education can be used for nation building and to serve the political interests of the ruling regime. This unit has only taken instances from the school curriculum to depict the politics involved in the educational curriculum. Therefore we can say that schools teach what counts as knowledge, and for Kumar (2004:8) “what counts as knowledge is a reconstruction, based on the selection made under given social conditions. Out of the total body of available knowledge, only a part of it can be treated as worthy of being passed on to the next generation”. The process (of curriculum planning) involves creation, codification, distribution and reception, and it takes place under the shaping influence of the economy, politics and culture. The knowledge that is available in schools for distribution is related to the overall classification of knowledge and power in society.

7.7 Further Reading

Kumar, Krishna. 2005. *Political Agenda of Education*. New Delhi: Sage

National Curriculum Framework. 2005. NCERT

Posner, George J. 1998 “Models of Curriculum Planning”. In L. E. Beyer and Michael W. Apple (eds.). *The Curriculum Problems, Politics and Possibilities*. State University of New York Press

