

CHAPTER - VI :

CENTRE-STATE CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY

IN EDUCATION

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6.1 INTRODUCTION

In education the need for consultation and co-operative decision-making has always been great. Here the interdependence of the Centre and the States is truly 'promotive', if one may borrow an expression from communication theory.¹ The Centre cannot achieve its goals in education, without the States cooperating and achieving them too. It will, therefore, be an entirely futile exercise for the Centre to set up educational goals with which the States do not agree and which on the basis of mutual consultation, the States do not undertake to achieve. The nature of the interdependence of the Centre and the States in education thus creates tough problems in educational policy-making.

In this chapter therefore, the Centre-State consultative machinery will be examined and its adequacy and effectiveness will be broadly inquired into.

6.2 THE CASE FOR CONSULTATION

The Administrative Reforms Commission submitted twenty and odd reports to the Government of India. The

problems on which the prolific Commission reported ranged from the redress of citizens' grievances to the administration of the Union Territories. One problem, however, escaped this wide net except in passing. This problem was what Yehezkal Dror, in his seminal work on policy-making,² calls 'meta-policy', that is policy about policy-making. In Dror's model, the last phase of meta-policy making is concerned with the designing of a policy-making structure.³ One would expect that this aspect of administration engaged the concerted attention of a body like the Administrative Reforms Commission holding its marathon deliberations in the context of a nascent federal polity. Its failure to do so reflects the weakness in the ^{usual} approach to federalism. In this approach federalism is looked upon, in the tradition of K.C. Wheare and others, as 'a static design regulated by firm and unalterable rules'.⁴ The other tradition of viewing federalism as a process and an evolving pattern of changing relationships is still comparatively new and the country is yet to be fully initiated into it. This latter approach accords the institutional devices for shaping and 'operationalising' the ever-evolving federal relationships the importance they deserve. Perspicacious Indian scholars have, therefore, suggested that studies of Centre-State relations in India

would be more rewarding, 'if they could be oriented increasingly towards federal processes and institution-making in the cooperative functioning of our Union.'⁵

Some students of federalism in the process tradition, like Professor Carl J. Friedrich, have argued that there is such a thing as a 'federal behaviour'.⁶ In Friedrich's conception, it is a highly pragmatic kind of political conduct, which understandably avoids all doctrinaire rigidity. One essential component of this conduct, it is generally agreed, is consultation between the Union and the units in a federal polity and collaborative decision-making.⁷

There is hardly any need to make out a detailed case for this aspect of 'federal behaviour'. Principles of participatory democracy itself should provide it ample justification. There is also the added consideration of political strategy: it is necessary that the mechanics of decision-making in a federal polity should create genuine confidence in the federating units in the objectivity of the decisions taken.⁸ In the Indian context, this consideration receives added weight from the political developments that have taken place in the country since the mid-sixties. As long as a single political party ruled at the Centre and practically

in all the States, with sporadic exceptions, the political party itself provided a common 'consultative forum' that inspired confidence.⁹ The charismatic personalities of the Central leaders of the party only rendered this confidence more unquestioning. This situation has now changed.

6.3 EXPERIENCE ELSEWHERE

A reference has already been made to the difficulties of federal decision-making in education. India, however, is not the only country which faces difficult educational problems because of the federal nature of its government. The Constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, like the Indian Constitution, assigns responsibility for education to each of the eleven German states. Educational systems or institutions of one country cannot be transplanted, either as a whole or in part, in another country; there is always the danger of the rejection of the foreign 'organ' by the host. All the same, it may be interesting in the present context to note the institutional tools devised by the Germans for handling the situation. Of particular interest among these are the Conference of the Ministers of Education of the eleven States, which has a permanent secretariat; the Conference of the Heads of the Universities; and the Scientific Council established in 1957 by a formal agreement between the separate States with each other and the Federal Government.

The latter body is an example of how these institutions function. The Scientific Council has published a series of recommendations and suggestions regarding university education. The reports of the Scientific Council has not always pleased everybody; but they have all the same served as a basis for action by separate States. What deserves one's attention is that the State legislatures have been ready to respond to the recommendations largely because the Scientific Council was a creation of the governments of the separate States and the Federal Government.¹⁰

There are indications of similar developments in the United States also. The American Constitution visualises what are known as 'inter-state compacts', especially in the matter of settling disputes between states. Inter-state compacts are agreements voluntarily entered into by two or more States and approved by the Congress.¹¹ The felt need for inter-state consultation has led to the application of this device to education also. The initial step along this road was taken in the 'forties. The Southern Regional Education Compact, formed in 1948, created a board with membership from each of the sixteen participating States. This was followed (in 1951) by the Western Inter-state Commission for Higher Education with thirteen states and the New England

Board of Higher Education with six States. Regional cooperation and the Consultation in education in the United States through inter-state compacts is still admitted^{ly} at the experimental stage. The scope of the policy-making and consultative functions of the compacts is also limited. But, if experience so far is any guide, the device possesses a great deal of promise. What is to be noted in the context of the present study, however, is how the emerging compulsions in the field of education have set off a search for consultative devices even in a country like the United States of America.

6.4 CONSULTATIVE MACHINERY IN INDIA

If it is necessary in older federations to be ever on the look out for accessory institutions to underpin the federal set-up in response to emerging situations in education, it is all the more so in a young federal polity. For, as Staley has rightly pointed out, it is easy to install a 'piece' of social technology, like a civil service, or a modern business corporation, or even the latest model in the Federal Government in a 'backward' country, but it will operate poorly, and figuratively break down if it is not adequately supported by institutional accessories appropriate

to the political milieu.¹² It is this that imports to the Indian 'improvisations' in decision-making and the Centre-State consultation in education a significance that they may not apparently possess. Upon them depend the very outcome of the federal experiment in education in India.¹³

No apology is, therefore, needed for this brief chapter in which we shall have a quick look at : (i) The National Development Council (NDC); (ii) The Central Advisory Board of Education (CABE); and (iii) The Conference of State Education Ministers.

The Consultative Machinery between the Centre and the States are classified on the basis of several criteria.¹⁴ One obvious basis of such classification is whether they are statutory or not. The inter-state council envisaged in Article 263, for example, is a statutory consultative machinery.¹⁵ The three institutions that are intended for discussion here are non-statutory in character and, in that sense, are true improvisations. The fact that one of them (the CABE) dates back to the pre-independence days when federalisation was first initiated does not change the innovative nature of them. All of them have been brought into existence through executive action and cannot therefore be considered solutions that are modo praescripto.

A word may be due here regarding the inclusion of the National Development Council in the discussion. It is true that the NDC as a consultative machinery is not distinctive to education. But, apart from the theoretical consideration that the processes and structures distinctive to a subsystem cannot often be fully understood unless in the perspective of the processes and structures of the 'parent' system, it has already ^{been} seen what an important role the NDC plays in decision-making in education.

Thus, the structure, functions and the 'style' (in the sense in which Almond has used that term¹⁶) of this apex consultative body in the country is not entirely of no interest to the student of the Centre-State relations in education in India. It may not ^{also} be out of place to mention here that the Administrative Reforms Commission has recommended that the Minister of Education at the Centre should be a member of the body. The recommendation perhaps is formal recognition of the fact that the NDC does play a part in education^{al} policy-making in the country.¹⁷

It would have been possible to lengthen the small list of institutions that have been taken up for study here. Before Mr. M.C. Chagla, the then Minister of Education at the Centre,

embarked upon his 'operation shearing' in 1964 and shed his Ministry of about fifty committees and councils, there were functioning at the Centre at varying degrees of somnolence¹⁸ many bodies that would have qualified for inclusion in the list. Then there are also conferences like those of the Vice-Chancellors and the State Directors of Education. There is also the consultative committee of the M.P.'s attached to the Ministry of Education. With a slight widening of the scope, it would have been even possible to include in the list autonomous organisations like the University Grants Commission and the National Council of Educational Research and Training. The researcher, however, deliberately confined his attention to what in effect is a purposive sample of bodies which are purely consultative in nature and functioning at a fairly high level of policy-making.

In subsequent sections, the three bodies chosen for study here will be discussed one by one. The National Development Council is taken up for discussion first.

6.5 THE NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

The NDC, as it is implied above, is the highest institutional arrangement for Centre-State consultation in India. It provides a forum of discussion on all vital matters affecting the Centre and the States at the apex of Indian political structure.

Contrary to common belief, the suggestion for setting up such a body was first made as early as 1946 by the Advisory Planning Board under the chairmanship of Shri K.C. Neogi.¹⁹ Later in 1951, the suggestion was again made by the Planning Commission in the Draft Outline of the First Five Year Plan. While doing so, the Commission stated the need for such a body in the following words :

In a country of the size of India where the states have under the constitution full autonomy within their own sphere of duties, it is necessary to have a forum such as the National Development Council at which from time to time the Prime Minister of India and the Chief Ministers of States can review the working of the Plan and its various aspects.²⁰

The suggestion was accepted by the Government of India and a National Development Council was established by a cabinet resolution on the 6th of August 1952, a little less than two and half years after the creation of the Planning Commission itself. The cabinet resolution defined the original functions of the Council. They were :

- (i) To review the working of national plan from time to time.
- (ii) To consider important questions of social and economic policy affecting national development; and

(iii) To recommend measures for the achievement of the aims and targets set out in the national plan, including measures to secure the active participation and co-operation of the people, improve the efficiency of the administrative services, ensure the fullest development of the less advanced regions and sections of the community and through sacrifices borne equally by all citizens, build up resources for national development.²¹

As constituted initially the Council consisted of the Prime Minister (who was also the Chairman), the Chief Ministers of the States, and the members of ^{the} Planning Commission. But, its meetings were usually attended by others as well. Central ministers concerned with the items on the agenda usually attended. Chief ministers were often accompanied by one or two other ministers. Sometimes outside experts were also invited to attend particular meetings.²²

The Administrative Reforms Commission in its Interim Report on the Machinery for Planning (submitted in April, 1967) recommended the reconstitution of the NDC to include the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, ten ministers of the Central Cabinet including, ^{earlier,} as it was seen, the Minister for Education,²³ the Chief Ministers of all the States and

the members of the Planning Commission. The ARC also recommended a redefinition of the functions of the NDC. The most important change suggested was that the NDC should be specifically required to prescribe guidelines for the formulation of the national plan.

The government accepted these recommendations with some modifications. A resolution incorporating the decision of the government on the recommendations was issued on October 7, 1967. The reconstituted NDC consists of the Prime Minister, all Union Cabinet Ministers (which incidentally has excluded the Minister for Education most of the time in recent years), the Chief Ministers of all the States and the union territories and the members of the Planning Commission. It is also provided that other Union and State Ministers may be invited, if occasion arises, to participate in the proceedings. The Secretary of the Planning Commission acts as secretary to the Council and the Planning Commission itself provides administrative support.

The revised functions of the NDC are :

- (i) To prescribe guidelines for the formulation of national Plan, including the assessment of resources for the plan;

- (ii) To consider the national plan as formulated by the Planning Commission;
- (iii) To consider important questions of social and economic policy affecting national development; and
- (iv) To review the working of the plan from time to time and to recommend such measures as are necessary for achieving the aims and targets set out in the national plan, including measures to secure the active participation and cooperation of the people, improve the efficiency of the administrative services, ensure the fullest development of the less advanced regions and sections of the community and, through sacrifices borne equally by all citizens build up resources for national development.²⁴

The composition and functions of the NDC show that it was designed to be the highest forum of federal consultation. Indeed the Planning Commission had mooted the proposal for its establishment to start with only because the need for such a forum was felt. How well then has the institution served the purpose of federal consultation in nation building?

The major weaknesses in the

operation of the Council in the matter of plan formulation have already been discussed in the earlier chapter on centre-state relations in educational planning. The observations which were made then apply, mutatis mutandis, to the entire functioning of the Council. These observations need not be recapitulated here in detail. But briefly, it was noted in that Chapter how the options put before the Council were narrow in range, how the attention given to the problems placed before it were inadequate, how the absence of proper conferencing procedures made its work unsatisfactory and how the council met at short notice so that there was no time for members to pre-digest the facts and other material relevant to the issues to be discussed.

The reorganisation of the body has not improved matters. The NDC as it is now constituted is a large body. In the ARC itself, which had recommended the expansion of its membership, anxiety had been expressed about the outcome of the move. Mr. H.V. Kamath, a prominent member of the Commission, had in a note of dissent warned that this might make the body too unwieldy. He had, therefore, suggested that, of the Central Ministers, in addition to the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, only Ministers of Finance, Home Affairs, Agriculture, Industry and, Irrigation and Power should be regular members of the Council.

Indeed, even with its original membership, the Council had been widely considered to be too large a body for any effective transaction of business.²⁵ (It was because of this that a standing committee of the Council was created as early as 1954).²⁶ A practice also was developed, over the years of inviting to its meetings a large number of central as well as state ministers in addition to the regular members. This only added to the problem.

It was in this background, that the ARC Study Team on the Machinery for Planning presided over by Shri R.R. Morarka had recommended that 'Sub-Committees of the NDC may be appointed from time to time and especially at the time of formulating a Five Year Plan'.²⁷ The Study Team had also recommended constitution of the counter-parts of these committees at the official level so that there is adequate consultation, communication, and therefore mutual understanding and cooperation between the States and the Union in all matters pertaining to Planning.²⁸ These recommendations, however, have not been implemented so far. Paranjape explains the difficulty in doing so in the following words :

As regards the recommendation that the device of NDC sub-committees should be more effectively utilised, this does not seem to have been possible. When

the question of constituting a sub-committee of the NDC for examining the question of the principles and patterns of Central assistance was considered by the NDC in May 1968, it seems to have been found impracticable to exclude any Chief Minister from the sub-committee. The only members of the NDC excluded from the sub-committee were the Central Cabinet Ministers.²⁹

When the NDC sub-committees did not materialise, there was no question of constituting their counterparts at the official level. Therefore, the latter committees also did not, as Paranjape puts it, 'develop'.

What Paranjape says about the reason for not implementing the ARC recommendation regarding the setting up of sub-committees of the National Development Council is indeed interesting; but it also brings out one of the inherent weaknesses of this most important institution of federal consultation and policy-making. This arises from the fact that while the interdependence between the States in the matter of development is 'promotive' in nature in the long run, in the short run it is highly 'contrient'.³⁰ A steel or fertilizer factory gained by one State is a steel or fertilizer factory lost to another. Unfortunately, Indian states, irrespective of their political complexion, seem to be too conscious of the

Keynesian doctrine that in the long run we are all dead! This explains the fact that the States are 'rarely able to present a united front'³¹ in the Council. The latter has, thus, been reduced to a bargaining count^{er}, where each State is too anxious to wrest the maximum for itself from the Central largesse. When it is not a free-for-all jostling bout between individual States, it is a gang-up between groups of States. An illustration of the latter is provided by the wrangling over the interpretation of 'backwardness' on which depended the quantum of the Central assistance to the States. In this dispute the States were sharply divided between the 'haves' (Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Punjab and Gujarat, mainly) and the 'have-nots'. Ultimately, the 'haves' succeeded in getting their view accepted, much to the chagrin of their less fortunate brothers.³² The point to be noted is that the 'work ethos' of the National Development Council is not one of consultation and dispassionate consideration of issues which is its avowed purpose; it is one of wrangling and jockeying for favours.

Another factor of recent origin which may also tend to detract from the effectiveness of the NDC must be mentioned before we conclude. The entry of non-Congress states into the Council following the crack in the one-party rule in the

country has imported into it a certain element of tension. The technique of 'tension-management' adopted for coping with the situation has been rather unfortunate. The practice has been developed of the Prime Minister meeting groups of chief ministers along with other prominent members of the cabinet 'informally' both before and after the NDC meeting. As a national newspaper³³ has editorially commented, this departure from practice may have a wide significance. Unless care is taken, this may prove to be the thin end of the wedge that may lead to the progressive emasculation of the National Development Council as a federal consultative body.

6.6 THE CENTRAL ADVISORY BOARD OF EDUCATION

The idea of a Central Advisory Board of education can be traced back to the Calcutta University Commission (1917-19). Though this Commission was directly concerned with the Calcutta University only, it had made recommendations on a wide range of related matters.³⁴ One such recommendation was that :

the government of India can perform an invaluable function by defining the general aims of educational policy, by giving advice and assistance to local governments and to universities... by coordinating

the work of various universities, and by guarding against needless duplication and overlapping in the provision of the more costly forms of education.³⁵

Constitutional developments that took place almost simultaneous with the submission by the Calcutta University Commission of its report, made education a provincial and transferred subject which reduced the authority of the central government in education to the minimum.³⁶ The Secretariat Procedure Committee set up to implement the Government of India Act, 1919 (which had brought about these constitutional changes) observed that, in future, the authority of the Government of India in education would be exercised through moral persuasion and that 'in place of giving executive orders, it will or should tend more and more to become a Centre of the best information, research and advice'.³⁷ The Committee went on to recommend the creation of a Central organization with these purposes in view. This was a recommendation also in line with the thinking of the Calcutta University Commission. Consequently, a Central Advisory Board of Education was set up in 1920 under the Chairmanship of the Education Commissioner to the Government of India. But, barely had three years ^{passed when} the Board was abolished on the recommendation of the Indian Retrenchment Committee (1922-23).

The Committee had said :

In view of the essential modification of the position of the Central Government vis-a-vis the Provinces under the Reforms Scheme in respect of education and medical administration, which are now transferred subjects over which the Government of India exercise a very limited control we do not consider that there is any justification for the retention of the Educational Commissioner, the Bureau of Education, or the Central Board, costing about Rs.1,00,000 or indeed, for the continuance of the department as a separate entity.³⁸

But soon doubts about the wisdom of the abolition of Board began to be voiced and as early as 1925 the question of its revival was discussed in the Government of India. The Auxiliary Committee of the Indian Statutory Commission, presided over by Sir Philip Hartog (who, incidentally, was a member of the Calcutta University Commission) went into the role of the Government of India in education at some length in 1928 and very strongly recommended that the Central Advisory Board of Education should be revived as early as possible. Later, the Statutory Commission also endorsed the recommendation. Consequently, the Board was revived in 1935.

The functions of the Board continue to be the same as

were laid down in the Government of India resolution of 1935 reviving it. They are :

- (a) To advise on any educational question referred to it by the Government of India or by any local government.
- (b) To call for information and advice regarding educational developments of special interest and value to India; to examine this information and circulate it with recommendations to the Government of India and to local governments.³⁹

The composition of the Board was also laid down in the resolution mentioned above. This part of the resolution has been suitably amended since independence.⁴⁰ The present composition is :

- (1) Chairman : The Union Minister of Education
Representatives of the Government of India
- (2) All Ministers of State and Deputy Ministers in the Ministry of Education and Social Welfare.
Representatives of State Governments
- (3) One representative of each State Government who shall be the Minister in charge of education.
- (4) One representative (to be determined by the Chairman) of each such Union Territory as has an elected legislature.

(5) Elected Members

- (a) Six members of the parliament, two to be elected by the members of the Rajya Sabha from among themselves and four by the members of the Lok Sabha from among themselves
- (b) Two members of the Inter-University Board (India)⁴¹ nominated by the Board from amongst representatives of universities in India.
- (c) Two members of the All India Council for Technical Education to be nominated by the Council.
- (d) One representative of the Indian Council of Agricultural Research.
- (e) One member of the Medical Council of India to be nominated by the Council.

(6) Ex-Officio Members

- (a) Chairman of the University Grants Commission, New Delhi.
- (b) Member, Planning Commission (in charge of Education), New Delhi.
- (c) President, All India Council of Sports, New Delhi.
- (d) Chairman, National Book Trust, New Delhi.
- (e) National Council for Women's Education, New Delhi.
- (f) Secretary, Department of Education, New Delhi.
- (g) Secretary, Department of Culture, New Delhi.

- (h) Additional Secretary, Department of Social Welfare, New Delhi.
- (i) Secretary, Department of Science and Technology, New Delhi.
- (j) Chairman, Standing Commission for Scientific and Technical Terminology, New Delhi.
- (k) Director General of Health Services, New Delhi.
- (l) Commission^{er} for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, New Delhi.
- (m) Director, National Staff College for Educational Administrators and Planners, Delhi.
- (n) Director, National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi.
- (o) Chairman, Central Board of Secondary Education, New Delhi.
- (p) Commandant, National Defence Academy, Khadakvasla, Poona.

- 7. Nominated Members : Twenty educationists to be nominated by the Government of India.
- 8. Member-Secretary : An officer of the Government of India nominated by the Chairman of the Board.⁴²

Though formulated in a different political background, the 'federal' character of the Board is evident from its

functions. It is also reflected in its composition about which however we shall presently have more to say. Again, paragraph 10 of the 1935 Government of India resolution, which stands in its original form in the amended version also, states specifically:

The Government of India take this opportunity of expressing the deep and abiding interest which they feel in the progress of education. They are hopeful that, by having reconstituted the Central Advisory Board of Education, they will have done at least something towards assisting State Governments in their difficult but important task of developing education in the best interest of the country.⁴³

With the emergence of a full-fledged federal set-up, the perception of the C.A.B.E. as an inter-governmental body has only become clearer. In his inaugural address to the thirty-fifth meeting of the Board, Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, then Union Minister for Education, had observed :

In a federal constitution like ours, a body of this character is, I think, extremely important and as far as I am concerned, I propose to give increasing importance to the Central Advisory Board of Education. I am also thinking of setting up a full-time secretariat for the Central Advisory Board so that we can get more concrete

advantage of the working of this organisation which is a Centre-State Organisation⁴⁴ (Emphasis added)

How effectively has the CABE played the role that has been thus assigned to it?

The composition and membership of the body were described at some length. This rather prosaic details were reproduced)deliberately, for, they bring out one of the important handicaps of the organisation as a Centre-State consultative machinery. In 1946, at the time of its twelfth meeting, the Board had 36 members.⁴⁵ Its present strength is 80.⁴⁶ There are also a large number of officials attending the meetings of the Board.⁴⁷ These meetings are, therefore, usually crowded and hardly provide a congenial atmosphere for decision-making on difficult issues of educational policy. This 'glut' in the membership of the Board has been due to an increase in the number of numbers in all categories of its membership. But, it has been particularly due to the addition of a new category to the membership, the category of ex-officio members. The 1935 Resolution of the Government of India did not originally provide for ex-officio members. There has been a proliferation of the central organisations in Delhi since independence. The heads of almost all these organisations,

including the Central Board of Secondary Education, are now ex-officio members of the CAGE.

There is another aspect to this problem, which, from the federal point of view, is equally disturbing. The putative autonomy of some of these organisations notwithstanding, their heads are all Central Government officers for all intents and purposes. The organisations have their counter-parts in the States (like the state councils of education, which perform the same functions in the states where they have been established as the NCERT at the Centre). If the intention in bringing these organisations into the CAGE was to make available to it more expertise in its deliberations, some of the latter organisations could also have been given representation. If the purpose, on the other hand, was the democratic association of the policy-enforcing agencies with policy-making, the state agencies, in any case, play an equally important role in the implementation of the policies evolved at the CAGE.⁴⁸

Simultaneous
/with the influx of the centrally-sponsored organisations into the CAGE, the contingent of members nominated by the Central Government has also grown in size. This is twenty strong now while it used to be of six members before independence. It is interesting to contrast this increase in the

number of nominated members with that of members elected to the C.A.B.E. by the parliament. In the old C.A.B.E., there were two members elected by the Legislative Assembly and one by the Council of State. The amended Government of India resolution provides for six members of the Parliament, two from the Rajya Sabha and four from the Lok Sabha. Thus, there has not only been a large increase in the membership of the C.A.B.E.; this increase has also been skewed in favour of the central government. One cannot help the uncomfortable feeling that the federal nature of this consultative device operating in an area of state jurisdiction has been considerably diluted. It may be mentioned here that this dilution has not come about because of any lack of awareness on the part of the Central government of the importance of the composition of the C.A.B.E. The Central ministers of education have been quick to point out the size of State representation on the Board whenever they thought it necessary and convenient. Thus, in 1957, Maulana Azad told the states that the representatives of the state governments had a clear majority on the Board and that the decisions of such a body should be speedily and willingly implemented by their governments.⁴⁹

The 'style' of the C.A.B.E. is even less calculated to enhance its effectiveness as a deliberative body than its proportions.

To start with the agenda, the government of India resolution enjoins the responsibility of preparing the latter and the explanatory memoranda that have to accompany it on the 'Secretary of the Government of India, Department of Education, assisted by the Secretary of the Board'. It is, therefore, prepared at the Ministry of Education. Having had the opportunity of observing how this is done in the case of at least two meetings (the thirty-fourth and thirty-fifth held in October, 1968 and May 1970 respectively), the present researcher cannot help the disturbing feeling that there is a kind of Gresham's Law operating in the Ministry in these matters. Routine work pushes out work of this nature which, therefore, tends to get postponed to the eleventh hour. The agenda and the 'agenda papers' (as the explanatory memoranda are called at the Ministry) for the CABE are, therefore, prepared in a great hurry and sent out a few days before the scheduled meeting.⁵⁰ There have been repeated complaints in the CABE about the late receipt of the agenda by the States.⁵¹ The inevitable consequence of this is that the States are not in a position to make an adequate study of the issues involved in the items on the agenda before they set out for Delhi to participate in the meeting. One suggestion frequently made in this connection has been that the

Board should have a secretariat of its own. It was in response to this suggestion that Prof. V.K.R.V. Rao, the Union Minister for Education declared in 1970 in his inaugural address to the thirty-fifth meeting that he intended to set up a full-time secretariat for the Board.⁵² The Board was so grateful for this assurance that it went out of its way to pass a resolution welcoming it.⁵³ Incidentally, the plaudits notwithstanding, the CABE continues to function to this day without a secretariat of its own.

The Board also is a victim (if one may put it that way) of a contradiction inherent in its nature. If the decisions of the Board are to command respect and acceptance, it has necessarily to be of ministerial level. But, the price it has to pay for its high-level membership is that its meetings cannot be very long. It has now almost become a tradition that the CABE does not meet for more than two days (During the period under study only twice did the Board meet for more than this. On these two occasions, it met for three days) One solution to this pressure on time obviously would be more business-like conferencing procedures. But unfortunately the meetings of the Board suffers from the usual annual-day syndrome. They open with a welcome speech followed by an inaugural address and end with a vote of thanks. In between, there are

addresses thrown in, for good measure, by other dignitaries. The thirty-sixth session of the Board (1972), for example was addressed by Prof. S.Chakravarti, Member, Planning Commission and by Shri I.K. Gujral, Minister of State for Information and Broadcasting, the latter presumably because the session was to consider the Fifth Five Year Plan proposals which also envisaged the use of mass media in part-time and non-formal education. The next session held in 1974 was addressed by no less than four dignitaries including the Vice-Chairman of the University Grants Commission. And, it is not as if the Board has only limited business to transact. The agenda is invariably long. The thirty-fifth meeting, for example, had nearly forty items on the agenda. The number of items for consideration in the thirty-sixth session was not large in number, but it had under discussion the Fifth Five Year Plan proposals, and four major reports by important ad hoc committees of the Board. All this business has to be transacted within the time left after the rituals. The result is that there is hardly any time left for discussion and the discussion that does take place is seldom anything but perfunctory. ^PComplaint about this aspect of the functioning of the CABE is also persistent. Thus, Professor Nurul Hasan, the present Union Minister of State for Education and then

a member of the C.A.B.E., had cryptically prefaced his intervention in the general discussion of the thirty-fifth session of the Board as follows :

I would like to start my comments with one suggestion.

In future the programme of the C.A.B.E. may be organised in a manner that each member is given at least ten to twelve minutes to speak.⁵⁴

Added to these inadequacies in the make-up and functioning of the C.A.B.E. is the fact that, with the emergence of planning, real decision-making has shifted elsewhere. All the vital decisions in education are now taken in the Planning Commission and, in their broadest aspects, in the National Development Council. They come before the Board, only when they have been irrevocably finalised. Strangely enough the confirmation of this came from the Union Minister of Education himself when he said in the course of his inaugural address to the Thirty-Fifth Session (1970) of the Board :

This meeting should have been held last winter and it was originally planned to hold it in 1969. But, I was advised that it would be better to wait till the Fourth Five Year Plan was finalised. The National Development Council gave its approval to the Plan towards the end of March 1970 and thereafter I took the earliest opportunity to convene this meeting.⁵⁵

The only occasion when the CABE tried to steal the initiative in planning from the Planning Commission was in 1972. The Fifth Plan was still on the anvil at the Commission when the Board decided to discuss a highly ambitious set of plan proposals in education involving a total outlay of 3200 crores, in its thirty-sixth session.⁵⁶ The proposals were supported by a huge publicity build-up. When the educational world exulted at the generosity of the proposals (which came to be known as the Fifth Plan 'Blue-Print' in education), the Planning Commission sulked; but the latter held their peace in the firm knowledge that the final word lay with them. When the final word did come, it was almost an anticlimax, for, the plan outlay proposed in the 'Blue-Print' had been severely cut. All that the CABE could do was to pass a resolution the meekness of which makes it interesting reading:

The Board recognises that, in the severe economic crisis through which the country is passing at present, education, like other sectors, will have to bear its share of economy cuts. The Board would, however, like to draw the attention of (the) government to the close link between education and socio-economic progress and point out that the disproportionately severe cuts now imposed on education will ultimately harm the long-term interests of the nation.⁵⁷

This marginality of the CABE to the decision-making process in education has perhaps now come to be at least tacitly recognised at many quarters. The Education Commission (1964-66) is one example. The Commission has never been accused of economising on words. But, all its skill in periphrasis seems to have dried up when it came to the CABE which has been given short shrift in a brief paragraph in its Chapter on educational planning and administration.⁵⁸ It is, therefore, not surprising that the States have sometimes suggested the winding up of the Board.⁵⁹

6.7 THE CONFERENCE OF STATE EDUCATION MINISTERS

Since independence a network of ministerial conferences have been called into existence by the central government. They act as institutionalised channels of consultation between the Centre and the States and are, therefore, more numerous in areas, legislative jurisdiction over which are assigned to the states by the constitution. Their number has steadily increased and to-day, as one student of centre-state consultative machinery has, rather sardonically put it, 'there is hardly any central counterpart of a State department which keeps itself deprived of the honour of convening a conference'.⁶⁰

The Administrative Reforms Commission have considered the device important enough to give attention to the functioning of four of them - the conferences of the state ministers of finance, food and labour and the Chief Ministers' Conference.⁶¹

The Education Ministers' Conference had its beginning in 1949. In January that year the CABE in its meeting held at Allahabad had adopted a scheme of social education on the basis of the report of an ad hoc committee appointed by the Board for the purpose of evolving such a scheme. It was proposed to call a meeting of the State ministers for education with a view to consider the nation-wide implementation of the scheme. The first ministerial conference in education was thus called in February 1949. This meeting, however, is not considered a part of the regular series. In 1949 itself, in the month of August, another conference was convened by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad mainly for the purpose of discussing the medium of instruction in schools and, interestingly enough, the problem of juvenile delinquency. This is now considered as the first in the series of State Education Ministers' Conferences.

Being an ad hoc conference, it is called at the will of the Union Minister for Education. Thus between 1949 and 1974 there had been only thirteen conferences. The biggest gap

between conferences took place between the first and the second; the second conference was convened only in 1956, after a gap of five years.

Since the initiative in convening the conference lies with the Union Minister for Education, the items for discussion are also suggested by the Centre. In the matter of the notification of the meeting, and the dispatch of the agenda and the related memoranda, the conference fares no better than the CABE. Notice of the meeting is given ten to twenty days in advance. The explanatory memoranda of the agenda are, however, issued very late. They are often sent to the states piecemeal. Equally often they are issued not more than a couple of days before the date of the conference. Occasions are also not rare when the memoranda are distributed to the ministers in the conference itself.⁶² Unlike its counterpart in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Conference of State Ministers for Education in India has no secretariat of its own.

In conferencing practices the Conference of State Ministers for Education is of a piece with the CABE. The Conference also is in session for two days. The ritual of different genres of addresses by various dignitaries takes its toll of valuable time. The discussions, therefore, are usually hurried and perfunctory.

But, the greatest failing of the Conference of the State Ministers for Education is that its boundary with the CABE is rather indistinct. The proceedings, particularly those of the earlier conferences, give one the impression that they only reiterated the decisions already taken at the CABE. Indeed, if this latter body had not of late shown signs of bulging out at the wrong places, it would be really difficult to find a raison d'etre for the conference.

6.8 CONCLUSION

The foregoing brief discussion of the Centre-State consultative machinery in education in the country leads to an important conclusion, viz., the existing system calls for sub-stantial streamlining. It would appear that fundamental issues relating to Centre-State consultation in education have never been consciously posed and systematically tackled. Ad hocism seems to have been the reigning principle here, as in much else that this country has been doing since independence.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

- 1 For a definition of 'promotive' and its opposite 'contrient' interdependence, see David K. Berlo, The Process of Communication: An Introduction to Theory and Practice, 1960, New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, p.144.
- 2 Yehezkal Dror, Public Policy-Making Re-examined, 1969, San Francisco, Chandler Publishing Company.
- 3 Dror's 'optimum model' consists of three major stages, namely, meta-policy making, policy making and post-policy making. Each of these stages is sub-divided into several phases.
- 4 Carl J. Friederich, Trends of Federalism in Theory and Practice. 1968, London, Poll Mall Press, p.173.
- 5 See D.L. Mazumdar, "A Note on Approaches to the Study of Centre-State Relations", in S.N. Jain, et al. (ed.) The Union and the States, 1972, Delhi, National, p.109.
- 6 Ibid, p.175.
- 7 Students of federal politics are not unaware of problems attending participatory decision-making. In a related academic field, Mansbridge has suggested that these problems are mainly three: the larger time-input per decision; greater emotional intensity of interaction; and, ingrained inequalities of influence based on fortuitous factors like verbal facility, expertise and opportunity to speak and participate (See Jane J. Mansbridge, "Time, Emotion and Inequality: Three Problems of Participatory Groups", The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, Vol. IX, No.2/3, 1973 pp.351-368). But, these problems are seen as the necessary price to be paid for such decision-making.

- 8 D.L. Mazumdar, loc. cit. The founding fathers obviously could not be as sensitive to this necessity as we are to-day. But, Article 263 which envisages an inter-state council shows that they were not entirely unaware of the need for consultation.
- 9 Ram K. Vepa, "Administrative Consultation - Formal and Informal", The Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol.XVI, No.3, July-Sept.,1970, p.419.
- 10 James Conant, Shaping Educational Policy, 1966 (Indian edition), New Delhi, Atma Ram and Sons, p.119.
- 11 Article 1, Section 10 of the U.S. Constitution requires that all inter-state compacts are approved by the Congress.
- 12 Eugene Staley, The Future of Underdeveloped Countries, 1961 (Revised edition), London, Frederick A. Praeger, p.213.
- 13 That the stability or the success of a federation is not always a forgone conclusion is shown by the many short-lived federal experiments. Among them can be mentioned the Mali Federation (1959), the Union of Central African Republics (1969), the Arab Federation of Jordan and Iraq (1958), and Egypt, Syria and Yeman (1961).
- 14 For one basis of classification, see Shriram Maheshwari, "The Centre-State Consultative Machinery in India", Indian Journal of Public Administration, Special Number on Union-State Relations, Vol.XVI, No.3, July-Sept.1970, p.432.
- 15 Although no inter-state council has been set up yet, the Article was expressly invoked in 1952 and 1954 when the Central Council of Health and the Central Council of Local Self-Government were respectively established by the Central Government to discuss matters relating to health and local government both of which are under the legislative jurisdiction of the States.

- 16 See Gabriel A. Almond, "A Functional Approach to Comparative Politics", introduction to G.A. Almond and J.S. Coleman (ed.) The Politics of Developing Areas, 1960, Princeton, p.5. The term, which connotes a significant concept in Almond's model of the modern political system, is used by him in the sense of the mode or manner in which a function is performed.
- 17 See "Digest of Reports", Indian Journal of Public Administration, Vol.XVI, No.2, April-June, 1968, p.393.
- 18 From the point of view of how these bodies functioned, what Mr. Chagla said of them in his autobiography may be of interest. "Some committees had hardly met and there was no progress; others continued to meet without doing any appreciable work. In some cases where a committee had submitted a report, another committee had been appointed to consider the report submitted by the earlier committee"! Mr. Chagla was speaking mainly about committees of an ad hoc nature. But, his observations, with necessary changes, would have been equally true about some of the standing committees that he got wound up. For a brief descriptive account of the standing committees of a consultative nature attached to the Ministry of Education and still functioning in 1970, see The Indian Institute of Public Administration, The Organisation of the Government of India, 1971, New Delhi, IIPA, pp.353-358.
- 19 S. Nasir Ali, Theory and Practice of Public Administration, 1970, Allahabad, P.C. Dwadash Shreni and Co., p.185.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Cited by the Administrative Reforms Commission, Report of the Study Team on Centre-State Relations,¹⁹⁷¹ Vol.I, pp.101-2.
- 22 Ibid, p.102.

- 23 The other ministers to be members according to the recommendation were the ministers for: (i) Finance (ii) Food and Agriculture (iii) Industrial Development (iv) Commerce (v) Railways (vi) Transport and Shipping (vii) Labour, Employment and Rehabilitation (viii) Home Affairs and (ix) Irrigation and Power. The logic behind the recommendation is obvious.
- 24 H.K. Paranjape, The Reorganised Planning Commission: A Study of the Implementation of Administrative Reform, 1970, New Delhi, The Indian Institute of Public Administration, pp.8-9.
- 25 Ibid, p.9.
- 26 This committee consisting of chief ministers of nine states and members of the Planning Commission functioned fairly well during the formulation of the Second Five Year Plan. But, it met only twice subsequently, the last meeting held being in 1963.
- 27 Administrative Reforms Commission, Interim Report of the Study Team on the Machinery for Planning, p.11.
- 28 Ibid.
- 29 H.K. Paranjape, op.cit., p.10.
- 30 See footnote at 9, supra.
- 31 A.H.Hanson, The Process of Planning, A Study of India's Five Year Plans (1950-64), 1966, London, Oxford University Press, p.62. One such rare occasions was when all the chief ministers, both Congress and non-Congress, joined hands in demanding an upward revision of the outlays of the states in the Fourth Plan (See, Shriram Maheshwari, op.cit., p.439).
- 32 Shriram Maheshwari, loc.cit.

- 33 The Times of India, April, 17, 1967.
- 34 See for a summary of these, Syed Nurullah and J.P. Naik, A History of Education in India,¹⁹⁵¹ Bombay, Macmillan, pp.501-4.
- 35 Ministry of Education, Central Board of Education (1935-1960) Silver Jubilee Souvenir, 1960, New Delhi, p.1.
- 36 We have briefly dealt with these changes in an earlier chapter. See Chapter II, Historical perspective: The Evolution of Centre-State Relations in Education (1813-1950)
- 37 Ministry of Education, loc. cit.
- 38 Cited by Ministry of Education, op.cit., p.3.
- 39 Government of India (Education, Health and Lands Department) Resolution No.f.122-3/35-E, dated the 8th August, 1935. See for extract from the resolution (as amended upto 1972), Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, The Central Advisory Board of Education: Constitution and Present Composition, 1972, New Delhi, pp.5-6.
- 40 For the original composition of the Board, see Ministry of Education, op.cit., p.10.
- 41 Now the Association of Indian Universities.
- 42 The information on composition has been taken from Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, op.cit., (pp.6-8) except in the matter of Nominated members. The paragraph of the Government of India resolution relating to this category of members has been amended twice since the publication of the above brochure. The number of Nominated Members here shown has been taken from the last amending order of the Government of India. See GOI Order No.F.1-30/73-PRII dated November 13, 1973.
- 43 Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, op.cit., p.8.

- 44 Ministry of Education and Youth Services, Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education (1971), p.6.
- 45 Ministry of Education, op.cit., pp.428-429.
- 46 See Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, op.cit., pp.9-17. Only 75 members are listed by this publication. Since this document was published in 1972, another state has joined the Union of India and the number of Nominated Members has gone up by four.
- 47 The thirty-fifth meeting of the CABE was attended by some 131 state and central government officers (see Ministry of Education and Youth Services, op.cit., pp.42-43) The Board then had 64 members (See Ibid, pp.38-41) Six of the members had not attended the meeting (See Ibid, p.155). Thus, as against 58 members, 131 officials had attended the meeting. The officers, however, do not participate in the proceedings. But, their very large number add to the general atmosphere of a 'mela', as one educationist who had been a member of the CABE for some time once described the meetings of the body.
- 48 Incidentally, one does not quite see how the commandant of the National Defence Academy qualifies to be an ex-officio member, in case this was the purpose.
- 49 Maulana Azad was addressing the conference of education Ministers held at New Delhi in September 1957. See Ministry of Education, Proceedings of the State Education Ministers's Conference (1957), p.2.
- 50 Fortunately the officer who has been handling this work at the Ministry for the last several years is a well-known educationist about whom it is often said that the facts he does not know about Indian education are not worth knowing

and that he has them all at his finger tips. His style of work is not typical, but the spirit is the same whether it is he or somebody else. A couple of weeks or sometimes even less before the meeting of the CABE when it is already too late for the agenda, he retains half a dozen stenographers and then goes at his marathon dictation which has become a byword in the Ministry. The stenographers work in relay and the whole team, including the inevitable peons, work into the small hours of the night for as many days as it is necessary so that the work that should have normally taken the coordinated effort of several officers for weeks would be done within a matter of days. One benign fall-out of this of course was a not inconsiderable and extremely welcome addition to the income of the stenographers and peons out of 'overtime'!

- 51 For example, in the course of a reference to some of the inadequacies of the CABE, the Education Minister of Maharashtra said in the thirty-fifth meeting: "Even the agenda of the meetings and the notes which are prepared for the meetings are supplied to the states very late". (Ministry of Education and Youth Service, op.cit., pp.15-16.)
- 52 See, ^{cited} quotation/at footnote 44, Supra.
- 53 For the resolution see Ministry of Education and Youth Services, op.cit., p.35.
- 54 Ministry of Education and Youth Services, op.cit., p.26.
- 55 Ministry of Education and Youth Services, op.cit., p.5.
- 56 See, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Central Advisory Board of Education, 36th Session, pp.61-119.
- 57 Ministry of Education and Social Welfare, Central Advisory Board of Education: 37th Session, p.42.

- 58 Ministry of Education, Report of the Education Commission (1964-66) : Education and National Development, p.455.
- 59 In the Thirty-Fifth meeting of the Board, for example, the Maharashtra Minister for Education referred to his own earlier suggestion to this effect. See Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Meeting of the Central Advisory Board of Education, op.cit., p.15.
- 60 Shriram Maheshwari, op.cit., p.433.
- 61 See Administrative Reforms Commission, Report of the Study Team on Centre-State Relations^{hips}, pp.296-300.
- 62 Delay in the dispatch of the agenda seems to be an endemic failing with all ministerial conferences. Maheshwari found the failing in relation to several conferences (See Shriram Maheshwari, op.cit., p.445) The Administrative Reforms Commission found the Finance Ministers Conference no better. (See Administrative Reforms Commission, op.cit., p.298).