



COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)
21st Congress
Samar Mukherjee Nagar
Visakhapatnam, April 14-19, 2015

Resolution

On Issues of Education

The 21st Party Congress of the CPI (M) notes with grave concern the attacks on right to education at all levels and in different spheres. The attack has been accentuated with the advent of the Modi Government. The policy thrust of centralisation, commercialisation, and privatisation of education, however, is not party-specific, but one that is supported by the entire ruling class to serve its interests. The Modi Government's sinister agenda of saffronisation makes this toxic combination more lethal.

The Modi Government has slashed budgetary allocations for education by 16.5 per cent. It has halved the funds for ICDS, cut funds for mid-day meal schemes and for the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan. Thus, even the limited gains of the past are being eliminated.

Successive Governments have underfunded education, and public funding has stagnated at just 3 per cent of GDP. The failure to expand public investment in education has facilitated the expansion of the private sector at all levels, from nursery school to higher education. Education has been a prime victim of the neo-liberal policy of cutting back public expenditure for the people.

The 21st Party Congress expresses deep concern at the undermining of the Right to Education Act. It strongly protests against the shut-down of Government schools in different parts of the country. The absence of a statutory requirement that the Central Government provide the additional resources to ensure the implementation of the Right to Education, combined with the worsening finances of the States, is leading to a catastrophe. The Government's claim that it is transferring more funds to States in the spirit of "cooperative federalism," while actually slashing allocations for major centrally-sponsored programmes, is characteristic of the crisis.

Though literacy and school enrolment rates have improved, a large proportion of the population remains illiterate and unschooled. Drop-out rates remain high, particularly among girls and children of socially-oppressed groups. Acute infrastructural shortages, poor student-teacher ratios, cramped classrooms, insufficient hostel facilities, and inadequate laboratory and library facilities characterise all levels of education, from schools to higher educational institutions.

The continuing colonial legacy of elitism has worsened disparities and accentuated inherent social inequalities in the educational system. The unregulated expansion of the private sector (sometimes in the form of PPP projects) and profiteering by means of astronomically high admission and tuition fees has led to the commodification of education, making education further a preserve for the privileged. The Rashtriya Uchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (RUSA), the Choice Based Credit System (CBCS), and the Common University Act are part of the agenda of privatisation.

Constrained by inadequate funds, even public institutions have had to take to “self-financing.” Further, increasing contractualisation of teaching positions is affecting both access and quality in the public sphere. In pursuit of its current policy, the Government is pushing for the centralisation of all powers with regard to policy and decision-making. This policy excludes the participation of academicians and severely undermines the autonomy of educational institutions.

The democratic rights of students and teachers are being curbed. Other than in a few States, student union elections are not held and students are denied the minimum democratic right to organise. The violent attacks backed by State Governments against students, teachers and non-teaching staff and particularly the attacks in West Bengal and Himachal Pradesh, must be strongly condemned.

Equally ominous is the communal offensive, with the RSS emerging as an extra-constitutional centre of power in decision-making. Science, the scientific temper, and historical studies suffer assaults not only from the Hindutva organisations and top brass, but also from Ministers, including the Prime Minister himself. Unambiguous statements by ministers that education will be saffronised underline this threat. Educational institutions and autonomous bodies, including those dedicated to research, are being packed with individuals whose main qualification is that they belong to the RSS school of thought.

The CPI (M), along with Left and other democratic secular forces, will have to create the broadest possible unity in order to wage a determined struggle to face this pernicious threat.

The Party Congress expresses its firm resolve to build such unity to combat neo-liberal policy and protect the right to education for the entire people of the country.

It demands:

- Free universal compulsory quality school education and strengthening facilities for pre-school education.
- Implement RTE Act and ensure 25 per cent of all seats in private schools for free admission for weaker sections.
- Regulate and control fee structures and reservation for SC/STs in private institutions.
- Stop the entry of foreign universities.
- Ensure a secular and scientific educational system.
