

The story of the nation

Education 23.2.07 JAWI

IN February, 1999, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had invited me to advise him on initiating reform in the education sector. I had three meetings with him, along with his senior cabinet members. The *National Education Policy 1998-2010*, hastily drafted by his government, and launched a few months earlier with much fanfare, even the prime minister admitted, was a still-born child and a disastrous failure.

My recommendation to the then prime minister was that rather than going for rhetoric-filled education policies, as a first step, the government should redefine its educational objectives, reorganize its administrative and policy-making structures and procedures, and concentrate on bringing in a strong quality component to existing public sector schools before opening new schools.

As a result of these meetings and on the instruction of the prime minister, the ministry of education notified the National Committee on Education (NCE). I headed the committee as its coordinator, and had members from different provinces in the committee.

We took upon the task of redefining the education objectives as a first step towards reforming the education sector. The first consultative meeting was held in Karachi at the office of the Book Group which was attended by two senior officers of the curriculum wing of the education ministry from Islamabad, members of the Book Group and teachers from different schools of Karachi. After consultations with several leading educationists from Karachi an agreement was reached on the broad framework of the document. Those involved in various stages of the consultative process, included, in addition to several government functionaries, Ejaz Malik (former director of education Government of

Balochistan), Zulfiqar Ali (Human Rights Education Programme, HREP), Dr Manzoor Ahmed (then Vice-chancellor of the Hamdard University), Nargis Alavi (IUCN), Nasreen Kasuri (Beaconhouse), Prof. Anita Ghulamali (MD, Sindh Education Foundation), Mehnaz Mahmood (Teachers Resource Centre, TRC), Abbas Hussain (Teachers Development Centre, TDC), Mohammad Memon (Institute of Educational Development, Aga Khan University), Meraj Khan (Delass Gul, NWFP), Shelala Rahimjan (LCAS), and representatives of Ali Institute of Education, Aitchison College, Book Group, UNESCO, UNICEF, NISTE and several others.

Mr Zulfiqar Ali, now the Director of the HREP, wrote the first draft for discussion, as well as the final draft. Once the draft was written, copies of it were sent to all the four provincial education departments and to the then federal education secretary, Dr Saifdar Mahmood. I traveled to all the four provincial capitals and to Islamabad several times, to discuss the draft and seek consensus. Copies of the drafts were returned to us with their comments and suggestions, which were incorporated in the final draft. This final draft was sent to a large number of educationists and education experts (both within and outside the government) and a meeting was held in Islamabad to finalize the draft.

With a foreword written by the federal secretary, the draft was finalized and published as the *National Curriculum 2000 - A Conceptual Framework*.

The document was printed in late September, 1999 and its printing cost was paid by Citibank. Soon after, the government of Nawaz Sharif was dismissed and General Pervez Musharraf took over power. The document was put away in cold

storage, where it has stayed there since.

In order to understand the significance of the new document, the readers must first get an apprecia-

Nation

Following are the 'National Curriculum es K-V (kindergarten to five), Integrated Textbooks, Ministry of Education, Govt

General goals

The general goals of the primary edu

- To provide for the overall growth and
- To create in the child a sense of citizen
- To promote intellectual development, inquiry in science, problem-solving in
- To provide learning that is relevant to
- To equip the child with life-long learn

Specific goals

The specific goals of the primary edu

- A balanced personality by acquiring action.
- An understanding of the ideological framework of mankind.
- Basic language skills.
- Basic numeracy skills.
- An understanding of the scientific method.
- An awareness of natural resources, their uses and conservation.
- An understanding of the environment and the physical conditions.
- A spirit of appreciation for religious and cultural heritage.
- An understanding of healthy living and safety.
- An understanding of the inter-dependence of individuals and communities.
- An understanding of the need for community service.
- An understanding and participation in social activities.
- Attitude, skills and abilities to pursue

tion of the obscure nature of the conceptual framework within which our policy-makers have continued to make policies and conduct their business. In the past 55 years educational policies have been designed in