CHAPTER 1

UNIVERSALISATION OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IN INDIA – VISION[1]

1.1 Introduction

Secondary education serves as a link between the elementary and higher education, and plays a very important role in this respect. A child's future can depend a lot on the type of education she/he receives at the secondary level. Apart from grounding the roots of education of a child, secondary education can be instrumental in shaping and directing the child to a bright future. This stage of education serves to move on higher secondary stage as well as to provide generic competencies that cut across various domains of knowledge as well as skills.

Providing secondary education to all, both boys and girls, with a focus on quality education assumes greater meaning today, when we consider the emerging challenges in our society. For instance, rising levels of socio-economic aspirations and also the democratic consciousness particularly among marginalized sections of population such as the dalits, tribals, OBCs, religious and linguistic minorities and girls seek space in the secondary education system for greater access, participation and quality.

The recent significant development viz., Universal Elementary Education (UEE) being achieved through Sarva *Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) and also the impact of globalisation and rapid growth of new technologies have led to reassessment of India's preparedness to generate required technical manpower, develop new knowledge and skills, and remain competitive at global level. The secondary and higher secondary education system has a key role to play in enabling the nation to move towards these objectives.

Given the high transition rate of about 85% from class VIII to IX and the anticipated progress in UEE, which is now widely acknowledged, that the time has arrived for taking proactive measures to plan and provide for universal access to secondary education and senior secondary education in a phased-wise manner.

[1] **Note:** This chapter is mainly drawn from the Report of the Sub-Committee of CABE (2005) constituted for Universalisation of Secondary Education by CABE (MHRD)

A sub-committee of Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE), which is the highest deliberative and advisory forum on education in the country, was, therefore, constituted in September, 2004. This Committee (2005) was assigned with a responsibility of preparing a blueprint for the universalisation of secondary education consequent upon the attainment of universalisation of elementary education. Deliberating widely on the concerns and challenges of secondary education in India, the Committee submitted its report in June, 2005. Their major recommendations are as follows:

- The guiding principles of Universal Secondary Education should be universal access, equality and social justice, relevance and development, and structural and curricular considerations. There have to be norms for schooling. Such norms should be developed for each state with common national parameters as well as state specific parameters.
- Each state should develop a perspective plan for universal secondary education. Decentralised micro-level planning should be the main approach to planning and implementation of universal secondary education.
- Financial requirements for covering the cost of universal elementary and secondary education will form approximately 5.1 percent of the GDP which is not sufficient. The immediate allocation of 6 percent of the GDP for education and progressive increase in this proportion will be necessary to move towards universalisation of secondary education.

The present vision document reiterates some of the major issues and concerns discussed in the report in the following paragraphs (see references):

Guiding Principles: For achieving the goal to provide quality education to all adolescents both girls and boys, up to the age of 16 by 2015 and senior secondary education up to the age of 18 by 2020, secondary education system needs to strengthen its preparedness for the coming plan periods allowing a paradigm shift in its conceptual design. The four guiding principles for creating the conceptual design of secondary education as visualized by this Committee are reproduced under:

***Universal Access*:** Access is to be envisaged in physical, social, cultural and economic terms – all interwoven in a common concept. This calls for a redefinition of some of the basic features of the Indian school. For instance, it is not sufficient to provide physical access to an orthopedically disabled child. It is equally critical that the disability of such a child is not seen in medical terms alone. The moment a barrier-free physical access is provided, this child's disability disappears and she/he becomes as capable as the rest of

her/his peers. In this sense, the disability is a social construct and the matter does not end by solving the problem at the physical level alone but demands a change in the mindsets of her/his classmates, teachers and the curriculum planners or textbook writers. Similarly, in the case of a *dalit* child, access is as much a cultural question as it is one of a school being available in the neighbourhood. There are poignant accounts of how alienating and humiliating school experience can be for children of the deprived sections of society. This kind of alienation is equally visible in gender discrimination as it operates as a 'hidden curriculum' all the time as an extension of patriarchy embedded in society. In these circumstances, children don't just 'drop out' voluntarily, but either they are 'pushed out' or even 'walk out' in protest. It is only when the school is able to create a new cultural ambience and a child friendly curriculum that universal access would begin to mean more than just concrete, black boards or even computers.

Equality and Social Justice: These two fundamental principles as enshrined in the Constitution imply equality and social justice towards secondary education, inside secondary education and through secondary education. It is only when the school curriculum empowers the child adequately to initially understand, then question and finally deals with that inequality and injustice, the child would be in a position to continue to seek equality and social justice in her life after the school. This is not all. We must draw attention to at least six dimensions of equality and social justice for which the school system will have to strive for viz. (a) gender; (b) economic disparity; (c) social i.e. SCs/STs; (d) Cultural (including the issues of religious and linguistic diversity); (e) disability (both physical and mental), and (f) rural-urban. All these dimensions need to be reflected with sensitivity in the curriculum such that the self-esteem of each child is built up. This is necessary for ensuring that all children are able to complete their secondary education. The issue has a structural dimension too. Almost 25% of the secondary schools today are private unaided schools whose clientele comes only from the privileged sections of society. This means that the children studying in such schools are deprived of the experience of knowing children of different social classes and diverse cultural backgrounds. It is inconceivable that such schools can inculcate a sense of equality or social justice among their students or even build up an appreciation of the composite culture and plural character of India. This anomaly can be taken care of only by including the private unaided schools in a Common School System, as recommended by the Education Commission (1964-66).

***Relevance and Development*:** No education today can be accepted as being relevant unless it (a) helps in unfolding the full potential of the child; and (b) plays the role of linking the development of the child with the society and its political, productive and socio-cultural dimensions. We would like to list five domains in which the developmental role of education can be envisaged: (a) building up citizenship for a country that is striving to become a democratic, egalitarian and secular society; (b) interdisciplinary approach to knowledge, concept formation (not just piling up information) and its application in daily life and attributes such as critical thought and creativity; (c) evolving values in a plural society that is, at the same time, stratified and hierarchical; (d) generic competencies that cut across various domains of knowledge as well as skills; and (e) skill formation in the context of rapidly changing technology which demands formation of multiple skills, transfer of learning and ability to continue to learn. A substantial proportion of parents send their children to schools with expectation that education will enable their children to face the 'world of work' with confidence and carve out a meaningful livelihood for themselves. For this purpose, it is essential that learning emerges from the child's social ethos and her productive experience, and at the same time ensures that the child will have access to global knowledge and challenges.

Structural and Curricular Aspects: Curricular reforms cannot be delinked from structural reforms. There is a consensus today throughout the country with respect to the 10+2 pattern of school education, as recommended by the Education Commission (1964-66). The Education Commission had also advocated that a minimum of 10 years of common curriculum is required for building citizenship in a democracy and for linking the 'world of knowledge' with the 'world of work'. In this concept, diversified courses will be introduced only at the +2 stage. These recommendations related to curriculum could be implemented by all States/ UTs only because the Central Government enabled a nation-wide switchover to the 10+2 pattern. In contrast, the policy on vocational education of "diverting" at least 25% of the children enrolled at the + 2 stage to the vocational stream by the year 2000 has not found favour with students. According to the Ministry's Annual Reports, less than 5% of the enrolment at the + 2 stage in the year 2003 was in vocational stream. One can infer that the children refused to be "diverted" and preferred the academic stream. The issue has been recently addressed by the National Focus Group on 'Work and Education', as constituted by NCERT, as part of the exercise of reviewing and revising the curriculum framework. The above report (April 2005) recommends a two-pronged strategy with radical structural and curricular implications for the entire school education, including secondary education, viz. (a) Productive work must be introduced in the

curriculum as a pedagogic medium for acquisition of knowledge, building values and skill formation from pre-primary stage to the + 2 stage; (b) A nation-vide programme of Vocational Education and Training (VET) must be built up in mission mode and be structurally and administratively placed outside the school system incorporating modular courses with lateral and vertical linkages. As long as the proposed two-pronged strategy of simultaneous structural and curricular reforms is not institutionalised, it is inconceivable that the "world of work" can be meaningfully integrated with the "world of knowledge" and vocational education can become a significant and effective programme.

Hence, the four guiding principles, imply a paradigm shift necessary for moving towards the goal of universalisation of secondary education. This shift is expected to simultaneously impact at the level of access, socio-cultural character, developmental objectives and structural-cum-curricular provisions of secondary education - all at the same time and throughout the nation. For speedy change an unambiguous commitment to a policy framework is necessary for translating this vision on the ground.

1.2 Secondary Education: Nature and Scope

1.2.1 *Education for the holistic development of the Adolescents*

Secondary education spreads over the ages of 15 and 16, and then to 17 and 18 in the senior secondary grades. These are the years of adolescence, and late adolescence. These are the years of transition; indeed, most crucial years of life. There are steady and fast changes in the body structure transforming to adult form and image of life. At this age, the bodily changes take final shape and stabilise. This is also the stage of emotional transformation and maturity that swings between joy and trauma. Secondary education essentially has to be the education of the adolescence. Experiences in schooling have to be designed to be responsive to the needs of transition and stabilisation. Since large number of students is likely to transit from education to the world of work, it is also the stage of transition to work. Secondary education must foster skills of transition. Though both boys and girls experience transition, there is a special case for girls and it needs special attention. Because of prejudices, taboos and social stigma, phase of transition for girls is more difficult. Also, it will be necessary to develop a gender friendly curriculum.

Contemporary secondary education concentrates primarily on learning a few subjects challenging the 'cognitive intelligence', that too largely the lower order cognition. This very approach to secondary education puts at disadvantage a large number of students because students with differential

abilities and potentialities are unable to cope with the demands of the kind of education offered in secondary education; on the other hand, secondary education does not contribute and nurture children native wisdom and imagination that they bring with them to the school. For example, a child who is very good in sports is ridiculed for low scores in mathematics or geography.

The future secondary education must be designed to nurture multiple abilities like linguistic or verbal ability, logical-mathematical ability, spatial ability, bodily kinesthetic or sports ability, musical ability, inter-personal ability, intra-personal ability and naturalist or environmental ability. The primary intention of designing secondary education with a purpose of holistic development of the adolescent is to ensure that a young person with musical ability can emerge as a musician, one with bodily and kinesthetic ability is able to emerge as a sportsperson, as much as the person with linguistic ability can unfold himself or herself as an orator, a writer, etc.

Equally important is nurturing the logical-mathematical ability that can produce a scholar in mathematics and science and other such scholastic subjects. In absence of education designed to facilitate holistic development, children with abilities other than scientific and mathematical abilities are treated as weak and not fit for the employment market. This not only makes them underachievers but also demolishes their self-concept and self esteem. In essence, for universalisation, secondary education must offer adequate opportunity for unfolding the full potential in each student.

1.3 Universal Secondary Education

Universal implies creating universal access and opportunity for all children to receive secondary education. It is evident from the international experiences that secondary education becomes naturally universal once universal elementary education has been achieved. The transition rate from eighth to the ninth grades in India is almost 85 per cent and this transition rate is further improving. With the universalisation of elementary education through SSA, there will be universal demand for secondary education. What is important is to make good quality education available, accessible and affordable to all young persons in the age group of 14-18 years with special reference to economically weaker sections of the society, the educationally backward, the girls and the disabled children residing in rural areas and other marginalised categories like SC, ST, OBC and Educationally Backward Minorities. As stated earlier, the CABE committee on Universalisation of Secondary Education (2005) recommends universal secondary education by 2015; As per the report, the projection of enrolment, transition rate indicates full possibility of universal enrolment in secondary education by 2015. By 2020, the target

should be universal enrolment, full retention and mastery learning in all kinds of learning tasks by more than 60% learners. Also, by 2020, there will be provision for universal senior secondary education and universal retention. This will be possible because of high transition rate from 10th to 11th standard and high retention rate in the senior secondary grades even now.

1.3.1 *Curricular Structure and Course Offerings*

The recommendation of the Education Commission (1964-66) for a common curriculum for until class X within the 10+2+3 framework was accepted in NPE-1968 and a major programme of shift with additional outlays was undertaken throughout the country. NPE- 1986 reiterated this pattern of education as part of the National System of Education. The National Curriculum Framework (1975) proposed a common curriculum for the ten-year school, to be followed by diversification beginning at class XI for the +2 stage. This basic principle is now practiced nation-wide. The National Curriculum Frameworks prepared successively in 1988, 2000 and 2005 have continued to follow this imperative of NPE- 1986.

"However, there are views from many quarters that "the most significant reason for mass scale failure in the tenth board examination is the common curriculum and course offerings . . . . . nearly 80 per cent of the candidates who fail in the board examination fail in mathematics, English and science . . . besides significant wastage of the educational resources, it affects self-esteem and self-concept of the students." The solution offered by these proponents to the problem of "mass scale failure in the tenth board examination" and its adverse impact on the "self esteem" of students consisted in "diversification of students into several streams of education beyond eighth standard" and offering them a "cafeteria approach" from class IX onwards. But actually the root cause of "mass scale failure" is not the common curriculum offered until class X as per NPE-1986. Instead, the cause of the failure lies in the framework in which subject knowledge is conceived, the manner in which knowledge is transacted and the evaluation parameters and the assessment procedures adopted for examining students. The right to study and succeed in basic mathematics, science, social science and languages, including English, and other mainstream subjects is as much a fundamental right of a child as to have access to and complete secondary/ senior secondary education." *(Report of the CABE Committee on USE, pg. no. 13)*

Keeping this in mind, the National Curriculum Framework – 2005 has made several radical proposals to revisit the very character of knowledge, shift to a new pedagogic approach and change the entire examination system. Such changes are urgently required in order to make sure that the nation is freed of this phenomenon of "mass scale failure" and widespread but apparent "under-

achievement". Without such a paradigm shift, it would not be possible to universalize secondary education either. We need to be especially concerned about the prevailing practice of not offering science or mathematics at Plus Two stage in many rural schools/ urban slums or to SCs, STs, girls or the disabled (or not providing science practical experiences at class IX-X level in backward areas), thereby forcing these children to go in for the so-called "softer" options. This practice has a significant negative impact on the aspirations of the masses for upward social mobility for their children.

1.3.2 *Work and Education*

The CABE Committee on USE expresses its deep concern with respect to the exclusionary character of education in general and secondary education in particular based upon the report (April, 2005) of the National Focus Group on Work and Education constituted by the NCERT as part of its exercise of National Curriculum Framework-2005. This is founded on the artificially instituted dichotomy between work and knowledge (also reflected in the widening gap between school and society). Those who work with their hands and produce significant wealth are denied access to formal education while those who have access to formal education not only denigrate productive manual work but also lack the necessary skills for the same. Accordingly, the Committee recommends the following two-fold strategy for a major curricular reform: (1) Productive work (and other forms of work as well, including social action and engagement) may be introduced as a pedagogic medium for *knowledge acquisition, developing values and multiple-skill formation*.

1.3.3 C*ommon Core Curriculum*

A common core curriculum incorporating work-centered pedagogy initially until Class X and, within the foreseeable future, up to Class XII for all children, should be the objective. A set of work-related generic competencies (basic, inter-personal and systemic) may be pursued and also inform the redesigning of evaluation parameters as well as the assessment system, including the public examinations. Generic competencies will include, among others, critical thinking, transfer of learning, creativity, communication skills, aesthetics, work motivation, work ethic of collaborative functioning and entrepreneurship-cum-social accountability. This will provide a firm foundation for building up a programme of '*Vocationalised* Education' (to be distinguished from '*Vocational* Education') at the secondary/ senior secondary stages. (2) Vocational Education and Training (VET) may be conceived as a *major national programme in the mission mode* and be structurally and administratively placed *outside* the school system.

VET in this new perspective will be built upon the *bedrock of 10-12 years of work-centered education in the school system*, unlike the prevailing notion of

vocational education 'hanging' in vacuum. VET will include (a) flexible and modular certificate/ diploma courses of varying durations; (b) multiple entry and exit points with in-built credit accumulation facility; (c) vertical and horizontal linkages with the academic, vocational and technical programmes; (d) accessibility all the way from the level of village clusters to the Block and District levels, and also in urban areas; (e) provision for carving out 'work benches' in the neighbourhood out of the existing economic activities, production and technical centers; (f) scope for engaging local farmers, artisans, mechanics, technicians, musicians, artists and other service providers as Resource Persons or invited faculty; and (g) a decentralised accreditation and equivalence programme which will also recognise 'work benches' for the purpose of evaluating and certifying students." The Committee wishes to emphasise that the above proposal to institutionalise work-centered pedagogy in the school curriculum and building Vocational Education and Training as a programme of national significance for the adolescents and youth can be translated on the ground only if the necessary systemic changes are made. Let us not hesitate in fulfilling this historical expectation.

1.3.4 *Common School System*

The Education Commission (1964-66) had recommended a Common School System of Public Education (CSS) as the basis of building up the National System of Education with a view to "bring the different social classes and groups together and thus promote the emergence of an egalitarian and integrated society." The Commission warned that "instead of doing so, education itself is tending to increase social segregation and to perpetuate and widen class distinctions." It further noted that "this is bad not only for the children of the poor but also for the children of the rich and the privileged groups" since "by segregating their children, such privileged parents prevent them from sharing the life and experiences of the children of the poor and coming into contact with the realities of life. . . . . also render the education of their own children *anaemic and incomplete*. (emphasis ours)" The Commission contended that "if these evils are to be eliminated and the education system is to become a powerful instrument of national development in general, and social and national integration in particular, we must move towards the goal of a common school system of public education."

The 1986 policy, while advocating a National System of Education, resolved that "effective measures will be taken in the direction of the Common School System recommended in the 1968 policy." Taking into consideration these policy imperatives and the contemporary emphasis on decetralisation along with the necessary flexibility in the school system to be able to respond to the

contextual curricular demands, the concept of the Common School System (CSS) has itself been evolving. Based upon the evolving public discourse on CSS, the following definition of CSS can be constructed:

Common school system essentially means a national system of education which is based on the values and principles of the Constitution of India which provides education as a comparable quality to all children irrespective of their caste, creed, language, economic or cultural background, geographic location or gender. This is the perspective articulated by the National Policy on Education- 1986 and further elaborated by the National Curriculum Framework-2005. Such a national system of education will be governed by certain minimum infrastructural, financial and curricular norms. For instance, in the context of the recruitment and working conditions of teachers, provision for basic resources, and structural flexibility and academic autonomy necessary for innovation are concerned with the spirit of National Policy on Education and the National Curriculum Framework 2005.

As per the report of the CABE committee on USE the guiding principles and basic characteristics of a successful programme of Universalisation of Secondary Education are fully consistent with the Common School System as defined above. The CABE committee report clearly mentions that the kind of paradigm shift discussed here can become sustainable only when it is implemented in all categories of schools, including the privately managed unaided schools, in the whole of the country within a declared timeframe, though a properly phased programme. This essential linkage between curricular reforms and systemic reforms must be understood, before it is too late. And such reforms would be feasible only within the framework of a Common School System.

1.3.5 *Three-Language Formula*

The three-language formula evolved out of a major political exercise and negotiations in the critical decade of 1950s and the early years of 1960s in response to the rising tensions with respect to different language regions of the country and the question of related cultural identities. In essence, this outcome reflected the federal spirit of our Constitution and the commitment to sustain and promote India's plural character. It is in this background that the 1986 policy made a commitment to implement the three-language formula "more energetically and purposefully.

NCF-2005 also reiterates this position and proposes to make a renewed bid to fulfil the commitment. While, as part of this formula, a crucial responsibility befalls upon the elementary stage of education to promote the mother tongue

as a medium of education, it is the secondary/senior secondary stage of education that becomes the real testing ground of the more challenging aspects of the formula. The 1986 policy also acknowledged the "uneven" implementation of the formula. The Hindi-speaking states, with their substantial demographic spread, have a special responsibility in responding to this challenge, especially with respect to the concept of the third language as a modern Indian language from a non-Hindi speaking region. Concrete steps in this direction will provide a new thrust for the non-Hindi speaking states to make a fresh commitment to implement the language policy in letter and spirit.

It is here that the political commitment made by the nation's leadership soon after independence to strengthen India's unity and integrity, promote inter-cultural dialogue and build an enlightened and articulate citizenship, will be redeemed. In this context, the Committee would like to urge upon the Central Government to take the initiative of setting up an effective and adequately funded structure and process for promoting inter-language translation of the highest quality material available in different languages of India. An active role of the States/UTs will be critical to the success of this central initiative. This process must also cover the word class material available globally in the languages of different countries and make it available widely in all major Indian languages. India's capacity in the field of IT should prove to be of special asset in this respect, provided urgent political will addresses this issue. It would be only appropriate if this inter-language endeavor would include Braille and computer-aided facilities for making quality material available to the disabled children also. Apart from enriching communication and understanding among different language regions of the country, the availability of such material in Indian languages will go a long way in enriching the quality of education not just at the secondary/ senior secondary education level but at the higher education level as well.

1.3.6 *Teaching –Learning Processes*

Curricular structure and course offerings are the necessary condition for quality secondary education. Instructional processes provide the sufficient condition for quality secondary education. Contemporary pedagogical practices are characterised largely by lectures where students are passive listeners. Such kind of processes contribute at best to lower order cognition, memorization and fragile learning; together, they make a grand nexus for large-scale failing in examination. Students lack problem-solving ability, higher order thinking and cognition, and creativity. Most importantly, they miss out on 'learning to know' or learning to learn. If the new generation

secondary education sets its targets for students to be able to think critically, solve problems individually and collectively, be creative, teaching-learning must undergo a paradigm shift. Pedagogy must bring students at the centre of stage where they primarily learn to learn through peer interaction, problem-solving, experiential learning, etc. In this new learning scenario, teachers will be facilitators of learning. Research as a tool for learning is quite common all over the world; introduced even at the pre-primary stage. Indeed, by the time students are in the 9th and 10th standards they should become researchers to be able to crack problems, contemplate solutions, explore and experiments alternative and creative ways of problem-solving.

1.3.7 *Student Assessment and Evaluation*

Secondary education is the turning point for a large majority of students. Not only the certificate one earns after schooling but also the actual learning during schooling is the lifelong resource. Along with building dynamism in curricular framework as well as pedagogy, evaluation must undergo major changes. Conventionally, education system, particularly school education is guided and controlled by concern for results in examination irrespective of the quality of learning --whether fragile or sustainable. The competition, though artificial, for securing percentage of marks in the final examination creates unusual stress in the students leading often to mental break down and suicides. This must change. Change in the mechanics of examination will be too simplistic a solution, amounting to treating the symptoms, not the disease itself. Examination-stress is directly related to facing the challenge of examination with 'fragile' learning due to memorizing huge stock of information. In order to manage the stress factor in examination it will be necessary to ensure sustainable learning which the function of instructional processes is. Yet, it will be necessary to reconstruct and redesign examination system with attributes like flexibility where a student can achieve mastery learning in a flexible time frame and accumulate credits; eliminating power tests (fixed duration), adopt continuous and comprehensive evaluation. The practice of mark sheets indicating marks in certain subjects must be replaced by a portfolio that would accommodate a student's performance in a variety of domains like life skills, academic/nonacademic and vocational subjects, personal qualities, etc. The portfolio should be comprehensive, revealing of the total being of the student. This aspect is discussed in chapter 5 in detail.

1.3.8 *Guidance and Counselling*

In this context, it is extremely important to recongnise the role that guidance and counselling play for meeting the needs of adolescent students going through the secondary and higher secondary stages of education. Provision for

guidance and counseling is necessary in view of the fact that adolescent boys and girls are facing a fast process of socio-economic and cultural change, and quite often the traditional institutional frameworks provided by the family and community are not adequate for helping the adolescent to cope with the demands made upon him/her. In a society going through a rapid process of institutional change and modernization, facilities for guidance and counseling in every secondary school are necessary. Even as the secondary education system expands towards universalisation, staff for guidance and counseling will be required to ensure that first generation school goers receive adequate coverage in terms of their psychological and personality related needs. Financial allocation necessary for making guidance and counseling a common reality of every secondary school will need to be worked out, and institutional infrastructure necessary for making professional input for such a facility will have to be put in place.

1.3.9 *Schooling Facility*

There is a lot of disparity in schooling facilities in various regions of the country. There are disparities among the private schools, among private and government schools in the same state, between schools in central sector like Kendriya Vidyalayas(KVS), Navodaya Vidyalayas(NVS), Tibetan Schools, Sainik Schools, etc. Also, there are no specific norms for secondary schools. In view of providing universal quality secondary education, it is imperative that specially designed norms are developed at the national level and then disaggregated for each State/UT keeping in mind the geographical, socio-cultural, linguistic and demographic conditions of not just the State/UT but also, wherever necessary, of the Blocks. Also, the disparities among various categories of schools must be reduced. This will require planning of educational facilities, and management of educational services to be streamlined.

1.4 *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan*

As a follow-up of the recommendations of the CABE Committee report, the MHRD has launched a scheme for universalisation of access to and improvement of quality at secondary stage in the year 2009 and has brought out a "Framework of implementation of *Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyaan*". The framework provides a detailed road map for the implementation of access and equity related components of USE and also deliberates upon quality components providing norms largely for infrastructure requirements. Hence, a need was observed by various stakeholders for a document, which provides a vision and multi-layer strategic guidelines on quality improvement of secondary education.

The present document on "Vision and Multi-layer Strategic Guidelines for Quality Improvement in secondary education" begins with vision as already set by the CABE report and the RMSA framework and moves ahead to address the quality issues with suggested strategies and action plans.

1.5 Secondary Education in India – Vision

Since Free and Compulsory Elementary Education has become a Constitutional Right of Children in India, it is absolutely essential to push this vision forward to move towards Universalisation of Secondary Education, which has already been achieved in a large number of developed and several developing countries.
In this context, the vision for secondary education as follows:

The vision for secondary education is to make good quality education available, accessible and affordable to all young persons in the age group of 14-18 years
(*RMSA* Framework, MHRD, 2009).

This vision statement points out towards three A's i.e. Availability, Accessibility and Affordability of secondary education to the target group under the overarching objective of providing quality.

India is emerging as the fastest-growing economy in the world. The success depends largely upon human resource development. If we look at the Indian higher education as provider of leadership-manpower in various sectors of economy, we need to tune our secondary education to emerge as the single largest provider of working people in all spheres of national productivity. Universalisation of secondary education will need to fulfill three major criteria, namely, universal enrolment in the 9th and 10th grades, universal retention achieving zero dropout rate, and universal performance (at a predetermined level, at least 60 per cent of the students of the 10th grade will achieve 60 per cent learning over subjects and other learning tasks) with successful completion by all who are enrolled in the secondary education.
Initial questions that need to be resolved are: achieving universal access, equity and social justice. Whereas universal access may be possible to achieve through expansion of schooling facilities in the formal and unconventional modes, special efforts will be required for achieving equity, social justice and performance of all the diverse groups of learners.
Although success in SSA will substantially facilitate the process yet it will take at least another 10 years of committed efforts, in a mission mode approach; universal secondary education should be targeted to be achieved by

2020 and the success in accomplishing this goal will be determined by the synergy among various stakeholders for planning, implementation and execution, political will and support.