Reality check

Comparing India's educational achievement with China, it is seen that India is more than 30 years behind China in terms of the proportion of the population with completed secondary and post secondary schooling.

This is not to belittle India's educational achievement but is more a reality check to capitalize on the need to prioritize the requirement of education in the country. Our failure to prioritize our budget expenditure on education will not only have economic repercussions but more so will aid social repercussions in terms of inequality and inequity in the years to come.

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S. Gayathri, Azim Premji Foundation

FOUNDATION UPDATE

The President of India, Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil launched a national portal for teachers www.teachersofindia.org, at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 5th September 2008, on the occasion of Teachers' Day. Launching the Portal, the President said that it is definitely a medium to improve the quality of education in schools and will also improve the teacher-student interaction in class.

Azim Premji Foundation has developed the Portal, with support from the National Knowledge Commission, which has been working for the

http://www.teachersofindia.org

creation of web-based portals on key issues for aggregating and disseminating knowledge. The portal for teachers will offer a platform for sharing best practices and generating discussion in the teaching community. Over the next few months the portal will offer content in several languages as well as provide access to other communities such as students, parents, teacher educators, etc.

The initial phase of the portal envisages a space for teachers to express their ideas and share their thoughts on any subject that touches their professional lives. Phase one involves the

uploading of material created by and for teachers in five languages (Hindi, English, Tamil, Telugu, Kannada). These will be short articles written by teachers on subjects of their choice including classroom practice, their experiences in school, ideas that they tried to experiment on, etc. This phase also envisages the beginnings of a district-wise directory of resource organizations working in education, that will help teachers gain access to material and people in their own geographic area.

During the subsequent phases of the portal, teachers will continue to contribute their thoughts. Links will be provided to websites of other organizations, institutions and people to provide access for teachers. Resource material (articles, policy documents, manuals, tools, modules etc.) by experts in the field will be made available on the portal either directly or through links. Teachers will be able to interact with each other and post questions, opinions, etc. The number of languages offered by the portal will gradually increase until all Indian languages are covered. The Home Page will also feature a "Teacher of the Month", in recognition of special efforts.

This portal will offer resources related to: Education Perspectives (Philosophy, Psychology, Sociology, Economics), Classroom Practice (Principles of Pedagogy, Pedagogy of Language, Science, Mathematics, History, Geography, Political Science, Economics, EVS, Art, Music, Dance, Sports), including manuals, activities, modules, tools, etc., Subject Content (Language, Science, Mathematics, History, Geography, Political Science, Economics, EVS, Art, Music, Dance, Sports), Stories, Songs, Games that teachers can use in class, Reading Resources (including links to other websites/portals/online library), Research Information and specific Case Studies.
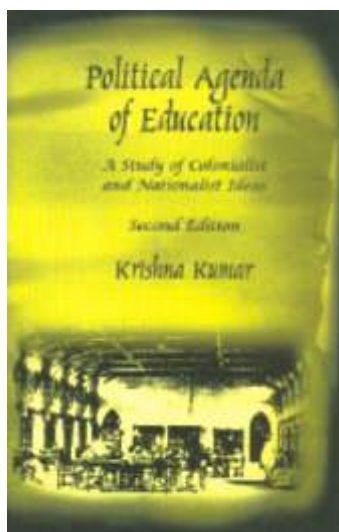
Sourced from the website of the President of India

BOOK REVIEW

Political Agenda of Education - A Study of Colonialist and Nationalist Ideas

By Krishna Kumar
Sage Publications, New Delhi (2005); 224 Pages

The state of education in India today concerns us all. The rote memorization of texts, the supremacy of the text book, the dictatorial role of the teacher in the classroom, the finality of the examination in deciding the worth of the student's achievement, the question of gender and caste, the government led and delivered curriculum and many other challenges facing the education system in India are all possibly symptoms or causes of our colonialist and nationalist past.

Krishna Kumar in this book, Political Agenda of Education, delves into that past and analyses, brilliantly, the development of the modern education system. The book traces the roots of the education agenda from the beginning of the colonization of India to a nationalist revival and peels the various layers of political agendas that dictated the legacies that still linger on.

A common view often heard in India blames the British for designing an education system that systemically produced clerks to support the British Empire in India. Krishna Kumar challenges this view and calls it theoretically feeble and historically untenable and launches a historical enquiry to understand why colonial education had the effects it had. In his analysis of early colonial educational enterprise, he describes the varied goals that education was meant to achieve from a pursuit of order to developing a moral agenda for the creation of a civil society under the British empire in