

Language Education: Direction for the Next Millennium

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Crystal gazing is, at the best of times, not a task for a senior citizen whose dreams belong a lot more to the world that was than to an uncertain future. Success in it comes more naturally to visionaries, creative artists (Ezekiel at HMPIETR) or religious messiahs. I am none of those but a simple specimen of a classroom practitioner. Not being able to look through a crystal ball (haven't even got one!) is the lesser problem, however. A much larger one is the nature of my present assignment, i.e. to grasp the direction of events inside a millennium that will start its life some 800 days from now. What makes the task much more daunting to the composite of forces and factors that one has to reckon with is trying to make sense of an institution as complex as an educational system. For as Neil Postman (1979) pointed out some two decades ago even a school has a multifaceted agenda and many constituents to serve. Parents, publishers, politicians, labour unions, state requirements, administrative convenience each makes its demand and exacts its price. "As a result", as Postman rightly concludes, "even an ordinary classroom becomes a place in what the claims of various political, social and economic interests are negotiated." (p.8)

The basic composition and character of language education in any nation state is determined by national policies on education and on languages inside it. Nation states do not allow languages to play their parts in any as they please manner; they have to do so keeping in view the larger national interests. Especially in multilingual/multicultural countries like ours, national policy decisions on languages - their status, roles and functions in life as in learning are, among other things, capable of not only giving languages and their users opportunities of growth and development but also of inflaming passions and endangering lives. Nor is it altogether true to say that language-related policy decisions begin and end inside a nation's geographical boundaries. In today's world they are influenced and, in large measure shaped, by the economics and politics of this fast changing world and the powerful market forces that operate inside it.

One need not go far in search of evidence for either of those statements about language policies and their social impact. Not long ago language-based movements became not only a main reason for the creation of India's linguistic states but also made it necessary to redefine the roles of official and national languages inside the polity. As for the impact of global vents on a nation's linguistic priorities or preferred programmes, this nation's changing perception and provision for teaching different foreign languages in universities and specialist centres of language study in the last quarter century should provide ample evidence.

In large measure language education programmes - their nature, duration and intensity are also products of national policies. That English language

comes into formal schooling 3, 4 or 5 years after the start of mother tongue or first-language medium schooling is, for example, an outcome of the national policy decisions such policy statements are known to allow for the play of important forces and factors inside different state-level systems. That English language has been and continues to be introduced earlier in some state-level systems, that in many states English- medium schools are mushrooming and in a few cases they are threatening to assume centrality by virtue of their growing prestige and popularity and that even the Central government has over the years been expanding the English-medium education facilities through growing numbers of Kendriya Vidyalayas, Sainik schools, Navodaya schools and so on shows, for example, that pressure groups do succeed in altering the nature and impact of even carefully drafted national policies. In sum, then, language education is a child of multiple factors and forces not all of which may either be predictable or permanent and at least some of which come to surface in highly unexpected forms. Constant change is in truth the only lasting characteristic of language education in the present world.

How, one might ask, can anyone predict the shape of things to come when the forces and factors that impinge on the object of study are not just beyond one's reach but even beyond one's limited understanding. A possible answer is that though one cannot look into the womb of future with any certainty, one is safer in attempting predictions, or more truly informed guesses with rather than without support from the existing and evolving trends on one hand and informed views on the forces and factors that are likely to influence the course of action on the other. What I shall say in the rest of this presentation has therefore to be based on what has become either established or emerging wisdom on the major essentials of language education. Needless to say that an hour's presentation can incorporate only small parts of the complex network that adds up to language education.

At this stage there is a choice between three possible options. The options are

- 1) to envision an educational Utopia. Education, as many of you here will know, has had its fair share of utopias from the over two millennia old times of Plato to those of Ivan Illich's *Deschooling Society* (1971/1973) in our own times. Utopias allow scope for creative impulses at the same time as they save dreams from getting lost to posterity.
- 2) To focus on the seamy side of things- on the politicizing of education and growing corruption in it, on falling educational standards, failures of formal schooling to respond to the society's mounting and changing needs, unequal educational opportunities and the resultant maldistribution, frustration and deprivation. This option can help one predict faster decline or even the virtual irrelevance of schooling.

Although neither of these options (1 or 2 above) can be entirely ruled out as aspects of possible portraits of an uncertain future both, in

different degrees, amount to what Postman calls self flagellation which serves little purpose.

- 3) The third option is to keep one's optimism alive and trust that hope-inspiring national and global trends will not just continue but offer a solid base for a world that every sane person aspires for.

Acceptance of this third option raises a fundamental question in answering which should lie hidden the main keys to a view of a possible future. The question is 'What significant macro-level development(s) in language education has/have over the years come into being or, better still, received global sanction which gives them added strengths?' I shall answer this question by looking at it under three heads - language education policies, programmes and performance. These three Ps should in my judgement help to bring in large and significant parts of the essential core of language education in the next millennium.

Let me take you back to the early years of this century. India has all through its recorded history been a country where several languages have lived happily together and grown alongside each other. Over many centuries India has also welcomed and in truth claimed ownership over languages other than those in use in people's daily lives. Historically, first Sanskrit and then Persian served as languages of learning and governance (see, for example, Dasgupta 1993, Kachru 1986). Nearer our times India also welcomed the different languages brought along by traders, missionaries or colonisers including Portuguese, French and English and the last of which has since come close to becoming an Indian language. The subcontinent has for long been a highly hospitable territory for foreign languages and alien cultures and its main distinction lies in making multilingualism and multiculturalism part of its evolving history.

However, at the beginning of this century the dominant view whose main seedbeds lay in the developed West was that unilingualism was the preferred state. In this view being a monolingual was a blessing, being a bilingual a problem and being a multilingual an unfortunate natural and national circumstance. When, for example, the late Michael West published his research-backed and insightful treatise on Indian bilingualism in 1926 (West 1926) he referred to bilingualism as a problem that India had to live with. A main reason for it was that Western scholarship saw a cause-effect relationship between being multilingual and being economically or even educationally under developed (Tickoo 1995). But there was also a defensible educational reason in the Westian argument. It was that since each language demanded additional learning efforts and teaching time, the learning of two or more languages made unacceptable demands on teaching-learning time and inevitably required time that was needed for other subjects.

Now, there obviously are points in favour of an argument such as West's. There is also some truth in the more recent contention (e.g. Mackey's 1984) that where a learner's mother tongue is a minority language or one not much used for purposes of learning and literacy, the choice between that mother tongue and a language of obvious power can be a difficult one. What needs to be high-lighted, however is the important fact that over the years a major development in linguistic scholarship has been the almost universal acceptance of bilingualism as the norm and a growing realization that being bilingual is a many-sided strength (e.g. Skutnabb-Kangas 1984). Realization that this is so has also resulted in a growing number of countries of the developed West including some of those that have all along favoured monolingual education, making bilingualism the preferred educational option (Beardsmore 1993a). True of Canada and parts of the United States, it has of late also been assuming centrality in member countries of the European Union. What should prove equally relevant and much more helpful is that studies into Canadian immersion and other bilingual programmes (e.g. Cummins & Swain 1986) and more recently into European bilingual programme (Beardsmore 1993b) have all shown its distinguishing strengths.

What this brief review of one aspect of language policies and programmes should enable one to infer is that by the time the third millennium begins to take shape the teaching and learning of more than one language will in all probability have become the universal norm. Not long after that, the unilingual individual will, much like a one-eyed human being, become an exception rather than the rule. Educational systems will, for reasons that make socio-economic as much as educational sense, invest in bilingual and wherever possible, multilingual schooling. One can say this in spite of the fact that, for example, a sizeable section of influential Americans are currently fighting to make the English language the only designated national language of that country (Crandall 1992). The American English-only movement suggests not just insularity but also a degree of insecurity and is bound to suffer decline as the new millennium is born and takes shape. As for the English language, the belief that is still held among an influential section of people in the native English speaking world that the language belongs to its mother country and that the rest of the world should not be allowed to own and make it a handmaiden to their national and global needs (for discussion see Widdowson 1994), is as ill-informed as it is indefensible.

The main point relevant to our purpose that has emerged in what we saw above is that the new millennium will make bilingualism in education an avowed aim of national education systems. Now, if bilingualism becomes the norm and language education systems get entrusted with the tasks of helping every child learn two, three or more

languages, the major question that arises is 'what changes and additions will become necessary to help in realizing that goal?' The simple answer is that every such system - be it national, regional or local - will have to commit itself to universalizing the provision of bilingual education to guarantee that every school leaver becomes a true bilingual.

But simple though that answer may be it is capable of hiding a lot more than it reveals. It fails, for example, to highlight the fact that in multilingual India the state-level systems adoption of opportunities for acquiring two or three languages for successful real-life use. The harsh reality is that sizeable sections of those who go through the mainstream state-level schooling currently experience failures of several major kinds. A clear understanding of those failures and the ways to overcome each of them must be seen as the necessary minimum preparation for making the next millennium capable of making bilingual education a reality. Let us therefore briefly refer to the major failure in languages and their teaching and learning in contemporary India. Four macro-level failures appear to stand out:

- i) In most state-run educational systems speakers of minority languages find little or no school-based provision for learning their first languages. This is especially true of those vast numbers who are speakers of tribal language or of language spoken by migrants from other states. What is also sadly true today is that in a few state-run educational systems the child is deprived of opportunities to become literate even in a mother-tongue that happens to be the state's majority language. An obvious case is Jammu and Kashmir where Kashmiri- the language spoken by most citizens of the valley- and one of 14 languages in the 8th schedule of the Indian Constitution, is not only not the medium of primary schooling it is not even a part of the primary-school curriculum (Tickoo 1993).
- ii) Secondly, in most state-run systems mother tongue teaching fails to equip sizeable sections of school leavers with basic skills and abilities that are required to use the language either creatively or competently. Approaches to mother tongue teaching very often stop short of enabling them to respond to both professional and academic needs. In most cases, they fail also in helping them gain their individual voices for using their first language productively. Mother tongue teaching has suffered such neglect that in many cases in the recent past curriculum designers have been known to favour the adoption of innovative approaches and methods used to teach English or another modern European language to foreign learners. As a result, the mother tongue

- at best gets taught for only the limited aims that foreign language teaching normally sets itself.
- iii) Thirdly, Of equal concern should be the fact that although in theory schooling systems avowedly aim at teaching a third language to most learners which, in the majority of cases happens to be English, the actual provision for teaching that language makes it unacceptable to not only well informed middle and upper class parents but to even those parents who can ill-afford English-medium schooling for their school going children. An obvious result is that throughout India English-medium schools are fast mushrooming and in great demand. In many states the name English-medium carries a charisma such that even where such a school provides next to nothing by way of real, useable English, it is preferred to be more established and relatively better equipped government schools. A major failure of mainstream schooling lies in this ever widening chasm between promise and provision.
 - iv) Fourthly, there is something that applies to the vast majority of classrooms especially in cities and large towns. Its that in their 'setting' these places are characterized by features whose strengths are outweighed by their known weaknesses. In 1960, Michel West who had spent productive many years in such classes defined their setting in the following words : "Such a classroom consists of 30 pupils (more truly 40 or 50) congested on benches (not sitting at individual or dual desks), accommodated in an unsuitable shaped room, ill graded, with a teacher who perhaps does not speak English very well or very fluently, working in a hot climate." (West, 1960). West also referred to the fact that 'Pupils in such schools are more subject to elimination than those that are more favourably circumstanced.' Almost forty years on the average class size has become much larger but the facilities have in many cases not grown proportionately. And because such classrooms also lack most of those essentials that now belong to ordinary language classrooms in more developed parts of the world, they are known to facilitate the adoption of only those forms of teaching (e.g. hour long lectures with no scope for any kind of interaction) which are hardly at all suited to the teaching of language skills and abilities.

We have so far answered two main questions : one, what policy directions on language education will prevail as the next millennium begins to take shape? Two, what type of problems do the systems currently face in making that policy real? The next obvious question is this 'Given that educational systems will work

towards effective bilingual policies and programs, what main steps will become necessary to make that pursuit real?'

Two answers are obvious one, remove the known road blocks some of which were referred to in what I said above and two, maximize the use of means that are or are likely to become available. In my second presentation I shall be looking at some ways in which both existing and emerging resources can be put to more productive uses. In what follows I shall present a view on how to remove roadblocks or wherever possible, convert them into dependable allies.

Effective bilingual education can best come about in an environment which allows the different languages to support each other. To make this additive bilingual learning-teaching possible what is needed most of all in terms of school based provision is a whole-school curriculum policy of language education or what the Bullock Report (1975) designated as a policy of language across the curriculum (See Tickoo 1986). That report spells out the main obligations of such a policy in the following words :

'In the secondary school, all subject teachers need to be aware of :

1. The linguistic processes by which their pupils acquire information and understanding, and the implications for the teacher's own use of language;
2. The reading demands of their own subjects and ways in which the pupils can be helped to meet them.

To bring about this understanding every secondary school should develop a policy for language across the curriculum. The responsibility for this policy should be embodied in the organisational structure of the school.

By making every teacher responsible for helping the learner become a good reader in one or more languages the school can give languages the attention they deserve. However, what also needs to be understood are the ways in which languages working in mutually supportive relationships can add to what is already known about a school based language education or language across the curriculum programme. Let us look at a few of the main answers :

Over seventy years ago several school-based scientific experiments were conducted in parts of British India and especially schools in and around the Bangladeshi city of Dacca. A main purpose of those experiments was to find out if the skills and abilities gained in becoming a mature reader in one language can have any value outside of that language. The main experiment ran as follows over a period of six weeks :

The researcher studied the reading practices of ordinary Bengali school children in two languages - Bengali and English. Both practices were found equally unsatisfactory. The researcher followed that up with intensive training in improving their skills of silent reading in English and not in Bengali. At the end of

these focussed training sessions tests were administered to measure the impact. In all cases the results were positive and they were seen in more mature silent reading skills with both greater speed and higher levels of comprehension.

Tests were next given to the testees to find out if training in reading English had had any influence on their reading in Bengali. A surprising set of statistics came to light. It showed that in almost all cases the pupils' Bengali reading skills and improved a lot more than those in English for which they had received specific training. The researcher concluded that reading was a general ability which once learnt in becoming literate in one language was capable of getting transferred to another (see Tickoo 1993b for a fuller discussion).

Significant developments have since taken place in the field of reading related scholarship (see e.g., Alderson and Urquhart 1984). Major advances towards grasping the nature of reading during the last two decades in which Kenneth Goodman sees 'a Copernician revolution taking place in our understanding of the written language processes' (Goodman 1984) have resulted in a paradigm shift in the ideas that govern the approaches to teaching reading. However, the understanding that the skills/abilities gained in learning to read one language especially where they are learnt at the level of what Cummins calls CALP (Cummins 1981) can prove useful in learning another is as true today as it was in the 1920's (for e.g. Cummins and Swain 1986).

Based on a study of ten female high school seniors and the processes they used in reading Hebrew(their first language) and English (a second language), Sarig (1987) for example came to the following insightful conclusions : 'That readers tackle high level reading tasks in both languages in a similar manner. The same factors explain success and failure to almost the same extent. In addition, there appears to be a considerable relation between the frequency of comprehension-production and deterring moves. One may conclude then, that reading processes do transfer crosslingually, as far as main ideas analysis and overall message synthesis tasks in academic text are concerned.' And finally, 'It can be concluded, then, that reading processes from the first language do appear to transfer to the foreign language.'

What is true of reading is in good measure true of writing and its complex network of skills. Here too experimental studies have begun to show that skills and abilities that add up to competence in writing serve across languages. Alister Cummins's extensive doctoral-level study (Cummins 1988) shows, for example, that for writers in second languages, the first language learnt skills and abilities are an 'important resource' in their 'continual processes of decision making while writing.'

Scholars working in bilingual studies (E.G. Fishman 1984) have also of late found evidence to support one other significant fact. It is that the learner's 'strong' language which in most cases is their first literate language, is

capable of becoming a powerful asset in more ways than are ordinarily understood. It not only serves to build parallel strengths in subsequent languages but also serves as a more reliable source of cognitive growth.

Now, if we put to work the above understanding of facts in designing a more workable language education programme what changes can we envisage in its make up? To serve both time and space I shall spell out the answer in brief points. However, before I do so I would like to sound a note of caution.

My main assignment this morning amounts to using a crystal ball to provide a view of language education in the millennium whose birth is still several hundred days in the future. I have, as far as possible, relied on data-driven studies in support of what I say. But there are two things that unavoidably enter the making of such a presentation. The first is that not all the variables that influence the course of events - and they are all too many - are known to any of us at this juncture. Secondly, that each of us is in some measure a partisan. In what I say about the alternative language education programme many of you may rightly see elements that suggest a viewpoint at work rather than a universal truth. This is inevitable and I plead guilty to it in parts of what follows. And now to the alternative that I would like to see at work as the next millennium unfolds itself.

The basis of the alternative language policy and programme that I envisage is my strong belief in the desirability and feasibility of making every child a true bilingual. I have not ruled out either the need or the possibility of making a percentage of children -especially those whose workplace requirements or special aptitudes justify it - the learning and use of 3 or 4 or more languages. What I would like to see as a universal pattern is that everyone in the third millennium being able to see the world around them with an enriched perspective by allowing it to be influenced by a minimum of two languages to shape and support it. I am conscious that in the assertion that one's language shapes aspects of one's worldview or parts of one's thought and action patterns one is upholding the now widely questioned Whorfian thesis (see e.g. Whorf 1956). However, I do believe that there is much to commend that thesis in at least its weak form. One's language does enable one to see the world in a particular way.

The next question that arises here is this 'Which if any of the languages in the school's curriculum should be made the first language and what place and roles should it have in elementary or even secondary education?' This is and will remain an extremely difficult question to answer in any multilingual country like ours. Let me briefly explain why on the way to presenting an admittedly partisan answer.

A large percentage of Indian languages are today without an alphabet and quite a few with alphabets are as yet not quite capable of serving singly as

reliable means of true and full literacy. I would like to see more and more of them enriched and empowered to serve those functions as the millennium moves apace. As for those languages that are literate but as yet poorly provided in terms of materials that can serve functional literacy in full measure, I would like to see both private and public efforts dedicated to giving them comparable resources for serving the child who is born to them. Importantly, I would also like to see concerted efforts at building every major Indian language into a worthy medium of literacy at the highest level. And now to the question of their place and roles.

The most provocative and contentious change I envisage in our system of language education is what might be called a reversal of linguistic roles. Let me explain. Decisions on which language should be first among equals are currently mainly dictated by economics. Ambitious parents are governed by it as much as policy-making bodies at the Centre and in the States. What is it if not economics that obliges highly educated parents to pressurize their child to give much greater or even total attention to becoming proficient in English? On a much larger and far more consequential scale what but economics must have led India's political leaders and educational planners working for them to make English-medium instruction part of every 'model' school? What if not economics can explain the logic behind Government of India's decision to make Navodaya schools which avowedly seek to empower the best of India's rural children, English-medium institutions? What if not economics makes well-known educationists believe that elitist schools whose numbers are ever on the increase serve the cause of Indian democracy?

So when I seek a reversal of roles I look forward to a system of language education where neither English nor any other foreign or even second language is given the pride of place in the child's schooling. Although there is much truth in the common belief that the majority of our successful men and women today are products of English-medium schooling, what has not been studied in any depth is the price that these successful individuals have been or are having to pay for being weaned away from their mother-tongues. For if it is true that both high-level cognitive abilities and true creativity are best and easiest gained through one's strong language, mother-tongue or first language medium schooling ought to have far greater potential for producing much larger pools of creativity in hard sciences and technologies as much as in arts and social sciences. But there is another, perhaps stronger, set of reasons for seeking a dominant place for mother-tongue teaching. It is that one's mother tongue is the only channel for access to the rituals and riches of one's native culture. In a world that is fast becoming not just globalized but more determinedly westernized and materialized and where the values and ways that serve to preserve the best in family life, in good neighbourliness but above all, in a human concern for fellow humans and perhaps also all living things, there has been an irreversible weakening of traditional values.

A true bilingual system will, in my judgement, best serve the individual and the society only if the child's first language is entrusted with the tasks of full literacy. I would like to see those roles extended and enhanced as the millennium enters its second and subsequent hundred years. I would also like every Indian language to equip itself to serve as an organ of national integration. For this and other obviously educative purposes I would like to see progressively larger investments of creative talent and budgetary provision for translation across Indian languages. A time might come in not too distant future when a Gujarati child can savour the best of contemporary Bengali, Kannada or Kashmiri literature without having to learn those languages. It is heartening to know in this context that at the Central University of Hyderabad efforts were already afoot to make translation across Indian languages a near automatic exercise with the help of highly sophisticated computer software. If that succeeds, Indian mother tongue may serve to bring speakers of different languages measurably closer to each other by taking in the best from each of them.

Now, if the mother tongues are made the sole medium of primary education, where and when should Hindi and English figure and what roles should be assigned to each? What I have to say may once again seem both contentious and deliberately provocative but I shall say it because I believe in its value and truth.

In my view Hindi is no less and no more a national language than Gujarati, Kannada or Konkani. Each already indexes parts of India's rich and diverse cultures which have a lot in them that constitutes the common core. But Hindi has been assigned an important role as India's official language. That role is to serve as a link language between states and individuals.

A deeper analysis of these twin roles will admittedly show a lot more than came to surface in looking at them for my purpose this morning. However, what I see as essential is to teach Hindi with a view to providing the skills required for oral communication (e.g. a Gujarati interacting with a Malayali speaker) and able to comprehend and, in a percentage of cases, comprehend and produce genres of written Hindi that will be needed for interstate correspondence at various stages. For me this would demand focussing on the teaching of Hindi for specific and limited goals only. Doing so at a time when radio, T V, and satellite-based communication will have assumed a much larger presence, ought normally to be possible in less than 300-400 contact hours.

In much the same way as the teaching of Hindi as a second language I would envisage courses in teaching English as a foreign language addressing themselves mainly to ESP requirements. Both the roles they serve and the place that the language occupies in the millennium would differ in two important ways. One, the English language will serve different purposes for different learners. For the majority it would, in my view, serve mainly as a library language rather than either as a link language or a language of social survival. For a sizeable and

growing percentage especially in larger cities and towns it would, for the definable future, be needed as a language of oral interaction with speakers of non-Indian languages. For a yet smaller number it will be the language of literature or law, Anglo-American culture, western art, music and dance etc. and so on. English will have to be taught and learnt only for well-defined purposes and for clearly demarcated and limited goals. Once again this will require only a small part of, say, the secondary-school time-table hours.

The second difference is this. Although for many decades to come the English language will continue to be the largest gateway to current knowledge especially in areas where the sciences and technologies are growing fast and moving farthest, it may not be long before several other languages will gain ascendancy and serve as equally effective and, in some domains, more productive means for some of those aims. With markets opening up in hitherto unimportant places it will, for example, become necessary to learn Chinese and Malay for gaining access to large parts of Asia. Similarly, to gain entrance into cultures and markets of member countries of the European union or Latin America investments in learning German, French and Spanish may offer higher returns than those in learning English. So too in some aspects and domains of scientific and middle years, there are likely to be several competing languages capable of serving global, regional or subcontinental needs which right now are increasingly being met by English. The Indian bilingual system will have to equip itself for teaching several of these influential languages for special but limited purposes and to teach them successfully in short periods of time.

What must the state and society do to successfully teach a number of languages where it now fails to teach a much smaller number in a majority of its schools? This is a question that will assume centrality as the years pass and multilingual education becomes a national necessity.

The answer, it seems to me, will lie in 3 types of strengthening of the educational provision. First, something that is as yet a virgin field in applied linguistic scholarship. What needs to be explored fully are ways in which learners' strong language(s) can be utilized as a source of support for acquiring another language. Here I refer to an enriched bilingual methodology which can by raising learner awareness of the similarities and differences among the learnt and targetted languages help ease the path to language acquisition. Second, a far greater reliance on a much strengthened system of non-formal education with sustenance and support from information technology, computer-based instruction, much enhanced T.V. services and a lot more that will have become available in, say, a hundred years from now. Thirdly, a whole-school policy of language across the curriculum wherein languages will not only live in harmony with each other, they will give meaning to 'additive bilingualism' (Lambert 1975) by exploring to the full the possibilities of interlingual cooperation.

Of the means envisaged for the goals, I can think of only a few. There will have to be language classrooms with book corners which provide large and growing shelf space for graded and appropriate reading materials with identical texts in a number of languages, libraries of audio and video cassettes with similarly rich and diverse materials and with a variety of teaching-learning aids - both old and new, and so on. A major resource will be much strengthened bilingual dictionaries which are already being seen as teaching aids with immense undiscovered educational potential and bilingual grammars which have suffered neglect because of their association with the discredited grammar-translation method.

A final thought not so much on how educational systems can contribute to enabling the society's participation in the process of globalisation as on how the society outside the school can enrich linguistic provision. The obvious first step has to be for bilingual individuals to help how best they can either as auxiliary teachers or as linguistic informants. The long-term goal will, however have to be to make language shops part of every locality. Such a shop should not only sell books, cassettes and computer software but more importantly serve as a place for learning languages for highly delimited specific aims. A much enhanced role for private enterprise has to become an important and integral part of an effective multilingual society. For some purposes (e.g. teaching languages for client-specified limited aims) the bulk of teaching may happen only in private fee paying institutions.

An assignment of this nature does not end with a single presentation. What I have attempted in my one hour is a view that at best takes care of the broad framework of a possible alternative. I have argued for true bilingualism in education which seeks to give every Indian child what they best deserve and what their society can give for their good and its own well being. In this bilingual system I have emphasized the need to make languages work in mutually supportive ways and provided a few reasons for both why that needs to be done and how it may be best achieved. I have also shown the need to empower India's many languages which index and embody its rich cultures and richer diversity. I have briefly referred to the status and roles that languages should assume in the next millennium and also the possible need for other up and coming languages as the millennium takes shape. A lot of what I have said has been put in hints and suggestions which need to be pondered either built on or challenged. My hope is that I have raised a few issues that will serve towards a dialogue on an issue which has been and will continue to be receiving attention at many levels of thinking in this great land.

More than a quarter century ago a British scholar who had lived in India wrote that the only solution to India's linguistic problems was for the people to learn to live with them. I have come to believe that our many languages may not be just problems but also and more truly rich resources. If that be true, living with them and growing with them may throw up many surprises in the millennia to

come. Let us then wish those of us who may live in those better times (would some of us be there in our next births!) all the joys of living in a truly multilingual and multicultural paradise.

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Management of Education: Scenario for the Third Millennium

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Lead - in :

Words in use gain additional meanings. Of late many English words do so primarily in being put to work for new technologies or for offshoots of established sentences. Two such words in the title of this presentation are 'management' and 'scenario'. Both have become part of what functional linguists call uncommonsense knowledge. To relate these two words to the main arguments in my presentation I shall first briefly situate them by answering two questions : which third millennium scenario should be foregrounded? And what will management mean inside the educational scenario that will receive attention?

Which Scenario? In seeking to understand a future of an institution that influences the lives and behaviours of human beings, a possible choice can be between a likely scenario and a desirable scenario. In building the former one could take one's clues from the way knowledgeable scholars and thinkers describe the current institutional scene. If, for example, one's interest is at looking at aspects of Indian higher education at the third millennium the best clues could come from statements made by distinguished scholars who, having served the system for long, claim to know it best. If one did so one would naturally share their belief that all is not well with our colleges and universities. College education is seen as heading towards virtual chaos in, for instance, Prof. Amrik Singh's 1995 book entitled 'The Trap Called Teaching'. As for the universities Prof. V V John's belief that 'Our university system has become an effective impedimento to the pursuit of the goals of higher education'(John 1973 :111) is as bad an indictment of the system as there can be. Elsewhere John also alleges that a typical Vice Chancellor remains pre-occupied with keeping what he calls the peace of graveyard (John 1979).

A similar worst-case scenario for the end of the century mainstream schooling systems based on a reading of some of today's credible critiques would highlight the following:

that class size which is already unwieldy, will go further thus making it impossible to provide effective teacher intervention in most state-run urban schools;

that the systems' unequal provision which is fast becoming menacingly inequitable, will soon assume threatening proportions;

that as the elitist system of fee-paying private schools expands fast it will not only continue to gain a dominant presence in the state-level educational

systems it will set unreal and unattainable standards of attainment for the mainstream regional-medium schools;

That Westernization and Materialization of the products of education both inside and outside the schools and colleges will have reached a point of no return; together the two will further displace or marginalize the essence of the nation's socio-cultural and ethical values.

A different view is possible, however; it is best described as the desirable scenario. For this scenario clues can mainly come from hope-inspiring initiatives that exist both within and outside the educational system. In this scenario the system will work towards those globally and nationally cherished goals which are best built on a value orientation to the curricula and courses, programmes and practices. It will seek to maximize and, to the extent possible, equalize educational opportunity and thus become capable of effectively harnessing all available resources in order to make even the currently unmanageable class size one of the systems' strengths.

In this presentation I shall place my bets on this latter scenario in looking forward to the next century and the next millennium. I shall do so in the firm conviction that the nation's investment in the scientific and technological education and in the creation of what Jawaharlal Nehru called India's new temples which has been the hallmark of educational planning from the very first five year plan, will have prepared the ground for an effective take off towards both socio-economic and cultural heights.

What type of management? Management has been defined as that science and art which aims at a systematic arrangement of resources. In our educational institutions today management at best serves to maintain and control the three M's (i.e. Men and Women, Money and Materials) which constitute the system's primary resources. As part of the desirable scenario which I have opted for, management will be essentially developmental. By definition, it will focus on long-term advance planning in respect of both its human and material resources. More importantly, one of its main distinctions will lie in generating work satisfaction and true happiness among all those who either serve it or have a stake in its success. Such a humane system will also help motivate every worker in it to successfully harness the materials under their care.

System's management has in the past been mainly associated with well-run industrial plants and establishments. At its best it incorporates human resource development (H R D) as an integral component. As a result attention will be focused on the interdependence or more truly, interanimation of all the major systems, i.e., from the highest level policy planning and administration leading on to curriculum design and development followed by program and syllabus renewal and implementation and onto effective and on-going monitoring and evaluation. An important consequence of making the systems mutually

supportive and interdependent will be that not only will educational aims and curricular objectives help shape the content of courses and the choice of methodologies, materials and means of measurement, the systems that currently form the lower ends of the spectrum will also continually inform and influence those on top of the network of systems. Equally importantly such a network of systems working in harmony will encourage and ensure the involvement of teachers and other practitioners in decision making processes at the same time as it will make it possible for theoreticians, top level managers and policy planners to be informed by coal-face realities.

Scenario at work: To explore in depth and detail the changes that will occur at various levels of a national system of education on its adoption of systems management, is a task best left to at least a book-length study. An hours presentation can hardly do justice to that. What I can attempt is a view of the desirable scenario in action in that part of the educational system which affects the working lives of most professionals who are involved in curriculum design and development, renewal and implementation. The decision to focus on just this part of the network of systems is also based on my understanding that most of those participating in this important annual programme belong to this class of professionals.

To understand the basic processes of curriculum change and renewal one must begin with a brief reference to relevant parts of the current scenario. In both national and state-level educational systems of today curriculum design and development is normally left to specialists who are known to be in touch with current thinking both on what needs to be learnt and taught when and how best it can be transmitted to those who make use of it in various situations and for differing needs. Such specialists or senior academics in the case of colleges and universities who are charged with the varied tasks that form part of it, generally belong to two or sometimes three different institutional or functional categories.

First, there are those who convert the curricular framework into teaching syllabuses; next come those who put flesh on those documents by translating them into textual (i.e. course, source and supplementary) materials and then come those whose pivotal task it is to mediate between the materials and the learners inside the classroom. The system also aims to provide for another type of mediation, one where the novice or untrained teacher is initiated into aspects of the collective wisdom that is available to the profession at a particular point of time. Currently this is mainly done through either pre-service or in-service training courses.

Now, there can be no doubt about the theoretical adequacy of such a system which seeks to put to work the best qualified people in the system or in an institution of higher education. It not only makes it possible to engage the best expertise in respect of each major task that forms part of the

total curricular system but is also calculated to strengthen the practitioners' hands by giving them access to the best of collective wisdom without forcing them to as it were reinvent the methodological wheel. What is more such a system can, in theory, be not only cost effective but should also be able to work towards producing high quality instructional materials.

This being so, two questions naturally arise: why need the current system be replaced, and in what significant and specific ways will the desirable management scenario of the next millennium that is being visualized here be different from what exist now? I shall address the two questions in that order.

In the system as it exists today practitioners - mainly classroom teachers - are expected to put to work what comes from above either via course materials or through learned lectures. The main mode in all this is one-way transmission and the roles are on one hand those of givers who are also knowers and on the other of 'knowees' who are its recipients. In a majority of school rooms the teacher therefore sees his or her task as being mainly that of someone who covers the assigned portions to satisfy both the examination requirements and also the pressure groups that operate either inside the school or college or outside it.

A main but not the only reason why the system of management may be failing to maintain and uphold standards of effectively harnessing the resources and, more importantly, why it requires not just change but an almost total reversal, is that studies done over many years now have been highlighting the fact that most teachers are both unwilling and unable to make good use of what comes to them as either a prescribed methodology or a pre-specified and -sequenced syllabus. (See e.g. Bailey and Nunan 1996). In their inability to do so, lie hidden a whole host of failures that such a system normally embodies.

The failures lie in the fact that it marginalizes teachers by assigning to them the roles of technicians and thus showing utter disregard for their professionalism. They also lie in the fact that people in the upper reaches of the system - policy planners, top-level administrators, theory makers or curriculum and program designers - are unable (more often unwilling) to draw their insights from the school room. Worst of all, the failures lie in the fact that in such a system students are neither expected nor able to learn by deploying the creative resources of their minds to discover new facts or to arrive at personal means.

An analysis of these and many similar failures of the current systems makes it abundantly clear that the systems continue to function within a century-old paradigm in which teaching is viewed as being the same as transmission of known information and human learning is believed to come about without any exertion of the mind. What is also known to follow from such failures in engaging the systems' human resources is the systems' and the schools' inability to put to good use even their limited material resources. In most cases not only are the

new technological aids and equipment underutilized and poorly maintained (in many classrooms they are often viewed as threats to teachers' authority) even the established teaching aids like the blackboard, maps and charts are hardly put to use in most classrooms.

To correct the ills and undo the wrongs of such educational systems and the institutions within them, three things will need to stand out in the alternative scenario of the next millennium. One, it will build on the strengths of each sector in the network of systems that constitute the essence of the institutional curriculum. Two, it will bring into a harmonious relationship the different sectors by facilitating and promoting cooperative engagement. Three, it will create conditions for maximizing the use of established aids and equipment at the same time as it will encourage the use of those that are born from developments in new electronic or information technologies. A brief reference to a select few of those structural changes which, in my judgement, are likely to be consequential in shaping the desirable scenario and in making the systems more responsive to individual and social needs, follows.

The Teacher now and then: The kingpin of any educational system's curricular resource is the classroom teacher on whose meaningful participation very often rests the success of the entire educational enterprise. It is common knowledge that what any teacher does in the classroom lacks visibility. The best that happens inside the walls of the classroom lacks not just record but very often recognition as well. A not unexpected result of this is the educational systems' failure to know the true nature of what or how much happens in a classroom and what is more, a total failure to recognise its true value. All too often people in authority appear to find it difficult to believe that the skills and abilities that constitute good teaching are not automatic products of becoming literate. The common practice of appointing untrained matriculates or graduates as teachers bears witness to those. But something else much less known but equally consequential is also part of the current educational scenario. This something was brought out some 40 years ago by the great literary critic, I A Richards.

Richards compared the state of the art in teaching with that in dentistry. He came to the conclusion that whereas the latter kept moving steadily forward, the former even at its best showed no more than swings of the pendulum. At least in English language teaching such swings of the pendulum which often signify no more than frequent changes of fashion, have been part of the last half century's recorded history. But, what in Richards' view, made the big difference between dentistry and teaching?

In answering this question Richards wrote that it was largely because dentists based their practice on studies of clinical case-studies. No such thing existed in the case of teachers largely because there were no avenues for helping teachers to know and learn from each other's classroom case-studies. The two related failures, i.e. lack of visibility and the inability to record and

disseminate and so share their success stories - together account for the fact that what teachers do in their classrooms lacks recognition. As a result those who teach are hardly ever called upon to contribute to either the design or the development of curricula and courses.

How will the alternative system of management remedy this situation?
The short answer is that

a] it will make teacher reflection of their work in the classroom an integral part of their professional responsibility and

b] in places of need within and across schools it will provide a forum and facilities to help everyone involved in curriculum design, development and implementation to remain informed about and so learn to value the findings of such reflective engagement by teachers with issues in practical pedagogy.

I shall look at each in turn.

The system of management that I envisage will encourage and reward regular teacher reflection for an informative collection of case studies based on teacher reflection (for an informative collection of case studies based on teacher reflection see, e.g. Freeman and Richards 1996) on what they do in their classrooms. It will do so by putting into effect two different but related processes. I shall call the first demystifying research and the second popularising publication. I shall treat the two together in viewing the teacher inside the desirable scenario.

It is common knowledge that most teachers think of research as something highly esoteric. In the widespread belief that research requires not only special training and equipment but also a qualitatively different mental preparedness, most teachers shy away from the very thought of indulging in any type of research. The result is that even where a teacher finds out things of value as a result of careful observation in his or her class, he or she sees no reason to share it with colleagues or even build on it towards improving her own practice. A lot of value to teachers and to the system as a whole gets lost in that diffidence.

Now, although it is true that high level research, be it quantitative or qualitative, requires both specialist training and sustained effort over a long period of time neither of which a busy teacher can normally afford, what is also true is that action research of the type which can provide many of the most useful insights into the goings-on inside a classroom, is best done by teachers either individually or, for some purposes, in pairs and groups.

Of many important aspects of everyday teaching which can be best understood and improved through an individual teacher's careful record of and reflection on her own and her colleagues' teaching, a few are: the nature and quality of questions and also their source and scope, the nature of interaction

between teachers and learners and between and among learners (in many of our classrooms today the only interaction is between the speaking teacher and the silent pupils), the effectiveness or otherwise of different types of feedback on student writing and the advantages and limitations of pair and group work in small and large classes. A few others including, for example, the relative efficacy of different aids or the best ways of teaching (or getting learners to learn) one or another topic or genre inside a subject may also require either sharing of success stories or learning from each other's failures. And so on.

What is obvious is that in the desirable scenario of the next millennium the system's awareness that teachers (much like dentists) can gain not from recounts and critiques of classroom events in which they routinely perform, will make teacher reflection an integral part of teacher training as well as of every school's work schedules. What will also receive equal attention will be the provision of avenues for helping teachers share each other's success stories through school-based and system-supported pedagogic publications. School and college based journals which are currently either non-existent or used only as newsletters, will become a main avenue for sharing classroom case studies. Similar initiatives at district, state and national levels will serve to make the most well researched classroom studies part of shared knowledge. But how will this change impact the system and its management?

The answer is that by getting teachers to know what works and what does not, by helping them to relate that knowledge to its causes and consequences, and by providing them the means to disseminate it widely, it will bring about major changes in human resource management. It will not only enable teachers to relate better to their day-to-day work in the classroom and improve its quality by basing it on what works under varied and often difficult circumstances, it will in time become a main source of an alternative methodology. What may matter the most is that such reflection will help build self esteem and professionalism among teachers and thus contribute to making them partners in all the processes of curriculum renewal. A much needed but little thought of gain may also lie in the fact that by helping practitioners' problematize reality in Paulo Freire's terms (Freire 1970/1977) it will reduce the need for them and for the system to keep looking for the universally best method or the surest remedy for all pedagogical ills. The unending search for pedagogical panaceas will end giving place to systematic attempts at building socio-culturally relevant knowledge through teacher engagement with local realities.

Theoreticians and practitioners - a new nexus:

Secondly, under the present system, curriculum design is a task assigned to institutions with known expertise in relevant fields of study. These include designated centres where curricula and courses are made and those where they are mediated for teachers' and learners' use. What most such centres of research, production or training currently concentrate on is the transmission of known knowledge via textual materials, training manuals or scholarly lectures. In

most cases what gets passed on is received or imported wisdom which often owes very little to realities on the ground. In the context of English language teaching in the third world, for example, Adrian Halliday (1994) rightly refers to what he calls the BANA technology (by BANA he means British, American and Australian) which has very little relevance to the average Asian and African teaching learning environment. Even in general the bulk of it is known to be imported wisdom from teaching-learning environments which have very little in common with those where ordinary teaching gets done in our systems. In most cases the fate of such vacuous theories and their products is also obvious: they fail to reach most mainstream classrooms.

What the alternative system will address are ways to ensure that such centres of ideation or training become increasingly relevant. It will do so helping them to stay in close touch with ground realities and, by enabling them to constantly interact with school administrators, teachers and students, situate their theories in typical classrooms placed inside typical socio-cultural and -economic environments.

How, it may be asked, can a hierarchical system like ours which manages to somehow drag the caste- or class-based preferences and prejudices into most structures of collective living, bring about such a change of assignments, attitudes and behaviours? The answer is that it will do so primarily by making changes in the system of rewards and recognition.

What has happened hitherto is that the bulk of research concerns itself with issues in theory. In most cases such research seeks to either replicate or, in a small number of cases, build on and extend what has been done in different academic centres and environments in the West. Rare are the studies which grow in collaboration between school teachers and scholars working in centres of research in India. Rarer still are those which address actual classroom needs in regional-medium schools and colleges.

What the alternative system of management will promote is an academic culture that places the highest premium on social responsibility. It will institute a system of rewards in which recognition and promotion are available to theoreticians who work to bring theory close to the known concerns of practice and also to practitioners who enhance the value of theoretical findings by relating them to the problems of teaching and learning. What is more important, in such a system it will no longer be necessary for teachers to covet administrative or research positions to reach the highest salary scales. The system will reward excellence in teaching in much the same way as it now does in the case of research or administration. The most obvious gains will lie in bringing theory and practice closer to each other and in enabling curriculum designers to work hand in hand with syllabus developers and implementers. If as a result the teacher is also restored to the well-earned social status that he enjoyed in our earlier history, it should be all for the good of a resurgent India.

Knowing not memorising -the learner then and now:

Thirdly, in the existing system the learner is, as s/he should be, the beneficiary of the knowledge that is put in course materials. However, the dominant pattern under which this gets done is what Freire calls the 'digestive' (Freire 1970/1977) concept of knowledge or a nutritionist view of its nature and use. What happens in it in most cases is that the prescribed textbook becomes the sole repository of known knowledge thus making it unnecessary or even unhelpful to reach out to sources of knowledge which require learner efforts at meaning making. The learner seeks to memorize discrete bits of knowledge rather than know or analyse what s/he sees on the printed page or of late in other - at times richer - sources of current knowledge. What is true of textbooks in relation to learners is often also true of teachers vis a vis learners. They too mainly serve as alternative sources of memorisable knowledge. Teaching thus becomes transmission in the belief that learners learn all and only what teachers or textbooks teach.

Such a system currently produces a vast majority of those who leave school with varied amounts of accumulated facts and figures which are calculated to help answer examination questions or, at best, prepare them for taking entrance tests of one or another kind. Where it fails is in equipping the majority of school leavers with the skills of learning how to learn by independently reaching out to both old and new sources of knowledge and, as necessary, by building personal meanings through discernment and critical study. What the alternative system will aim at are graduates of schools and colleges who are capable of independent thought as much as of self-directed action. Learner autonomy will be a main goal of teaching and learning from very early in mainstream schooling.

Material Resources: We have so far looked at some ways in which the alternative system of developmental, systems management can attempt two related things: one, maximize the potential of the men and women who serve it in their different capacities, viz. As policy planners, administrators, researchers and teacher educators and as school and departmental heads, classroom teachers and learners and two, find ways of enabling each and all of them to work in harmony for the good of the system and the society and for their own happiness. There can be no doubt that between them these primary stakeholders of the system are not only its beneficiaries but also its greatest resource. However, several facts that have of late gained additional relevance appear to make it imperative that the alternative system of management pays equal attention to maximizing the potential of the other half of the system' resources. Let me begin with a brief word on these emerging facts.

It is a well known fact that state-run systems of education are finding it increasingly difficult to provide adequate additional facilities to ensure that population growth and democratisation of educational opportunity which are and

will remain a large part of the Indian educational system in the next century and the next millennium, are not allowed to have an adverse effect on the quality and character of formal instruction. Class size is growing and making its impact felt on the quality of instruction and learning.

Two related developments appear, however to raise hopes of the system' being able to meet the challenges of change as the millennium takes shape. The first of these is the gradual emergence of information technology and computer-based instruction as resources capable of successfully serving some pivotal functions in even those aspects of education which have hitherto been solely dependent on high quality human intervention. The second is the emergence of non-formal education as a possible alternative system of schooling. I shall look at them in that order.

In a system which puts its bets on teachers as reflective practitioners a heightened awareness of the strengths and limitations of different aids and devices should be a natural outcome. With planned provision for practitioners to share each other's success stories and case studies, it should also become normal to make much fuller and more productive use of the existing aids. What should, however, make a significant difference to an educational system's ability to harness the material aids is the new and still evolving knowledge that even for teaching skills-based as opposed to knowledge-based subjects (e.g. second and foreign languages) new technologies have been showing fresh possibilities of getting educational aids to do what hitherto could not be attempted without a teacher's intervention.

Of several such uses in second/foreign language teaching one can, for example, single out the following: use of computer-aided instruction in producing and promoting more interactive tasks for training in listening and speech, use of concordance studies for making it possible to get to know and put to use the multiple meanings and habitual collocations of heavy-duty and high frequency words, valuable support provided in different processes of professional academic writing and the use of teleconferencing for economic and effective interaction and feedback.

But computer-aided instruction and learning although it promises to become a major player in the millennium's alternative system, is not the only teaching aid that has of late been put to more productive uses more fully are audio- and video-cassettes, educational television and, in an as yet reflectively small way, educational programmes using international and national communication satellites. With personal computers becoming more accessible and more versatile as aids to learning and teaching the alternative classroom will be able to make far greater use of it for many additional purposes. At the same time, however, the system will also find it helpful to work towards greater and more creative uses for the older and more established aids.

Non-formal education has been being put to more and more uses first at the tertiary level through national state-level Open Universities and latterly for school drop-outs and others through the Open School system to give a second chance to join the skilled workforce. In doing so it has of late not only been incorporating more interactive materials and more professional forms of human intervention, it has also had to increasingly rely on support from the media-educational TV and also the radio. All this and more will continue to be part of the alternative system of the next millennium.

But far greater use of the non-formal mode as an auxiliary to formal schooling is not all that I visualize as part of the alternative system. What I visualize is an alternative system which uses the non-formal mode to make a major impact at several nodal sectors of the educational edifice. One such obvious point is its use to provide full functional literacy via community centres and other non-formal institutions and agencies. Another is to open up the possibilities of own-time learning for middle-level technicians who currently are not only in short supply but also are often found wanting in skills that are required to perform important technical jobs to the satisfaction of their clients. Those of us who have had recent experiences of making use of the services of plumbers, electricians or some other workers with presumed technical skills, may have noticed that our current system does not always do a good job of producing such middle-level technical workers.

What is being visualized is a system of non-formal education which not only serves a much larger percentage of learners and thereby reduces the growing pressure on mainstream schooling and tertiary-level training and also the educational budget, but also becomes the main source of certain forms of education with its growing support and sustenance from both modern media and recent information technologies. For countries like India and China whose populations will soon equal and surpass those of whole continents, an enriched and enhanced system of non-formal education may in time have to become an educational resource comparable in its range of services to the formal system. Institutions working for such a system will inevitably need to involve and make use of the local community's qualified men, women and educationally useable materials on a much larger and better planned scale.

In sum, the alternative system of educational management inside the their millennium will tap every existing and emerging resource in the society and put it to its best uses for individual happiness and collective development. Its greatest strengths will come from its success in equipping and enabling everyone who works for it and in it or has a stake in its success, to maximize their potential and give of their best and in turn receive its best in cash and in kind. Its differentness will also lie in building new and fruitful relationships between different systems and sub-systems and as part thereof on one hand and practitioners working under different arrangements on the other. An avowed aim capable of releasing hitherto suppressed human creativity will be to make every teacher a responsible

professional by helping him/her grow into a reflective practitioner and to equip every learner with skills and abilities which are needed to not only learn how to learn but also gain their individual voices as responsible citizens.

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